

When students learn differently, how do we respond?



Learning Support at ISB

www.isb.be



Everyone

included, challenged and successful



Our mission of **everyone included, challenged and successful** is one that we take seriously. There are many international schools that deny admission to students who learn differently, but we fundamentally and firmly believe that inclusive educational programming has a value that enriches the whole community. People with disabilities exist in every nation and culture and we believe it to be our responsibility to teach all students that good communities value and educate all of their members. As we enthusiastically rise to the occasion of including the whole family, we serve students with a range of disabilities - from mild to intensive - given that we are confident in our abilities to meet their needs. We understand the complexity of providing support for students within this range and have services in place that offer what they will need.

We look at student learning through a collaborative approach, incorporating professionals with a range of expertise to balance our teams - a best practice in learning support. Teachers who specialize in specific learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, disorders of attention, autism spectrum disorders, gifted and talented education, are presently amongst the members of our team. Teachers work closely with clinical practitioners - professionals such as speech language, occupational and physical therapists, educational psychologists, counsellors, and professional coaches to create teaming that will allow us to best meet the diverse needs of our students. By looking at student learning through different lenses we are able to create a consistent, comprehensive set of goals for each student to maximize their learning.

What are our guiding principles?

- We work to know our students as individuals
- We respect confidentiality
- We work as a multidisciplinary team
- We see parents as our partners
- We see diversity as a strength
- We work to develop students' understanding of their own learning profile, and promote their ability to self-advocate given this understanding
- We use student strengths, and our own, to overcome weaknesses
- We use differentiated instruction to provide all students access to the curriculum
- We believe labels are for jam jars, not people



How do we offer balanced support services?

Each school division also has its own learning support team, and the school-wide programme is coordinated by a Head of Learning Support.

ISB provides the full spectrum of learning support, which includes provisions for students who require services identified in three broad bands:

Mild Support

Provided by trained professionals in a balanced service delivery model of consultative support, accommodations, small group, or in class support.

MILD SUPPORT

- Consultative support from a learning support specialist
- Monitoring student performance
- Literacy support (reading, writing, speaking)
- Mathematics support
- Small group instruction – either in class or out of class
- Learning Support Centre – strategies/skills classes
- Assistive technologies
- Formal accommodations



Moderate Support

A programme through which children with more specialised needs are supported through a combination of co-taught and small group support in combination with the appropriate therapies.

MODERATE SUPPORT

curriculum support and remediation

- Co-taught classes in core literacies
- Specialised small group instruction
- Specifically designed courses in mathematics (secondary only)
- Social skills support
- Study and organisation skills
- Assistive technologies
- Formal accommodations
- Curricular modifications – when required





Intensive Support



Three Special Education classrooms, for children with cognitive or developmental disabilities, one for children in the Early Childhood/Elementary range, one in Middle School and one in High School. These students work with a small team of specialised professionals and with other mainstream teachers. As their graduation approaches, there is an emphasis on life skills and in vocational studies to prepare for a successful life after ISB.

INTENSIVE SUPPORT

The programme is characterised as a self-contained programme with an inclusive component and includes:

- A student/teacher ratio of 2-3 students to 1 teacher depending on student need
- Individually designed inclusion opportunities
- Speech Language Therapy
- Functional Life Skills
- Vocational skills (secondary)
- Social Skills
- Adaptive Physical Education
- Adaptive Music
- Adaptive or assistive technologies
- Therapeutic Horseback Riding
- Belgian National Special Olympics Team

Speech language therapy and occupational therapy can be recommended in any level of programming.

How do we document specific student plans?

Each student enrolled in the learning support department will have an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) which describes their school history, learning profile, and outlines annual educational goals. It is updated annually and includes a teacher/parent/student meeting to ensure a common direction and consistent approaches for the student.

Providing all students access to curriculum is a primary responsibility of all ISB teachers. At a foundational level, all teachers offer differentiated opportunities to their students, taking into account student learning style, readiness for concepts, strengths, weaknesses and affinities or gifts. Accommodations and modifications for individual students are possible and will be identified formally through student ILP's.

How do we use technology to support student learning?

“Our commitment to technology is integral to our vision of differentiation. Technology allows teachers a wide variety of strategies for meeting the needs of all learners in our classrooms.”

Mary Jeanne Farris, Head of Educational Technology



We make every effort to stay current with assistive technology practices. Our one-to-one tablet PC programme allows us to make assistive technology available at all times to students. The learning support department is working with the following specific software designed for students who learn differently.

Lexia: <http://www.lexialearning.com>

Text Help: <http://www.texthelp.com>

Kurzweil: <http://www.kurzweiledu.com>

What clinical therapeutic supports do we have in place?

Speech Language Therapists

Speech Language Therapists have specific knowledge and skills in human communication and are vital members of our multidisciplinary team who work in close collaboration with learning support and classroom teachers. The role of a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) is to identify, evaluate and treat speech, language and communication disorders in individuals of all ages to enable them to communicate to the best of their ability.

SLTs assist students who exhibit/present with:

! **Speech difficulties:** producing sounds, pronouncing sounds and words; requiring use of augmentative/alternative communication systems (sign language, picture symbols, voice output computers, AAC etc); speaking fluently (stuttering, cluttering, rhythm).

! **Language difficulties:** understanding language/following directions; expressing language (learning/retrieving words, constructing sentences or expressing ideas, wants, needs); auditory memory for words, sentences and conversation speech; understanding written language; reading, spelling and writing abilities.

! **Social Communication:** understanding/using non-verbal language (gestures, eye contact); communicating in social situations (taking turns in conversations); cognitive communication (reasoning, problem-solving, memory, organisation).

! **Voice and resonance difficulties:** voice quality (hoarse/breathy/strident), voice resonance (hyper/hyponasal); voice pitch/volume (too high/too low, too loud/too soft); loss of voice; laryngectomy.

! **Oral-Motor, feeding and swallowing disorders:** weakness in the muscles used for talking and eating; drooling; swallowing solids, soft foods or liquids; chewing/controlling food in the mouth; initiating a swallow; coughing, choking, throat clearing, gurgly voice after eating/drinking; excessively slow eating associated with weight loss; signs of aspiration (repeated pneumonias).

We consider collaboration essential best practice for parents/teachers and other communication partners. Working together enhances the best support options for students with communication difficulties and encourages transfer of new skills and strategies into all of the students' environments.

- Each student receives a full evaluation at the start of his or her therapy.
- Student needs are matched with the best model of support.
- Support can be administered in class or outside of class individually, in a pair, or in a group.

At ISB, the Speech and Language therapists provide these services which are billed to parents through an invoice from the school.

Occupational Therapy

ISB operates a satellite clinic for students with occupational therapy needs, and are fortunate to have a collaborative partnership with Maximum Potential. Although this is a private service in which fees are paid by parents, the therapists work closely with ISB teachers and are welcomed consulting members of our multidisciplinary team.



Maximum Potential

Paediatric Occupational Therapy - Specializing in Sensory Integration
25 Devonshire Place, London, W1G 7JD - Telephone/Fax 020 7486 4747 Mobile 07980 311960
Email: mel@maximpotential.org.uk - Web <http://www.maximpotential.org.uk>

Melanne Maddalene Randall, MSc OTR Director

SATELLITE CLINIC

A satellite clinic is usually located within a school setting, and involves Maximum Potential providing services specifically to the school clientele and the staff.

Maximum Potential provides registered, certified, licensed and insured Specialist Therapists to the facility, for programme implementation.

The programme usually involves the following: (billed privately to the parents)

Evaluation of:

- neuromuscular status
- gross motor skills
- fine motor skills/handwriting
- sensory processing
- visual perception skills
- oral-motor skills

Treatment of:

- sensory integration skills
- gross motor skills
- fine motor/handwriting skills
- visual perception skills
- self-help skills
- oral motor skills

Parent training to:

- increase understanding of sensory integration
- improve awareness of "play" and it's role in gross/fine motor skill development
- provide home treatment programmes to aid in the therapy process

Teacher training workshops to:

- increase understanding of sensory integration
- implement classroom strategies



What formal testing is available?

Formal psychological educational evaluations to identify learning or developmental disabilities are a requirement for services from the learning support department. Typically psychological educational testing consists of formal intelligence and achievement testing as core assessments. Additional assessments can be recommended given student need.

We will be beginning to offer some psychological educational testing in-house. There will be an additional charge for this service. For assessments that we are not able to provide in house, we do have an extensive list of professionals who can provide evaluations in the Brussels community.

How do we make admissions decisions?

We make admissions decisions on a case-by-case basis given a complete application. Each application is thoroughly reviewed by the Head of Learning Support in consultation with school Heads to ensure that we will be able to meet each student's needs. We do have a limited amount of space for students in the Learning Support department to protect the student teacher ratios and to ensure service to a high standard.

We want each child to have a positive start at ISB, with the best possible opportunity for success. It is for this reason that we require parents to share information with us about their child's learning profile and/or any known learning disabilities.

Based on the admissions process, we make decisions about class placement and programming that have a profound effect on a child's education. These decisions, when based on good information, result in success. Without this information there is a risk that some children may not receive the very specific support they need.

We wish to assure parents that it is not our intention to 'label' any child, but that disclosing this information is essential to our ability to understand their child as a learner, and then plan educational opportunities appropriately. We know this to be in the best interests of any child, and therefore we have created a policy that reflects this understanding in our practice.

We do not presently have opportunities for students with emotional or behavioural disorders as we do not have the necessary therapeutic supports at our disposal.

Naturally, we will manage any information about a student with the utmost discretion and professionalism.

Are there additional fees associated with this programming?

Mild and moderate levels of learning support are included in the tuition fees at ISB.

Additional therapeutic support services carry a fee in addition to the tuition.

Additional fee programmes include:

Special Education Class

Speech Language Therapy

Occupational Therapy

Psychological Educational Evaluations

In some cases these services are conditional to enrolment. Please contact the head of learning support for fee details.

What qualifications do we require of our learning support faculty?

All teachers in the Learning Support department are qualified and certified in the field of learning disabilities.

What do people say about our learning support department?

"The ISB mission of inclusion offers one of the most powerful educational outcomes of our programme. As one of our Middle School English units reminds us, the greatest human strength lies in diversity. The single, most powerful, and fairest challenge one can set for any individual is for that individual to work to the best of her or his ability. An ISB education is about identifying this ability and supporting each student in the goal of working to meet that potential."

Michael Crowley - Middle School Head

"Each of our students comes with a unique profile of strengths, challenges, former experiences and future aspirations. One of our jobs as a school is to create an environment where this diverse student body can effectively live and learn together. Each student needs to feel a genuine sense of belonging, knowing that he or she will contribute to the community and also grow from the contact with it. We believe in providing access and opportunity, not setting ceilings."

Anna Zeiders - Elementary School Head



"ISB has developed a programme that promotes each individual's abilities, and yet allows the students to be an integral part of the school and community. When you watch the entire school show up to send off the students to Special Olympics, you can tell that there is a unique relationship with our kids."

Tee Sabalot - ISB Parent

"I can speak from a dual perspective, as a HS Baccalaureate teacher and mother of a child with dyslexia. In the latter division I see a focused sense of commitment and customized care for my son. This is a school that has raised my expectations for my son's future through working at identifying and improving his weaknesses and developing and maximising his strengths. They have just got on with educating him in a way his previous school did not have the commitment or vision to do. This simply could not be achieved without the input that ISB management puts into resource strategy and planning. Inclusion is not treated with lip service here, it is a fact."

Anne Brennan - High School Teacher and ISB Parent



We live in a world of limited resources and increasing demand. Becoming an international citizen is about understanding the environmental impact of decisions we make, and the responsibility this understanding brings.

It is for this reason that all school publications are printed using vegetal ink on FSC (products from controlled sources, managed forests, recycled wood or fibre) or 100% recycled papers.



The International School of Brussels a.s.b.l.

Kaltenberg 19, 1170 Brussels, Belgium. - Tel: +32 (0)2 661 42 11 - Fax: +32 (0)2 661 42 00