



**COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL
COSTA RICA**

A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES

HANDBOOK

January 2018



TABLE OF CONTENT

1. Mission of Learning Support Service
2. Vision of the Learning Support Service
3. Terminology used in this document
4. Policy that support practice
 - a. Inclusion Policy
5. Levels of Educational Support
 - a. Tier 1
 - b. Tier 2
 - c. Tier 3
6. The Referral Process
7. The Student Learning Service Team
 - a. Role of the RTIi
 - b. Role of the regular classroom teacher
 - c. Role of the learning support teacher
 - d. Role of the counselor
 - d. Role of the English Language Development teacher (ELD)
 - e. Role of the external services providers
 - f. Role of the learning coaches
8. One school four Houses
 - a. Early Childhood (EC)
 - b. Elementary School (ES)
 - c. Middle School (MS)
 - d. High School (HS)
9. Communication
 - a. Communication with parents
 - b. Communication among teachers



c. Communication between houses

1. ***Learning Support Service Mission***

The foremost commitment of the Learning Support Service (LSS) in Country Day School is the inclusion of all students in the learning community. All teachers, learning support teachers and regular educators, are responsible for meeting the needs of all students and must be proactive in achieving this. The first instance of support for students is inside the regular classroom in collaboration with the LSS teachers. CDS has a team of support teachers who work closely with the principal, counsellors, and classroom teachers to lead the process that meets the students where they are and provides the support required for them to learn and progress.

2. ***Learning Support Service Vision***

The Learning Support Service complies with Country Day's vision in the observance that all students can learn, although in different ways and with a different amount of support, and that all students develop their potential in a safe environment, with a sense of belonging.

Country Day School embraces a diverse community of learners in the most inclusive learning environment possible from Early Childhood to High School with the support and partnership of all stakeholders (students, parents, faculty, learning specialists and administrators).

In CDS, we believe that education is for all and we take the challenge to find spaces where all of our students can learn together, no matter their abilities, ethnicity, language, or nationality.



3. Terminology used in this document

- a. Multi-Tiered System of Supports: MTSS is the framework that includes Response to Intervention and instruction (RTIi) and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) framework. This system of support is driven by data-based decision making for supporting students.
- b. Response to Intervention and instruction (RTIi): It is a system of Tiers in the provision of intervention services to assure academic success. It has three systems of support: Tier-1, Tier-2 and Tier-3.
- c. Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS): It is a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behavioral support. It also offers three systems of support according to the need of services.
- d. Universal screening: It is the screening utilized to determined the students´ need of support and to make informed decisions to promote a student’s academic growth. The screening used in CDS at this moment is the MAP or the Measure of Academic Progress in the areas of Reading, Language and Math, which is used in Elementary and Middle School. In Early Childhood, the DRA is used as a universal screening and in High School, results from PSAT, SAT, and student performance guide the decision making for services.

Based on this screening, the LSS intervention team determines which students are entitled to receive intervention in either Tier-2 or Tier-3 based on the need and availability of services.

There is a variety of universal screening [tools](#) that can be used for all academic subjects and for social and behavior assessment.



- e. Progress monitoring: It is the set of assessment tools used to measure students progress and growth. It is also an evidence based approach to evaluate intervention methodologies and strategies.
- f. Student Learning Profile (SLP): Before 2019-2020, this document was issued for every student who received services in any Tier of intervention. It compiled

information about the educational history of the student in CDS; testing results, since the student had to undergo external psycho-educational evaluation; a list of strengths and challenging areas; and the curricular accommodations to be provided in the regular classroom according to Costa Rican Law-7600.

In 2019-2020, the SLP will suffer some changes such as there will still be a student educational history in CDS; testing results will be obtained from the universal screening used in the school that determines intervention; external testing will not be required for students suspected to need intervention, but will be input if it exists; a list of strengths and challenging areas will be determined by the universal screening; and there will be a list of curricular accommodations to be provided in the regular classroom according to Costa Rican Law-7600.

- g. Collaborative Action Plan (CAP): Beginning in 2019-2020, every student who receives intervention in Tier-2 and Tier-3 will have a CAP. This document will state the goals for intervention, the collaborators, the case manager, and the tools used to measure progress. Once the goals are met, the student will be out of the Tier, and will be back into Tier-1 services only, until there is a proven need that intervention should continue.
- h. External neuropsychological evaluation: It is an in-depth assessment of skills and abilities linked to brain function. It measures areas such as attention, problem solving, memory, language, I.Q., visual-spatial skills, academic skills, and social-emotional functioning. This type of evaluation is given by an authorized and licenced professional who is recommended by the school when there is a need for a more



formal prove of educational needs. The LSS team will require this type of evaluation only when it is strictly necessary to determine the need for more services, especially for services in Tier 3 that need to be given for a long period of time over the years.

This assessment is required in the high school for students who need extra time, small setting, and/or electronic devices as tools to access the reading and writing

essays in the College Board standardized testing (PSAT, AP and SAT). The learning support teacher is the only one requiring this type of documentation when the teachers have expressed concern about a student, or when a student is a CDS student moving from Middle School with and SLP.

- i. Learning intervention team: The principal, the counsellor (s), the curriculum coach and the learning support teacher of each house makes up the learning intervention team in charge of analyzing data obtained by the universal screening tools..

4. Policy that supports practice

The LSS works in the agreement with the Costa Rica [7600 Law](#) of Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities in the attention of the students with learning challenges, and different levels of support are provided using a Response to Intervention Model (RTI). The intervention received by the student will be defined by the intervention team responding to individual needs.

a. Inclusion Policy: CDS is committed to national and international principles and agreements concerning the inclusion of all students in the educational system. We agree that all students have the right to high-quality education and CDS provides students with support services to help them access the curriculum.

Our efforts are focused on providing students with the least restrictive environment possible, which should be the regular classroom. We aim for the greatest level of inclusion



possible in our regular academic program. All the students should have the opportunity to learn with their peers. In very few cases, when the learning barrier requires it, we will deliver services in small groups outside the regular classroom.

5. Levels of Educational Support

When the student has difficulty accessing the curriculum, CDS offers support services in agreement with the Response to Intervention Model (RTI).

- a. Tier-1: All students in the regular classroom have the opportunity to be taught by a professional teacher who shows expertise in the subject area he/she is teaching. When the student doesn't learn the skill that is taught the first time, the regular educator finds other ways and resources to provide the instruction.

The support teacher has weekly hours of push-in in the regular classroom, which is an important time to collaborate with the regular classroom teacher in attending any learning issues that occurs while instruction is being delivered. This instant support is not strictly documented, except in the weekly planning of each teacher.

There are different modalities of collaboration during the push-in hours between the regular classroom teacher and the support teacher, as well as different levels of collaboration. The regular education teacher and the support teacher decide on the model they will use in providing the service (one teaches-one assists, one teaches-one observes, station teaching, parallel teaching, supplemental teaching, alternative teaching, and/or team teaching).



It is the responsibility of the classroom teachers to ensure that they are effectively collaborating with the support teachers and communicating frequently by sharing resources, and responding to emails in a timely fashion.

- b. Tier-2: When a student hasn't been able to acquire the skill after Tier 1 services are given, this student is entitled to receive an extra amount of support in a smaller setting, inside or outside the regular classroom, for a specific period of time.

The regular educator and the student support teacher will meet to make an action plan in order to help the student overcome the learning gap. This action plan derives from the data analysis after universal screening is given and critical skills are identified. This intervention is data-driven-based intervention.

- c. Tier-3: The main focus of intervention in this level is the learning of critical skills across the curriculum and across time. When a student enters CDS, lacking important skills for the grade level he/she is in, there is an urge of Tier 3 services to help the student level up. Critical skills are usually in the area of reading, writing and math. The student needs these skills and knowledge in order to be successful in school.

The student receives Tier 3 services once a day with the student support teacher or an external service provider who is approved by the school but paid for by the parents of the student. The LSS team will coordinate efforts with the external services provider in order to offer the best intervention to overcome the educational barriers that have been identified.



The school uses evidence-based intervention systematically to evaluate the need for services or the permanency of the students in the program. In any of the RTI levels, students can be in and out of the program depending on the need for services and the growth shown.

Students who need Tier-2 and Tier-3 services will have a Collaborative Action Plan (CAP) that determines the goals of the intervention, the amount of time needed to

reach the goal, the evidence used to prove the need of intervention, the evidence to prove progress and growth, and the people in charge of the intervention (school personnel and external services providers).

The difference between Tier-2 and Tier-3 services are the amount of time dedicated to intervention during the week. While a Tier-2 student is served individually or in a small group, two times a week, a Tier-3 student may be served three to five times a week, individually or with another student. Tier-3 services are offered more frequently in the primary years.

Critical skills are strengthened using research based methods and practices such as Orton Gillingham methodologies for reading and spelling, Lindamood Bell-Visualizing and Verbalizing for reading comprehension, individual drill and practice programs and resources such as IXL, Khan Academy, Lexia for math.

6. The Referral Process

The start point in the process of providing RTI services is by either a written referral or the data analysis conducted by the learning intervention team. All K-8 students will be screened at the beginning of the year, using a developmental readiness assessment in the



areas of fine motor, early literacy, and math readiness in Early Childhood and the DRA in Preparatory, and MAP in elementary and middle school.

After the data analysis, the learning intervention team will determine the need for services and the action plan to follow for every student needing services. However, at any time of the year, teachers, parents, and/or administrators still have the opportunity to place a referral (digitally or hard copy) when they think there is enough evidence to support the need of services in Tier2 and Tier3 level of intervention in

either or both areas academic and social/emotional. The purpose of this [document](#) is to collect evidence that proves the need for services. When parents have a concern about a student's need for services, they can communicate their concerns to the regular classroom teacher so the teacher can add to their concerns and fill out a form that will be shared with the learning support team.

The LSS team in each House (or division) will discuss the referral and will start a case study. There are several actions to be taken that will vary according to the type of concern displayed. The concerns might be in the area of learning or counseling. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to follow up on referrals due to socio-emotional issues, using the appropriate protocol.

When referrals are submitted due to a learning concern, the LSS team designs an internal plan of action that may include but it is not limited to classroom observations, data analysis of universal screening, meeting with parents and regular classroom teacher, student file check, student work samples check, and in some cases, additional internal assessment.

Once all the documents are analyzed and learning barriers are determined, a further action must be taken. The LSS team will meet with the regular classroom teacher to start



serving the student in one of the Tiers of RTI, and determine the accommodations to be applied in terms of methodology and assessment. If learning barriers are said to be part of the classroom/school environment, immediate measures should be taken to modify the physical/emotional environment. But, if barriers are to be seen in the individual because of a specific learning condition, both teachers write a Collaborative Action Plan (CAP) to start serving the student.

In very few cases when the individual's learning barriers are not easily determined, an external evaluation will be required and done by a professionally primarily

recommended by the school and paid by the parents. If the family wants to visit a specialist of its choice, the credentials of this person should be shared with the LSS team.

Regarding high school students, the SLP may determine the non-significant and access accommodations that will be provided during instruction and assessment in the regular classroom. If a need for College Board and Costa Rica Baccalaureate accommodations are considered, the student will need to follow the procedures determined by the College Board and the CR-Ministry of Education.

In the high school, the LSS teacher will conduct student review sessions periodically with each grade level team in order to review students of concern regarding academic and social-emotional issues. Measures will be taken in regards of giving students extra support during study hall times with the LSS teacher, after school review sessions with the subject teacher, and/or session with an external tutor outside the school.

When a student with learning needs is seeking admission into CDS, the family will follow the admission protocol already established by the school.



7. The Learning Support Service Team

The Learning Support Service (LSS) involves all the actions that regular classroom teachers and support teachers take, collaboratively with the counsellor, and with all the teaching and working staff in the school. The purpose of the LSS is to help eliminate the barriers that impede the participation, learning and quality of life of all the students, especially those who have been serviced throughout a SLP.

The goal of the service is to move from the concept of “disabilities”, which has a medical connotation of something to be cured, to the concept of “learning barrier”.

This conceptualization allows the team to explore the environment and identify what is preventing the student from learning. An important question to ask is if there is a barrier in the environment that doesn't let the student access the curriculum as it is expected. Thus, the LSS team will work on designing a plan to remove the barrier. Barriers for learning are not necessarily neurological. They might be related to the methodologies used in the classroom, absenteeism, classroom environment, skills that were not learned in previous stages of schooling, and social relations that do not allow learning to take place. When teachers, parents and external support services come together to make a collaborative plan, the student will benefit.

- a. Role of the learning intervention team: Each house makes up its learning intervention team whose primary role is to conduct universal screening and data analysis, and define intervention services for the students who need them. The principal of each house, the curriculum coach, the learning support teacher, and the regular classroom teacher (s) are part of the team who meet after the first universal screening is given. Once the services are defined, the support teacher and the regular classroom teacher write a collaborative action plan and conduct progress monitoring sessions to measure growth. This progress monitoring sessions will be conducted as



frequently as needed to measure Tier-2 and Tier-3 students' progress, and the measuring tools used are determined by the learning intervention team in each house.

b. Role of regular education teacher: Teachers will present information in a variety of ways, giving students different options for learning and ways to demonstrate their knowledge, and incorporate practices that maximize student engagement. In this way, removing learning barriers enables the students in a range of abilities to access the content and skills taught in the general education. The regular classroom teacher

is the number one responsible for offering effective instruction to all students in a Tier-1 level of intervention.

c. Role of the support teacher: The support teacher will have a role that focuses on making inclusion happen. The support teacher will work collaboratively with the classroom teacher in meeting the needs of all the students in the classroom, especially students who already have a Student Learning Profile (SLP).

The support teacher becomes the case manager of students who take part of a Tier-2 and Tier-3, and is in charge of writing the CAP in conjunction with the regular educator. Both teachers are part of the learning intervention team that analyzes the data obtained by the universal screening and define the levels of intervention to provide to the students.

For 2019-2020, all students receiving Tier-3 services and curricular modifications will have a CAP that will take the place of the actual Student Educational Program (SEP) used prior to that time.



- d. Role of the counselor: The counselor of every house is also part of the LSS team and will have knowledge of all the student being served by the team. However, his/her role will be more active when the intervention requires more attention in the social/emotional area. For the population in general, the school counselor offers a range of social and emotional support services to families, including parent workshops, consultation, life skills sessions, and individual and group guidance.
- e. Role of the English Language Development teacher: The ELD teacher is also part of the team that meets to discuss the referral and the need of services for a student. The ELD teacher will offer services to students whose English language is a critical skill. In Early Childhood and Elementary School where the admission of students with low language proficiency is more common, the ELD is a crucial service to offer.
- f. External services providers: Services such as Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Psychological Therapy (few cases in EC that have been approved by the team) are provided whenever the LSS team considers them to be crucial in the intervention. The external services are offered during school hours and are paid by the families. People who work in the school under this designation follow a specific [policy](#) in agreement with the Child Protection Safeguarding Policy.
- g. Learning Coaches: In very few cases, students who have more significant learning barriers require a person who intervenes directly with their behavior in the regular classroom. CDS has required the presence of learning coaches (permanent or itinerant) when the student is still working towards independence, communication and mobility, and when the external behaviors shown by the student become disruptive for him/her and the rest of the students in the classroom.



Regular classroom teachers and personnel who relate with the student will learn the best practices concerning behavioral management and strategies in handling the student's disruptive behaviors, as soon as the behavior doesn't represent a harm to others. The learning coach will be in charge of teaching the personnel the adequate

behavioral strategies in order to find consistency in handling the student. Ideally, the learning coach has already worked with the student for several years and knows what works for him/him regarding this area.

[External services](#) providers and [learning coaches](#) must meet all child safeguarding requirements as any person does in CDS. They meet with the subject teachers at least once a week to be aware of the class activities. They provide important input concerning classroom accommodations and modification, and have to be in touch with the case manager to coordinate any change in the CAP.

8. One School, Four Houses

Although the Learning Support Service is offered from Early Childhood through High School with the same vision and mission, and similar structure and procedures, the level of organization and intervention vary due to the characteristics of the students, rigorosity of the program, and staff composition. Some differences are described below.

- a. Early Childhood: The Early Childhood team meets every week to discuss new referrals and define intervention actions. The team consists of the support teacher, the counselor, the ELD teacher and the principal. The regular educator is also a member of the team who participates of the meeting if there is a student of her/his concern.



In Early Childhood, the Learning Support Service focuses on early intervention to help students gain all necessary skills, also called critical skills, and attributes to be successful in school. Early intervention services give specialized support to children and families in the early childhood years. This support might include

individualized or small group instruction, informal evaluation, counselling, and/or additional English language acquisition assistance.

The RTI system works in the same three levels. The regular classroom teacher is in charge of the early acquisition of critical skills while working on developmental, health, academic, and social emotional needs of all her students in a Tier-1 level of support.

Tier-2 level of support is offered to students who have shown low English proficiency and low phonemic awareness/early literacy skills after the universal screening has been done at the beginning of each year. Progress monitoring will determine the addition or withdrawal of services, and continuous assessments will help to keep track of student learning and growth. The team is aware of the arrival of new [referrals](#) in order to maintain the intervention in place for the students who need it.

In the second semester of the year, students in the Preparatory level are more likely to be seen by the support teacher to work on crucial skills that haven't been met. Areas of concern are discussed by the submission of the referral, and external services in speech, emotional therapy and occupational therapy are recommended if the team considers them beneficial to the student.



The ELD intervention is a push-in (Tier-1) and a pull-out (Tier-2) service for the students whose English is not proficient as defined by their oral communication skills and results from the WIDA, LAS and other proficiency testing used at the beginning of the year. Once the student has reached the expected level of English, he/she is out of the program. The WIDA testing, informal teacher-made

test, and classroom observations are used to collect evidence that prove growth in the English language acquisition.

The Early Childhood guidance counselor is available to work with students concerning emotional, behavior, or personal situations that may arise during the school year. Other support programs such as whole class guidance lessons, CDS Social Emotional Curriculum based on the Child Safeguarding Program, and consultation with faculty and parents are also provided. It is not permitted for the Early Childhood counselor to work as individual therapist, rather, this is a guidance counseling service for parents and students.

- b. Elementary School (ES): The Elementary School team consists of the counselor, the support teachers, the English language teachers and the principal. They meet weekly to review the arrival of new [referrals](#) and to estimate the level of intervention needed for students. The regular education teachers, including specials teachers, attends to this team meeting whenever it is required.

The support team meets at the beginning of the year to analyze the universal screening (MAP and DRA) and to decide on the levels of intervention needed to help students succeed in school. Tier-2 and Tier-3 levels of intervention are offered to students based on the need of support, and progress monitoring will give the



evidence to keep the student in the service or to graduate him/her from it, once the student has shown the expected growth.

Team meetings are held weekly between the support teacher and/or the ELD teacher and the regular classroom teacher in order to go over the weekly planning. Together, they revise the support needed for specific students in the classroom. Teachers also decide on the kind of teacher collaboration they will use to best address the students' learning.

- c. Middle School (MS): The MS team consists of support teachers, the counselor and the principal of the House. They meet to discuss any [referral](#) and/or concerns regarding the students' learning and the intervention that are already in place. Most of the intervention in the MS happens inside the regular classroom where the students are served in Tier-1. If reteaching and/or sporadic intervention are needed, both teachers the regular classroom and the support teacher will meet to plan a group intervention.

Tier-2 intervention is determined by the universal screening and will be delivered by the support teacher twice a week in a personalized session. An action plan will be designed to show the goals of intervention and the progress and growth of the student. If more intervention sessions are needed due to a critical learning condition, the student will receive services in a Tier-3 level of intervention and an external evaluation will be possibly accompany the evidence to require the services.

- d. High School (HS): The HS team consists of one support teacher, the counselor, the college counselor and the principal. Every month, the grade level teachers and the team participate in a student-review meeting to talk about any student of concern.



All the students in the high school may be a student who needs support in one way or the other. Therefore, the student support and the counseling services go hand in hand in the attention of adolescents.

Student who already have a SLP and/or are known to receive support services in the MS at any level will always be under monitoring in HS, and services will be provided since they are entitled to receive curricular accommodations according to CR-Law 7600. When a student has a documented learning challenge that require accommodations for the College Board testing (PSAT, SAT, AP), the LSS teacher, known by the College Board as the SSD (Services for Students with Disabilities), will apply for the accommodations, sharing the evidence with the College Board SSD team.

In the same way, the LSS teacher will apply for testing accommodations for student pursuing the Costa Rican Baccalaureate in 12th grade. The student has to be proved to receive testing accommodations in the last two years of high school and evidence will be shared with the Ministry of Public Education.

In 2019-2020, there will be a period a week used for academic support and offered to all students. Teachers and/or students can require the “study time” for extra support, reteaching of a skill, and homework support, individually or in a group of fewer students. RTIi is mostly offered in Tier-1 by the regular subject area teacher and by the LSS teacher in a daily study hall. Any Tier-2 and Tier-3 intervention have been determined in the MS and serviced in HS. Thus, the role of the LSS teacher for student with a learning coach is to coordinate the inclusion of the student with significant learning needs into the regular classroom. Since emotional support becomes crucial at this age, social-emotional support and intervention services are offered at the different levels of intervention.



9. Communication

Various means of communication are established in order to share information about the intervention process. The LSS team writes a blog that shares with the entire community throughout the school's newsletter. The blog is intended to raise awareness about different topics in the areas of learning differences, behavioral approaches, research based methodologies, intervention strategies that are best practices in the field of education, and important information about how CDS is responding to meeting the learning challenges of all its students.

- a. Communication with parents is intended to happen in the regular basis in different modalities such as face-to-face meetings with parents and external service providers, written documents sent by e-mails to report concerns and progress. Any parent or teacher is encouraged to initiate the contact at any time. However, there are times set up in advance when specific meetings need to happen. After the LSS team analyses the results of the universal screening, and identifies the students who need intervention, a first meeting is held with the parents of those students. The team of teachers and parents writes the Collaborative Action Plan as the first step in the intervention. Later on, for each progress monitoring (weekly or biweekly, the LSS team informs the family about the growth shown by the student and makes the adjustments to the intervention.
- b. Communication among teachers. Every teacher who works collaboratively in the student's action plan, must have a weekly contact (face meeting or written communication) with the other teachers in the team. Review meetings are mandatory after every universal screening is applied (3 times a year) with the purpose to celebrate growth and make intervention adjustments in the initial goals.



When a student has had a collaborative action plan and is moving up to the next grade level, the LSS team is in charge of passing down the information of the student to the new teacher (s) in the new grade level.

- d. Communication between houses. At the end of every school year, the LSS team, and the counsellors in each house meet in the month of May to share important information about the students who are moving up to the next house (Preparatory, sixth grade and eighth grade) regarding the SLP, the CAP, and any other important intervention process the student has gone through.