



Learning Diversity Policy

Latest Review: August 2023 - January 2024

Review cycle: 1 year

Next Review: January 2025



Wellspring Learning Community

Learning Diversity Policy

Contributors to the 2024 review:

Head of School – Kathleen Battah

Director of Learning and Teaching - Rita Zgheib

LD Coordinator – May Shbaklo

Senior Executive Assistant – Sereen Ajami

Related Policies:

Admissions Policy

Assessment Policy

Inclusion Policy

Promotion Policy

Teaching and Learning Policy

Approvals - names and signatures:

Chairperson of the Board

Head of School

Wellspring Learning Community

Learning Diversity Policy

Wellspring Learning Community's Mission Statement

Wellspring Learning Community aims to establish an inquiry-based learning environment in which students from diverse backgrounds are given every opportunity to optimize their social, emotional and academic capacities and talents. Our students will become confident, resourceful, creative, caring, responsible global and local citizens prepared to use their education to contribute in meaningful ways towards improving society, both locally and internationally.

Wellspring's Vision of Inclusion

Wellspring values diversity and recognizes uniqueness. Wellspring is committed to granting access and removing barriers according to programme limitations when appropriate. Wellspring promotes equitable high-quality learning for students.

Academic barriers are addressed within the classroom's delivery and learning methods for diverse students to meet grade-level expectations and grasp content. Wellspring, believes each student has the potential to achieve and move their learning forward. The school creates a nurturing and supportive environment that encourages students to pursue self-acceptance and personal growth. Students are empowered with tools, resources, and guidance to enhance and move forward in their academic, athletic, artistic, or community service endeavors. The IB curriculum facilitates the exploration of their interests and the development of skills.

There is no single concept or methodology to describe an inclusive approach to learning since needs are different. Wellspring aims to recognize inclusivity within the school's resources, expertise, and academic criteria. The primary goal is to create meaningful learning experiences that foster a sense of social belonging. The use of Individualized Education Plans (IEP), reasonable adjustments, resources, and accommodations are often effective in assisting many students in reaching their potential.

Despite adjustments to meet typical developmental and educational milestones, students may continue to face challenges. In such cases, specialized support, early intervention, or concerted efforts involving parents, home-based support, and external therapists may be necessary for a student to thrive and integrate as active members of the school community. After specific efforts of support have been exhausted, some students might require a more specialized approach than what a mainstream school, such as Wellspring, can offer. Consequently, a student who requires a more specialized day school or an intensive learning structure tailored to specific needs, will be advised to seek a better suited learning environment.

Accommodations at Wellspring

Wellspring is capable of accommodating mild to moderate cognitive, social and emotional challenges that impact learning. The Learning Diversity (LD) Department is dedicated to assist

students who face learning challenges such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, specific numeracy difficulties, mild ADHD, test-taking anxiety, and those needing mild support in social communication and interaction.

The LD team provide modification, differentiation, and accommodation depending on curriculum requirements and student's needs. In addition, the LD Department conducts ongoing assessments across various subjects such as English, Arabic, and Math. These evaluations support individual strengths and challenges, guiding the team in tailoring specific support and interventions.

Structure and Objectives of the Learning Diversity Department

The Learning Diversity (LD) Department at Wellspring is led by LD Coordinators who oversee the Primary, Middle, and Secondary schools. Besides the coordinator, the LD department team consists of:

- **LD teachers:** (Special Ed Teachers)
- **Subject specific support teachers**

The LD Department team collaborate with parents, school leaders, counselors, teachers, ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers, and external professionals to meet the following objectives:

- Foster a positive learning environment that celebrates diversity and encourages empathy, respect, and understanding
- Identify students who require support to enhance their learning development
- Implement and advocate for universal design principles to create learning materials and environments accessible to students
- Develop students' autonomy and affirmation of self-identity
- Guide teachers with proper access arrangements
- Involve parents, therapists (when applicable) and students in decision making and the learning process to develop strong partnerships
- Implement strategies or programs and provide appropriate resources to identify and accommodate the needs of students requiring support, such as regular screenings, assessments, collaborative discussions with the school team and parents or tailored reading programs
- Apply strategies and differentiated opportunities into each unit removing barriers and improving students' capacities, potential and access
- Explain how differentiated approaches to learning are integrated into the curriculum, mentioning specific techniques or resources employed to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities
- Establish a system for continuous monitoring and evaluation for improvement of the LD Department's strategies and services to ensure they remain effective and responsive to evolving student needs
- Elaborate on the types of access arrangements provided to teachers, ensuring they have the necessary tools, training, and support to cater to diverse students effectively

- Develop and offer targeted interventions or support programs to enhance social-emotional skills, resilience, and mental wellbeing for students facing learning challenges
- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and staff to enhance their understanding of diverse learning needs and effective strategies for inclusive education

The LD team collaborates with grade level teachers from different disciplines to provide the academic support needed for students. LD staff members also collaborate with Wellspring's guidance counselors and ESL team to ensure that the student is supported academically, socially, and emotionally.

Academic Access for Diverse Students across the Wellspring Curriculum

Wellspring strongly values inclusion while upholding transparency regarding the school's capacity to make limited adjustments or adaptations, especially within the context of the academically demanding International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. Modifications and accommodations may be made to subject content, instruction and assessments depending on the needs and aptitudes of individual students. Provisions for learning diversity in the Middle Years Programme (MYP) and the Diploma Programme (DP) are very limited in comparison to the services offered in the Primary Years Programme. This is especially true regarding intensive modifications, complete removal of content, exclusive one-on-one instructional delivery, or comprehensive assessment accommodations. The Lebanese program offered in parallel to the IB in Middle and Secondary Schools, maybe more accommodating. At the end of Grade 5, students with LD cases will be assessed individually to determine suitability and appropriate course of action for moving to the MYP.

LD Support Services

The LD support services are designed to support and remove barriers when applicable and within curriculum guidelines. These services provide specialized assistance and resources tailored to address the specific challenges. LD support services aim to encourage academic progress by offering personalized support within the school's program limitations.

- **Individualized Educational Program (IEP):** The development of an IEP is a collaborative process between teachers, the LD team, external professionals (if applicable) and parents. It highlights the student's strengths and documents the overall educational program with clear and measurable objectives as a supplement to or *en lieu* of the school's regular curriculum and reporting system.
- **Inclusive Access Arrangements:** Inclusive Access Arrangements refer to accommodations or adjustments made in educational settings to ensure equitable access and support for students with diverse learning needs. These arrangements aim to provide necessary accommodations, differentiation, modifications, or support mechanisms to enable all students, regardless of their abilities or challenges, to participate effectively in learning activities and assessments.

- **Reasonable Adjustments:** These are changes or additional conditions to the assessment process that may not be standard or covered in the list of inclusive access arrangements.
- **Push-in (in class):** This support consists of differentiation of content, instructional processes, assessments and learning environment provisions, resources, extra tools, cues, and access arrangements according to curriculum requirements, academic content, student needs, strengths, and interests. LD support teachers collaborate with classroom teachers to reasonably differentiate within the class setting to cover and understand the same content.
- **Pullout:** Whenever additional support or remediation **outside the classroom** is required, the LD team and parent(s) will agree upon the frequency and suitability of pullout sessions when applicable. The content of the pullout sessions is recorded in a log in which the LD teacher logs the objectives, strategies and activities used, and their reflections.
- **Follow-up with External Services:** When students receive support from therapists or other professionals outside of school, the LD Department is committed to liaising transparently with external professionals to maximize the benefit of the student's continuing success within the school environment.
- **Preparation of School File for External Examination Accommodations:** The LD Department liaises with the appropriate governing body or official testing office such as the IB, SAT, or Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education MEHE (Grade 9 Brevet, Grade 12 BACC) to seek inclusive assessment accommodations or a total exemption for students enrolled in Wellspring's LD department. The LD and the registrar's office prepare individual files of required reports, which must be submitted within the prescribed deadlines by parents.

Specialized LD Support Services

Shadow Teacher: Certain students may require individualized support in addition to what the LD department can offer. Thus, the shadow teacher is hired by the parents to accompany the student all the time. They support the student in the learning process, helping them focus and interact positively in the classroom environment. The shadow teacher coordinates with and reports to the LD Coordinator.

Virtual Learning Support (VLS): The LD teacher will support the students enrolled in the LD department and others facing difficulties coping with the Virtual Learning (VL) requirements whenever needed. The support consists of individual or group sessions (depending on the students' needs and after consulting with the teachers and the LD Department).

Learning Diversity in the PYP

Not all LD students require an IEP. For those that require an IEP, it can be tailored for specific subjects, or across all subjects.

LD support services offered at Wellspring vary in intensity depending on need:

- Push-in support (frequency based on needs)
- Pullout sessions (frequency based on needs)
- Classroom accommodations provided by the LD teacher
- Access arrangements
- LD differentiated instruction

In some cases, LD students may need further intensive support as such:

- Shadow teacher (hired by the parents) who collaborates with the LD team
- Intensive modification of the general curriculum - In this case, the parents approve that the student cannot be considered for the rigorous MYP/DP programs which start in grade 6.

Before arranging for support services, parents will meet with the LD Coordinator and the Principal to discuss the student's needs and subsequent action plan. Once the parents agree to the student's enrollment in the LD department, monthly fees besides the regular school tuition and school fees may be applicable. Services will begin after the final financial agreement has been signed by the parents.

Learning Diversity in the MYP/DP

The Middle and Secondary School LD department focuses on the consolidation of learning strategies and skills. Students are granted access and support as needed and in alignment with the IB Access and Inclusion policy. The LD department collaborates closely with parents and liaises with external specialists as needed. In addition, the department compiles and completes all required documentation for students eligible for exemption or accommodation in the Lebanese or DP examinations.

Documentation and Confidentiality of LD Files

Each student registered with the LD department will have a confidential LD file. Access to this file is only available to the Head of School, the Director of Learning and Teaching and the LD Coordinator. Documentation of all communication and meeting minutes with parents are filed in the student's LD file along with copies or scans of confidential reports from external professionals.

LD Referral Process

Current Wellspring Students

Teachers are usually the first to notice learning diversity needs and report them. Having said this, any faculty member who has concerns regarding a student's learning diversity should also report this. The reporting faculty member fills in an electronic referral form, which the LD coordinator, the Director of Learning & Teaching and the Principal automatically receive. The LD team then observes the student in various classroom settings for at least 2 to 3 weeks.

If the concerns are validated, parents will be called in for a meeting. The next step will be to set a plan of action to meet the students' needs. The intensity of the support will be decided by the

LD department, with the parent's approval. A contract will then be signed, and the student will begin receiving LD services.

Parents may also contact the LD Department to share their concerns and ask for help.

New to Wellspring (new applicants with LD)

Families interested in having their child join Wellspring must apply to the electronic platform "Open Apply" on the school's website: www.wellspring.edu.lb. Parents whose children have learning diversity needs are requested to disclose any concern or official diagnosis on the application form and upload current psycho-educational assessment reports, medical or other reports from specialists or registered therapists that reveal the history of the child, diagnosis, and recommendations. All information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Once received, admissions will review the application, and the Director of Admissions will set an appointment for a meeting with the Wellspring academic team. Should the candidate demonstrate difficulty or discomfort with completing the interview, a second interview using standardized testing tools may be required before a final decision is issued.

Applicants who present medical or psycho-educational reports that support the child's diagnosis or the need for access arrangements will be encouraged to join the LD department (at additional fees) to receive special academic accommodations. Acceptance is contingent on Wellspring's ability to cater to the child's needs and to space availability within the LD department. All special cases, documentation and interviews are handled with utmost discretion. Interviews are conducted by the Head of School, Learning Diversity Coordinator and Counselor. Once the evaluation of the applicant's status is completed and Wellspring's ability to attend to those needs is confirmed, the applicant will be granted full acceptance.

The new student will join a regular class with other students of varying academic and social abilities. The new student will be observed by the school LD team for the first month of school before initiating an individualized education plan (IEP) with individualized goals and skills. Depending on the grade level, the student will be assigned an LD teacher who will follow their learning. Students will be granted all necessary accommodation.

Exiting the LD Program

The student's academic performance and progress are consistently evaluated. If the student demonstrates sufficient progress and autonomy, indicating reduced reliance on LD support, the LD Coordinator, in consultation with parents, teachers, and the Principal, will collectively decide on the student's exit from LD services. A comprehensive exit checklist will be finalized upon mutual agreement, and the LD Coordinator will inform the accounting department.

Re-enrollment in the LD Program

At the end of the 1st term of LD enrollment, the school will meet with the student's parents to evaluate progress and decide the continued suitability of Wellspring's LD intervention and the IB curriculum.