



AMERICAN OVERSEAS  
SCHOOL OF ROME

**HANDBOOK OF SERVICES  
FOR STUDENTS WITH  
SPECIAL NEEDS**



**Rome, Italy  
2016**

## **What is our mission?**

The purpose of the American Overseas School of Rome (AOSR) is to offer an excellent educational program to the English speaking community of Rome. It seeks to create a harmonious atmosphere within which an international student body learns to interact, work and play together in an American educational system. A caring and thoughtful school environment supports academic rigor. AOSR has always respected students with learning differences. For this reason, it was the first school in Italy to develop a resource department to provide a support system for students with learning disabilities in order to ensure their academic success.

## **Whom do we serve?**

The resource department serves children experiencing difficulties with the learning and processing of information. A student with a learning disability may experience difficulty listening, speaking, remembering, reading, writing, and/or problem solving. The learning disability creates a discrepancy between the student's potential ability and actual performance. Learning disabilities are seen at all levels of cognitive ability and students with specific learning disabilities often possess excellent abilities in many other areas of learning (e.g. abstract reasoning, long-term memory, sequencing, reading comprehension, visual spatial skills, musical talents, etc.). Children with attention deficits may be included in this category.

## **What are the admission procedures for new students with previously documented learning disabilities?**

Adequate information provided prior to the student's admission ensures that the student is immediately integrated into a suitable special needs program. When applying for admission to AOSR, parents are required to inform the school of any pre-existing special needs or special help the student has received in the areas of reading, counseling and special education. Results of individualized psychological testing, as well as an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Section 504 Plan or comparable documentation, must be shared with the school, so that informed decisions regarding acceptance and placement may be made.

Admission of a student with a learning disability is determined individually on a case-by-case basis. Members of the Student Support Team (SST) review cases in collaboration with the administration and admissions office. A team decision is made based on the student's particular needs and the services the resource program can provide. If the resource program is unable to provide a particular service, admission may be contingent upon the agreement that the student's family pays for any additional services beyond the capabilities of the school. These may include diagnostic testing, counseling, speech or occupational therapy.

In the case of students with moderate to severe learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral problems, or students with physical disabilities requiring wheelchairs or other physical aids, AOSR is unable to provide an appropriate program.

## **How does AOSR address the learning needs of students experiencing difficulties?**

Student Support Teams (SST) meet weekly to discuss students who are struggling (academically, behaviorally or emotionally), review referrals, and create action plans.

The Elementary Student Support Team (SST) consists of the resource specialists, reading specialist, school principal, elementary school coordinator, school counselor, and the child's classroom teacher/s.

The Secondary Student Support Team (SST) consists of the resource specialist, reading specialist, school principal, middle school coordinator, college counselor, and school counselor.

### **Resource Specialist – Pre-K to Grade 5**

Two full-time resource specialists for pre-K to grade 5 are responsible for providing instructional support to students with mild learning disabilities. Those who qualify for the resource program are students who, despite appropriate instruction, have not been able to acquire age-appropriate skills.

An important aspect of the resource specialist's role is to implement and coordinate each student's special education program and facilitate communication among members of the Student Support Team (SST) and the student's teachers. Instructional programs are developed as a result of appropriate testing, administered either at school or by outside specialists. Through collaboration, learning goals in the form of an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) are developed and implemented.

### **Resource Specialist – Middle and High School**

One full-time resource specialist for middle and high school is responsible for providing support to students with mild learning disabilities. Students who qualify as a result of diagnostic testing are given periods of resource instruction, scheduled into their timetable, for which they receive elective credits based on a pass/fail grading policy. Communication and collaboration with the students' teachers, differentiation of instruction, and parent communication are all crucial roles of the resource specialist to ensure academic success. An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is developed, implemented and reviewed annually to ensure the continued growth and achievement of the student.

An important aspect of the middle and high school resource program is to support students' development of effective, personalized study skills and to teach them to become advocates for their unique educational needs. The resource specialist, in this latter role, provides activities, readings and discussions that allow students to learn and practice self-advocacy skills.

## **Reading Specialist**

One full-time reading specialist for grades pre-K to grade 12, works with students who qualify for additional reading services, usually as the result of referral and diagnostic testing. These students are generally two years behind grade level in some area of reading, or are experiencing difficulty coping with the grade level expectations in Language Arts. Prescriptive programs are developed and individualized instruction is provided in the least restrictive environment, so that students develop the skills necessary to be successful in the regular classroom. The reading specialist consults with students, teachers and families regarding students' reading needs and collaborates with the Student Support Team, speech and language pathologists, and occupational therapists, regarding program planning and implementation.

## **School Counselors**

The school employs two full-time school counselors (a school counselor and a college counselor) who contribute to the development and implementation of individualized educational programs for students with special needs. They also work with any students experiencing problems in the educational environment. These may include difficulties with learning, social relationships and/or emotional problems. School counselors engage in observations of individual students, design and implement behavior management programs, and advise teachers and Student Support Team (SST) members on interventions and instructional strategies that may positively influence a student's academic and social-emotional development. Individual and small group counseling, as well as consultations with family members and outside professionals, are also provided as needed.

## **What other services are available at AOSR?**

The school works closely with outside consultants including psychologists, speech and language pathologists and occupational therapists. The parents of a student identified by the Student Support Teams (SST) as requiring any of these services are encouraged to seek assistance from an appropriate consulting specialist.

The school offers the opportunity for outside speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists and Italian language logopedists to provide evaluation, assessment and therapy to students on campus during the school day. These consultants provide initial screenings at no extra cost to families. Additional services and follow-up therapy are contracted privately by parents and are paid for by the individual family, embassy or corporation.

Resource personnel collaborate with outside specialists as needed to best meet the needs of the students.

## **What are the Referral Procedures?**

### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (Grades Pre-K to 5)**

#### **What is the pre-referral process for elementary school?**

Pre-referral activities are interventions or actions implemented by the teacher to remediate student's learning or behavioral difficulties within the regular classroom setting. During this process, the classroom teacher reviews student records and confers with the student's parents/guardians and past teachers to discuss concerns and gather information. At times, members of the SST and/or an outside consultant (such as an occupational therapist) are asked to observe the student and make recommendations for classroom interventions.

#### **How is the referral process initiated in elementary school?**

If further evaluation or intervention is indicated, the classroom teacher completes the Pre-Referral Information Sheet and initiates the formal referral process through the Student Support Team (SST). A vision screening is completed to determine whether or not visual acuity is contributing to or causing the student's difficulties. These results, along with the completed Pre-Referral Information Sheet, interventions previously applied and work samples that support noted concerns, are collected by the resource specialist. The completed documents are presented to members of the SST who then discuss and determine appropriate further action.

#### **Who refers students to the Student Support Team (SST) for review in elementary school?**

Parents, teachers, administrators, the school nurse, school counselors or students themselves may refer a student experiencing difficulties (academically, behaviorally or emotionally) to the SST. If someone other than the classroom teacher identifies the student's difficulties, the teacher must still be involved.

#### **What happens after referral in elementary school?**

The SST reviews and discusses each referred child's specific needs. The SST may recommend and implement further interventions, organize parent-school partnerships, and/or recommend outside evaluation for testing (speech, occupational therapy, psycho-educational, etc.).

### **What are the entry criteria for resource services in elementary school?**

Entry criteria are based on a significant discrepancy between ability and achievement in one or more of the following areas:

- ♦ Reading skills
- ♦ Math Skills
- ♦ Communication Skills (written or oral)
- ♦ Organizational Skills /Attention
- ♦ Processing Abilities

Students who are at, near or above expected grade levels are not considered to demonstrate significant difficulties and are, therefore, not eligible for special services.

### **SECONDARY SCHOOL (Grades 6 to 12)**

#### **What is the pre-referral process in secondary school?**

Pre-referral activities are interventions or actions implemented by the content area teachers to remediate student learning or behavioral difficulties within the general classroom setting. Content area teachers confer with members of the Student Support Team (SST) and parents to discuss concerns, gather information and implement interventions.

#### **How is the referral process initiated in secondary school?**

If further evaluation or intervention is needed, the SST initiates the formal referral process. The SST will request content area teachers to complete the Secondary SST Referral Form. The completed forms, along with student work samples, teacher anecdotes and educational history documents appropriate to the student's need are reviewed by an SST member and discussed during the SST meetings.

#### **Who refers students to the Student Support Team (SST) for review in secondary school?**

Parents, content area teachers, administrators, school nurses, counselors, or students themselves may refer a student suspected of having learning disabilities to the SST.

#### **What happens after referral in secondary school?**

A member of the SST gathers the completed forms, along with student work samples, teacher anecdotes and educational history documents appropriate to the student's concern. The SST reviews and discusses the findings. Based on the individual student's need, the SST may implement further interventions, organize parent-school partnerships, or recommend outside evaluation for testing (speech, occupational therapy, psycho-educational, etc.).

### **What are the entry criteria for resource services in secondary school?**

If the SST concludes that resource services are necessary to support student progress, parents will be required to provide recent documentation from a proper specialist or initiate a new outside evaluation. The SST works with the family to contact appropriate outside specialists.

Once the outside evaluation is received, the SST reviews it and makes a determination. Entry criteria are based on a significant discrepancy between ability and achievement in one or more of the following areas:

- ♦ Reading skills
- ♦ Math Skills
- ♦ Communication Skills (written or oral)
- ♦ Organizational Skills /Attention
- ♦ Processing Abilities

### **What are the primary goals of resource services?**

The purpose of resource services is to provide direct, individualized and small-group instruction in specific learning strategies, document and evaluate student progress, and consult with school-based staff.

The instructional services are not solely tutorial but include individualized instruction in learning skills/strategies that lead to independent functioning in the regular program, using adaptive techniques to assist students in applying skills and strategies to content areas, and modified instruction in specific academic or behavioral areas that impact academic performance.

The resource specialist creates Individual Learning Programs (ILPs) for students in the resource program, defining academic and behavioral goals, which are reviewed on an annual basis. ILPs additionally document the ongoing student progress throughout the year and provide testing accommodations and modifications for content area teachers to implement in the general education setting. ILPs are created with teacher, parent and student input and are reviewed, revised and discussed with parents, teachers, specialists, administration and students at the annual meeting.

The resource specialist consults and assists school-based staff on specific strategies, adaptations, coordination of instructional programs, classroom modifications and testing accommodations to enable student success in the classroom and make progress toward his/her ILP goals.

### **What is done as a follow-up?**

The resource specialist reviews and updates student ILPs at least once annually to discuss the student's program, review academic progress, make recommendations and implement changes to the ILP. The resource specialist maintains ongoing communication with parents and content area teachers throughout the school year to support achievement and development in and outside of school.

### **What are the exit criteria?**

Exit criteria may include, but are not limited to, achievement in core subjects at his/her grade level and success in reaching goals as stated in the ILP.

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*\*Italian Native – In order to receive accommodations in the “Quinta” and/or “Media” exams, a diagnosis of a specific LD (disturbo di apprendimento) from an ASL accredited agency is required.*

**For more information,  
please contact a member of the  
Resource and Counseling Department.**

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