Glossary

We acknowledge that the international school communities are made up of people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Language used in everyday interactions is dynamic, however, we also strongly believe that language shapes culture and advocates for changes.

In these standards, we have decided to use one set of language to keep it consistent. However, we understand that these terms may not fit within the context of your school, country, or culture, so please feel free to use the terms that best suit your needs. We hope that the adaptation of some of this language we propose will help to promote a school culture that is more informed and accepting of the neurodivergent population.

We see great value in working collaboratively with schools in your region to agree on terminology to create consistency for all community members.

A

Ableism

Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability.

Accommodations & Modifications

Accommodations are changes to the learning environment and/or assessments that help students access the same material as their peers. They do not change what a student learns or the academic expectations, but rather how the student learns and demonstrates their knowledge. Modifications involve significant changes to the curriculum itself, altering what the student is expected to learn, altering the content, performance level, and/or assessment criteria. Modifications are reserved for very specific and rare situations. These changes must be agreed upon by the entire team, including parents, Student Support Coordinator and Principal as they can impact the student's educational trajectory, potentially influencing their diploma path.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is technology used by individuals with disabilities or a neurodivergence in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible.

B

Barriers to Learning

A barrier to learning is any aspect of a curriculum's design that hinders a student's ability to access, process, or demonstrate learning.

Best Practice

Best practice is a method or technique that has been generally accepted as superior to any alternatives and it is implied that it is research-based as well.

C

Case Manager

A case manager is a trusted professional who leads the Student Support team around the child. The main purpose of this role is to gather information and make sure that the child's needs are being met with the appropriate resources.

This case manager role can be sourced internally or externally to the school and should not be filled by parents; although, this is often the case with children of highly mobile families whose constant support is their parents.

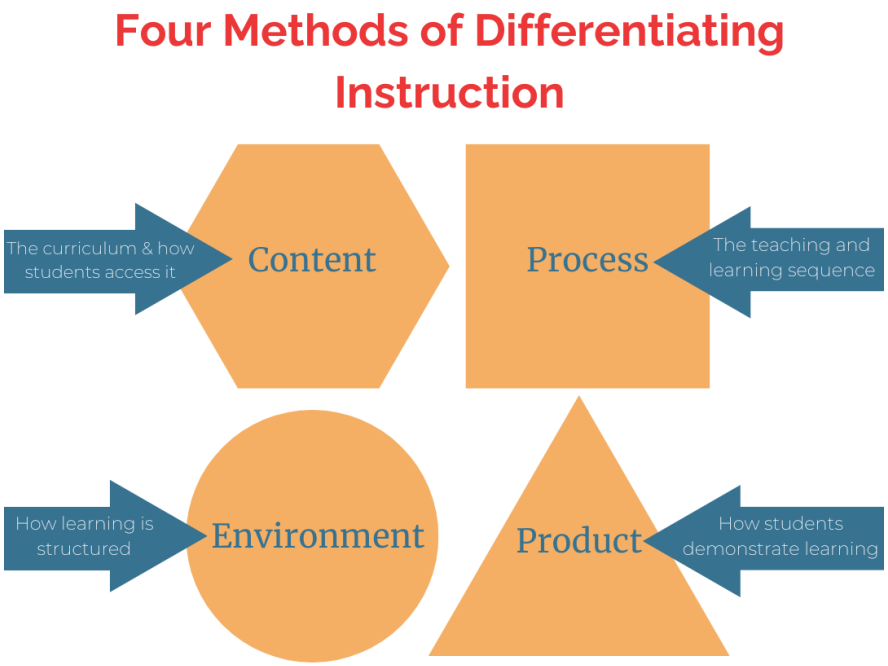
Co-Teaching

Co-teaching is an educational method that involves two teachers working together to plan, teach, and assess one group of students.

D

Differentiation

Differentiation is the process of tailoring instruction to meet the needs of all students. Differentiation can be made in four areas:



Adapted from Tomlinson & Maker (1982)

Disability

The UN currently defines a disability as “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

E

Evidence Based

Effective educational strategies supported by evidence and research.

I

Inclusion

The American Psychological Association defines inclusion as "an environment that offers affirmation, celebration, and appreciation of different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences, thus allowing all individuals to bring in their whole selves (and all their identities) and to demonstrate their strengths and capacity."

Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

The individualised plan created by the school lays out the specific instruction, learning, assessment, and services a student needs to thrive in school. This plan typically includes Present Levels of Performance, student strengths, academic/behavioral/social emotional areas of need, amount of services provided, and goals for each identified need.

Interventions

Planned, targeted supports provided in addition to core instruction to address identified student needs. Interventions are selected based on data, delivered with consistency, monitored over time, and adjusted according to a student's progress and response to support. They may address academic, social, emotional, behavioural, communication, or executive functioning needs.

L

Laws of Transition

In Doug Ota's book, Safe Passage: How mobility affects people & what international schools should do about it, he outlines Six Laws of Transition. These six laws of transition are a roadmap for international schools to understand how negative transitions across cultures and/or schools impact learning, and conversely, how well-managed transitions can add significant value to the learning journey.

Learning Objectives

Clear and measurable statements that communicate the intended knowledge, skills, understandings, or competencies students are expected to develop through a learning experience. Learning objectives support intentional planning, promote transparency, and help educators and students monitor progress toward meaningful learning outcomes.

Least Restrictive Supports

Taken from the laws of special education in the United States, least restrictive supports mean the condition or environment which maximises the opportunity for self-determination and community integration according to the individual capabilities and needs of each student.

M

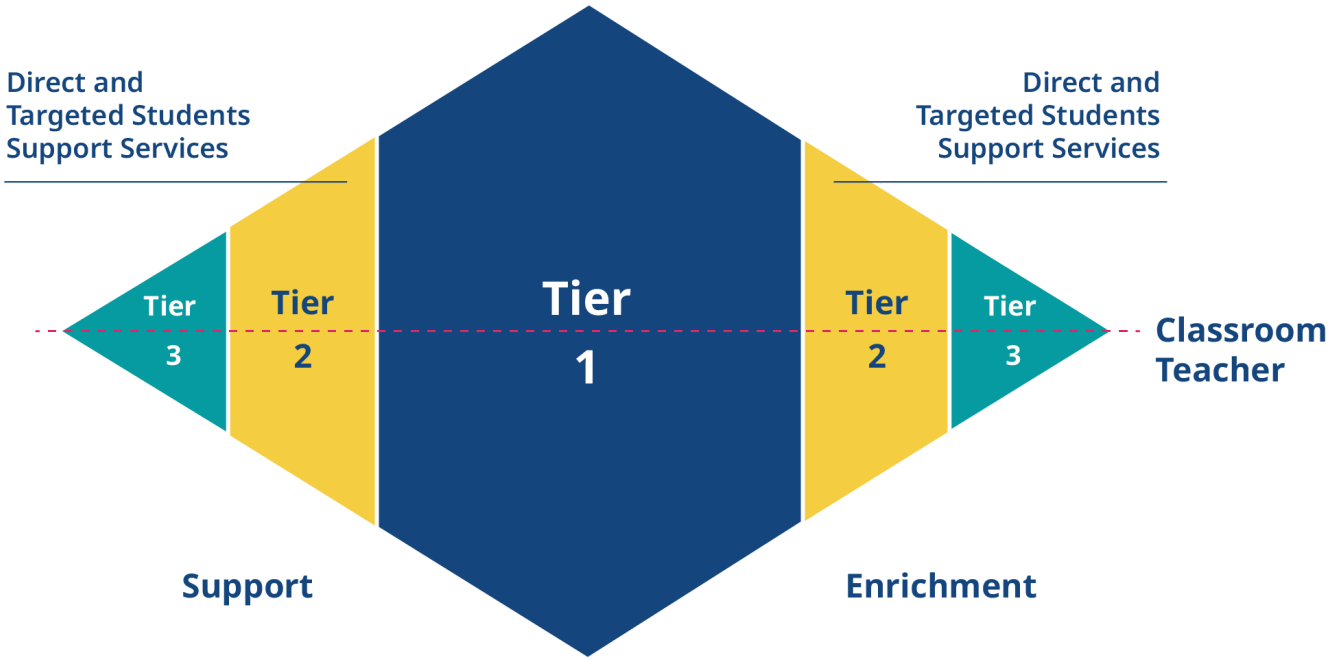
Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Understood.org defines MTSS as a whole-school, data-driven framework used to identify and support students who need help with academic, behavioral, social, or emotional needs. It uses three progressive levels (tiers) of support:

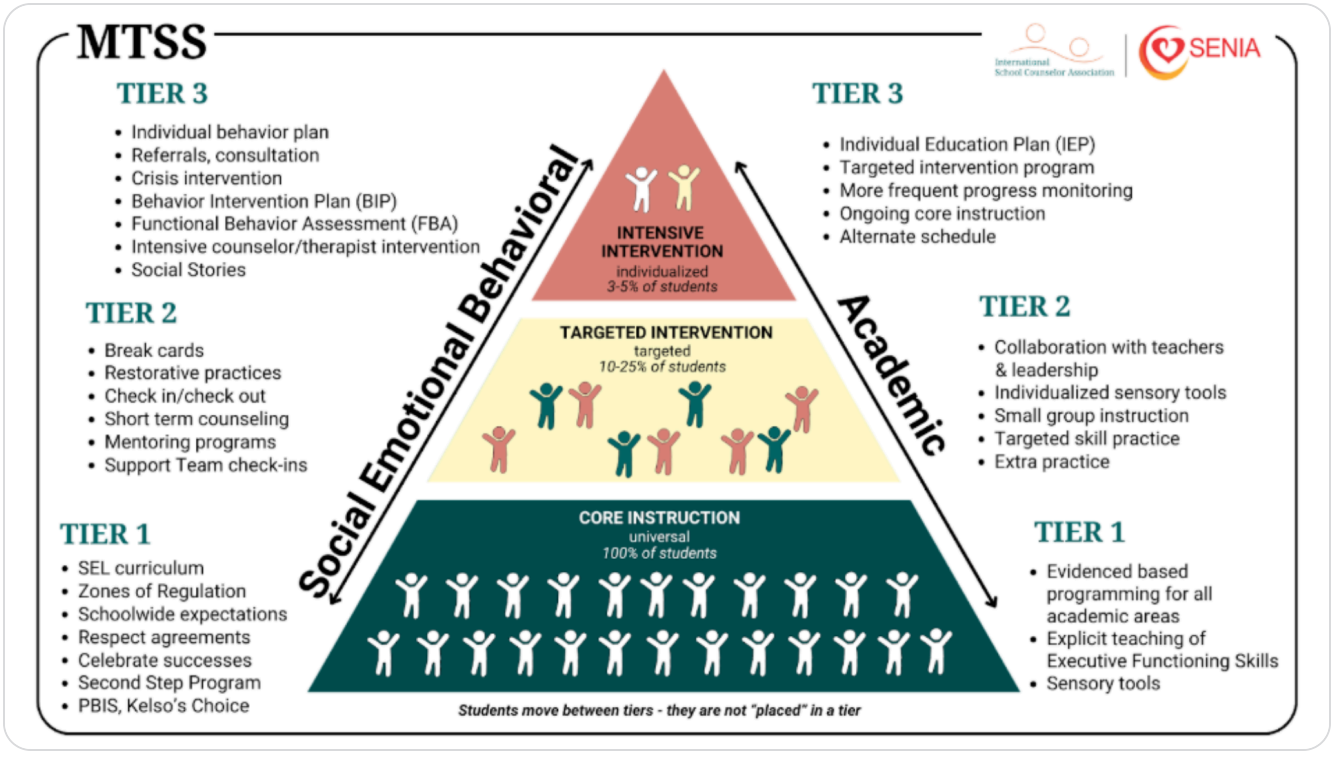
Tier 1 (Universal): High-quality, whole-class instruction and support given to all students.

Tier 2 (Targeted): Focused, small-group interventions for students who are falling behind.

Tier 3 (Intensive): Highly individualized, one-on-one support for students with severe or complex needs. (https://www.understood.org/en/articles/mtss-what-you-need-to-know)



Adapted from Anita Churchville "Expanded Model of MTSS"



Created in cooperation between SENIA and ISCA.

N

Neurodiverse

A single person cannot be "neurodiverse"—diversity requires a group. For example, while a person can belong to a specific ethnicity, only a group can be ethnically diverse.

Neurodivergent

- The concept of neurodiversity is the idea that variations of the brain are natural human differences and should be valued, not stigmatized.
- Refers to an individual whose brain functions differently from what is considered "typical" (e.g., autism, ADHD, dyslexia).
- Can be used as an adjective ("She is neurodivergent") or a noun ("He's a neurodivergent").

Neurodiverse

- Refers to a group with varied neurological functioning.
- Example: "The classroom is neurodiverse, with both neurotypical and neurodivergent students."

Neurodiversity celebrates the strengths and unique perspectives that neurodivergent individuals bring.

O

Outside service providers

Individuals that provide services to students that cannot be provided through in-house hires. These may include speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counselling, psychologists, etc.

P

Parents

In the standards listed, the word parents is used to encompass the full group of people that may be caring for a child or young person. It is fully acknowledged that parents are not the only caregivers included in the lives of children and young people. Parents are also a vital member of the Student Support Team

Pathways

Pathway programs are those that create multiple pathways to appropriate education, training, further education, and successful work placement.

Personalised Safety Protocol

Students are provided with affirmative, responsive, trauma-informed and person-centred care.

A personalised safety protocol documents a procedure to prioritise and promote safety and security in students who experience distress due to sensory processing differences or trauma-based triggers. This protocol also considers safety and security in those interacting with the student experiencing distress.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is a systematic method used to assess students' academic, behaviour and social-emotional progress, examine rate of improvement, and evaluate effectiveness of the instruction or intervention.

R

Response to Intervention (RTI)

RTI is a portion of MTSS which refers to a specific intervention process in which an intervention is put into place for a finite period of time while documenting the student's progress.

S

Sensory Friendly Environments

A sensory-friendly area is a quiet, accessible space within the school designed to reduce sensory input and support self-regulation, particularly for students who are neurodivergent, highly sensitive, or experiencing stress or overload. These spaces are proactive tools for inclusion, not just reactive responses to crises.

Social and Medical Models of Disability

According to People with Disabilities in Australia, "'disability' is a health condition dealt with by medical professionals. People with disabilities are thought to be different to 'what is normal' or abnormal. 'Disability' is seen to be a problem of the individual. From the medical model, a person with disability is in need of being fixed or cured. From this point of view, disability is a tragedy and people with disability are to be pitied. The medical model of disability is all about what a person cannot do and cannot be.

The social model sees 'disability' as the result of the interaction between people living with impairments and an environment filled with physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers. It therefore carries the implication that the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment must change to enable people living with impairments to participate in society on an equal basis with others."

Student Support

Teachers and teaching assistants that work directly with students with disabilities and/or neurodiversities. The main role of the Student Support professionals is to provide instruction and support which facilitates participation in the classroom. They typically also serve as case managers and are responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of students' ILPs.

Student Support Team (SST)

The student support team is a team of staff dedicated to identifying students who exhibit academic or behavioural challenges and supporting classroom teachers to provide systematic interventions, document the progress, and report back to the team to make further recommendations and decisions.

An SST can also be created to be the champions of an individual student. Members of this student specific SST are made up of individuals who bring different perspectives and expertise to the table to craft an individualised response to a specific student's needs, taking into account that same student's strengths and talents. Parents are included in this team and as early as possible, students themselves should be members of their own teams.

Supplemental Curriculum

Supplemental curricula are used to support students who require additional help beyond the school's core curriculum to reach their full potential. These resources do not replace grade-level instruction but are provided in addition to it, offering targeted interventions to address specific learning needs.

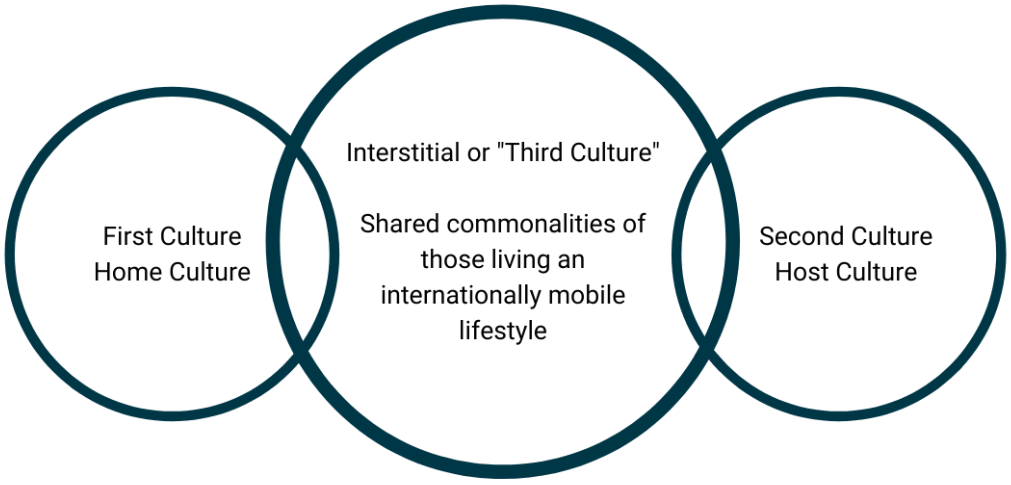
T

Teaching Assistants

Teaching assistants can be known as teaching assistants, learning assistants, paraprofessionals, shadow teachers and many other versions of the word. Teaching assistants perform many duties, but in the context of Student Support, teaching assistants typically work directly with students receiving additional services and provide support in their daily and educational activities.

Third Culture Kid (TCK) Model

Third culture kids or transnational students are those that bring their home and host cultures together to create their own personal experience. This idea was published in Growing up among worlds by Ruth Van Reken and David Pollock. Adapted with permission.



Reken, R. V. E., Pollock, M., V., & Pollock, D. C. (2017). Third Culture Kids 3rd Edition: Growing up among worlds (3rd ed.). Nicholas Brealey.

U

Universal Design

Universal design is the process of creating products that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, and other characteristics.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL is a framework created by CAST. "UDL guides the design of learning experiences to proactively meet the needs of all learners. When you use UDL, you assume that barriers to learning are in the design of the environment, not in the student."

V

Vulnerable Groups

Learners who are affected by poverty, violence, abuse, discrimination, and other disadvantaged backgrounds often have a lower-than-average chance of completing school with success. Identifying vulnerable groups is essential to ensure early identification and assessment of different capacities.