



**SST**  
**Student Support Handbook**  
**GAA**  
**K-12**





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## GAA Mission Statement

GEMS American Academy is a diverse and caring international learning community offering a rigorous, relevant and holistic education.

We develop global citizens who have the confidence and conviction to pursue their dreams and impact the world.

## Service Model

GEMS American Academy- Abu Dhabi accepts students who are English Language Learners (ELL) and/or children with learning differences who require Learning Support (LS) services, and/or students who have been identified as Gifted, Talented and High Ability Learners. In addition, GAA offers a counseling program that promotes learning.

**English Language Learners at GAA** offers a program of study that allows students to gain life-long learning skills and prepare themselves for higher education. With the collaboration of recognized international accrediting agencies, the curriculum is reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect current pedagogical research and best practices of international schools. An English-medium school, GAA facilitates, through a coteaching model, the attainment of English proficiency by students whose native language is not English. Instructional Coaches and/or ELL specialists are dedicated to these goals, and are continuously developing their knowledge, skills, and abilities accordingly.

**Learning Support at GAA** offers support to students with learning differences in a variety of settings using a variety of methodologies based on individual needs. A **Success Plan** may be developed for students in need of targeted interventions that are either group or individual in nature. For students who require intensive intervention, an **Individual Education Plan** (IEP) will be developed and outside assessment(s) may be required. Instructional Coaches and/or LS specialists are dedicated to these goals, and are continuously developing their knowledge, skills, and abilities accordingly.

The needs of exceptional learners are met through differentiated instruction in the regular classroom for identified students. Students may qualify for the Gifted, Talented and High Ability Learner (HAL) differentiation at GAA. Giftedness refers to “a student who is in possession of untrained and spontaneously-expressed exceptional natural ability in one or more domains of human ability”. (ADEC Policy 2015 - 2016). An **Advanced Learning Plan** (ALP) must be completed for those students who are identified as Gifted.



**Counseling at GAA** is an effective international school counseling program that is comprehensive in scope, preventative in design and developmental in nature. Our counseling programs ensure all students K-12 know, understand, and are 'able to do' in the four domains areas: academics, career, personal/ social, and global perspectives. It is preventative in design in that it educates specific skills and learning outcomes in a proactive, preventative manner ensuring all student can achieve school success in the four domain areas. Our program is developmental in nature in that school counselors design school programs and services to meet the needs of students at various growth and developmental stages.

Our **inclusion/co-teach model** allows students to:

- Participate as equally as possible in educational opportunities
- Make effective academic progress
- Make a positive contribution to their local and international communities
- Develop and maintain their physical, mental, social, and emotional health
- Transition to further educational and vocational opportunities beyond school
- Develop thinking and analytical skills that will allow them to be creative, compassionate, lifelong learners

## **Student Support Team Philosophy**

The Support Team collaborates with students, families, the classroom teachers, and counselors (as needed), pushing into the mainstream classroom. Inclusion and co-teaching ensures education is accessible to all students regardless of age, race, gender, and abilities. Student Support Team specialists co-plan and co-teach in a differentiated classroom environment in order to cater to all students' needs through accommodation and adaptation of the GAA curriculum. Inclusion, as we are using the term at GAA, is a vital philosophical commitment of a caring learning community to the education of children with unique learning styles. In Elementary school, small group interventions are also done on a very specific basis for reading and math when a student is found to be performing 2 or more years below grade expectation. In Secondary, using multiple data points and based on team determination, students may be placed in a resource block in lieu of a World Language/Art. This is determined on a case by case basis with individual students.

GAA guiding principles require that school be a supportive and integrated learning community. These principles define a path towards creating an inclusive learning community.

1. All children can, do, and will learn.
2. Highly qualified teachers can teach most children through differentiation of their curriculum content.
3. The teacher is the most important architect of a child's learning environment.
4. Diversity enriches.
5. Strategies that define and comprise good teaching are applicable to all students.



6. Collaboration with teaching specialists enriches the delivery of classroom content.
7. GAA strongly advocates an inclusive approach for the education of all children. When it is in the interests of the student and the class, short-term interventions out of the regular classroom may be more effective in meeting some special needs, i.e LOI Reading Program in elementary school.

## Student Admissions Policies and Procedures

**Non-Discrimination Policy:** In its hiring and admission practices, GAA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or language, gender, sexual orientation or disability. (See GAA Policy Manual for full policy)

The principal considerations in admitting students with limited proficiency in English and/or learning differences to the GAA Student Support Services are:

1. GAA must have a high degree of confidence, using multiple data points, that it will be able to meet the academic, social, behavioral, and/or emotional needs of the student.
2. These needs can be met largely in an inclusive classroom environment with differentiation and the support of the teacher and Support Services Staff.
3. Admit students with limited English proficiency and/or special needs through registration process criteria for identification.
  - a. All applying students must take a GAA admissions test (MAPS)
  - b. Any student applying to GAA from a non-English curriculum must take a language screening test (WIDA).
  - c. Prior school records (including any previous assessment data and learning plans)
4. If the student is identified as having limited English skills and/or Learning Differences, they may be admitted if:
  - a. If required, parents will, at their own expense, supply additional supports so as to help their child make effective academic progress which may include (and not limited to):
    - 1a. Occupational Therapy
    - 2a. Speech and Language
    - 3a. Psych/ed evaluation
    - 4a. One-to-one Learning Support Assistant (LSA)
5. Should a student be admitted, the school will continue to evaluate the student's progress. Enrollment in GAA will always be dependent on the school's ability to meet that child's educational needs.
  - a. The student's learning differences and needs do not impede achievement of the overall learning objectives of the class.
6. There needs to be a high degree of parental support for GAA's program for the student.

## Student Support Team

The Student Support Team (SST) is a multidisciplinary team set up to identify and monitor the progress of identified students. Its purpose is to review strategies and goals as well as to recommend



and develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Accommodation Plan to meet the individual needs of all students.

Specific responsibilities include:

- Advisement in admission of students with Limited English Proficiency
- Advisement in admission of students with learning needs
- Discussion of assessment and observation of students
- Provide strategies to classroom teachers to meet diverse student needs
- Review considerations / placement for ELL, LS , LLI, and Gifted and High Ability Learners
- Recommendations for effective parent communication
- Referral for formal assessment
- Entrance into Student Support Services
- Monitor progress through achievable goals
- Support implementation of Learning Support Programs
- Review general program guidelines

Team members may include the Head of School, Principals, Student Support Coordinators, General Education Teachers, Instructional Coaches, Reading Interventionists, and Counselors. Additional consultation with GAA staff will be included as necessary.

## **Role and Responsibilities of the SST**

The primary function of the SST is to ensure that the needs of students are being met.

- The Student Support Team is central to the GAA development of teaching and learning conditions that meet the needs of all students
- The SST provides planning and programming for the school and for individual students through the coordination, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of academic programs

### **School planning**

The SST may consider the implications for school planning issues.

These may include:

- Effective use and coordination of resources within the school
- The effectiveness of a student's IEP Program planning and implementation, assessment, and reporting
- Collaborative approaches to the development of support programs for ELL, LS students, Gifted, Talented and High Ability Learners.
- Collaborative approaches with a classroom teacher to assist them in supporting students

### **Areas identified by the SST may include:**

Teaching and learning strategies  
Behavior management strategies  
School organization / Schedule



Teacher support and development  
Parent and community participation  
School systems and processes

GAA makes every effort to support students in the classroom setting (with the exception of KG) by providing support through differentiated instruction, adaptation, accommodation, and support in the classroom related to specific academic needs. GAA attempts to meet all students at their level. If the need arises, out of class support is available for short-term durations in elementary. Out of class support may be provided if:

- Data, such as MAP and WIDA, demonstrate that the student has very limited English proficiency
- Has outside documentation from a medical specialist that this should be an accommodation

This short-term support may include

- a. In-class small group instruction
- b. In-class one-to-one instruction
- c. Resource room (secondary)

School counselors assist in creating behavioral intervention plans.

GEMS GAA does **not** include speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and/or long-term counseling. If additional assessment of a student is required it is the parent's responsibility to have a cognitive assessment carried out in a timely fashion.

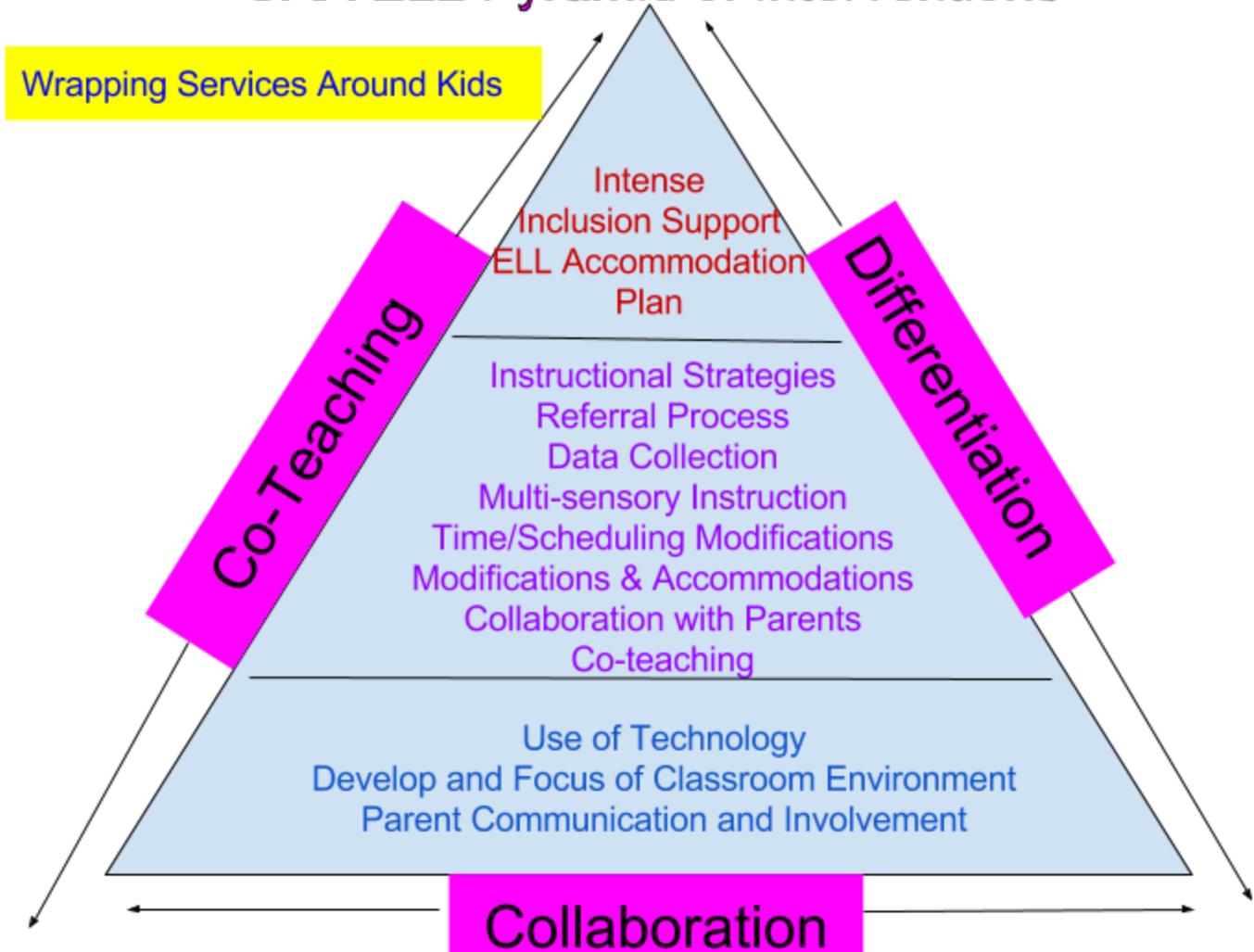
Once a student has received an assessment, GAA will implement the recommendations in the assessment to the best of its ability. Recommendations for speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and counseling therapy will be the responsibility of the parent and are to be completed during the course of the school year.



# **A 3-TIERED APPROACH TO MEETING STUDENT NEEDS**

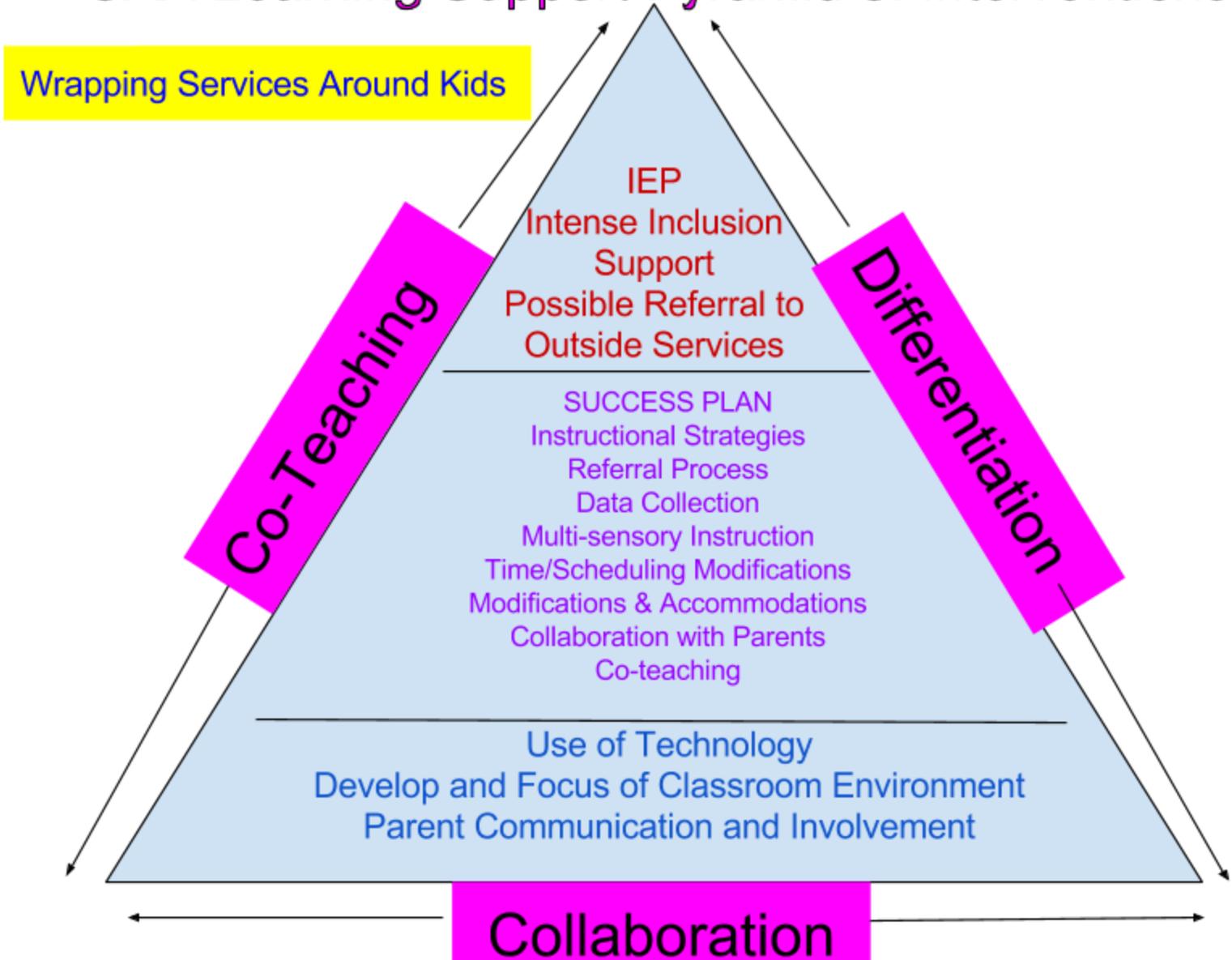


## GAA ELL Pyramid of Interventions



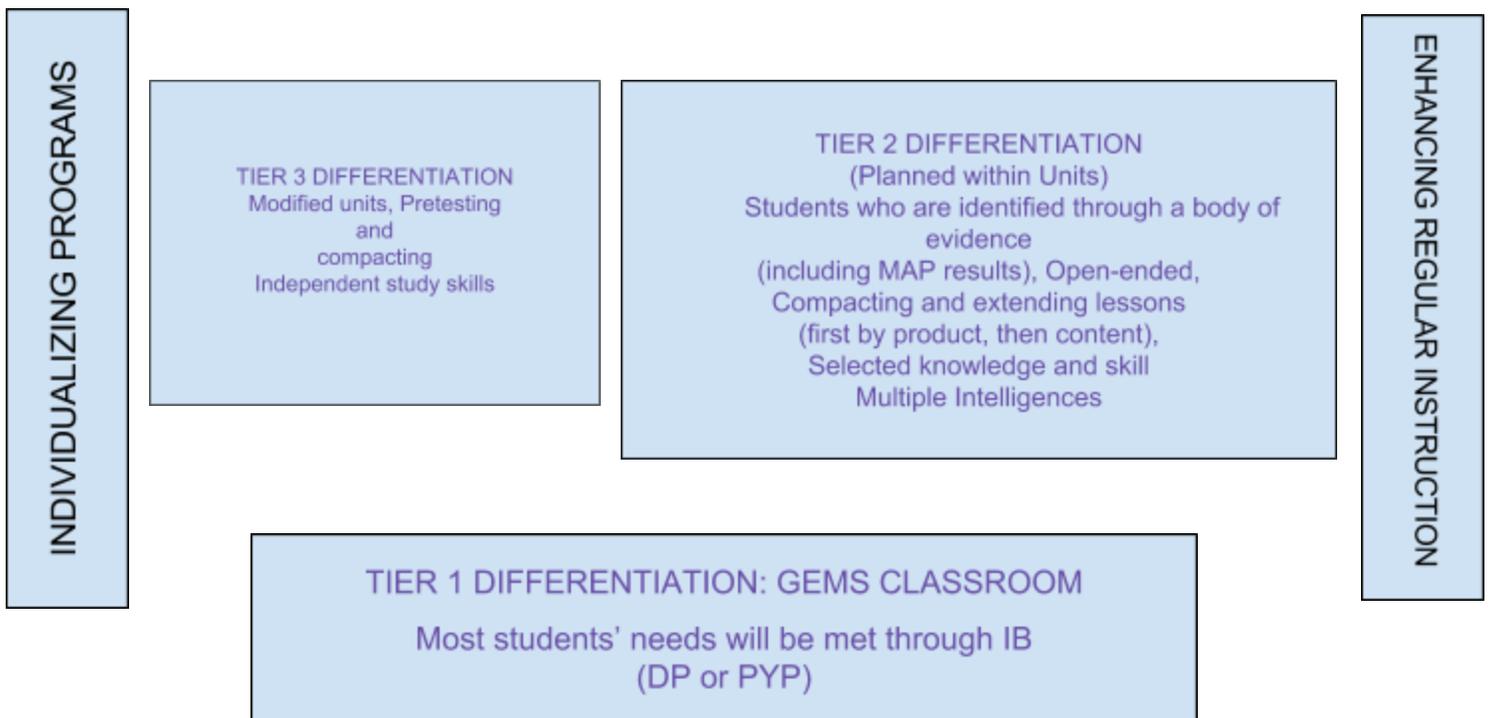


# GAA Learning Support Pyramid of Interventions





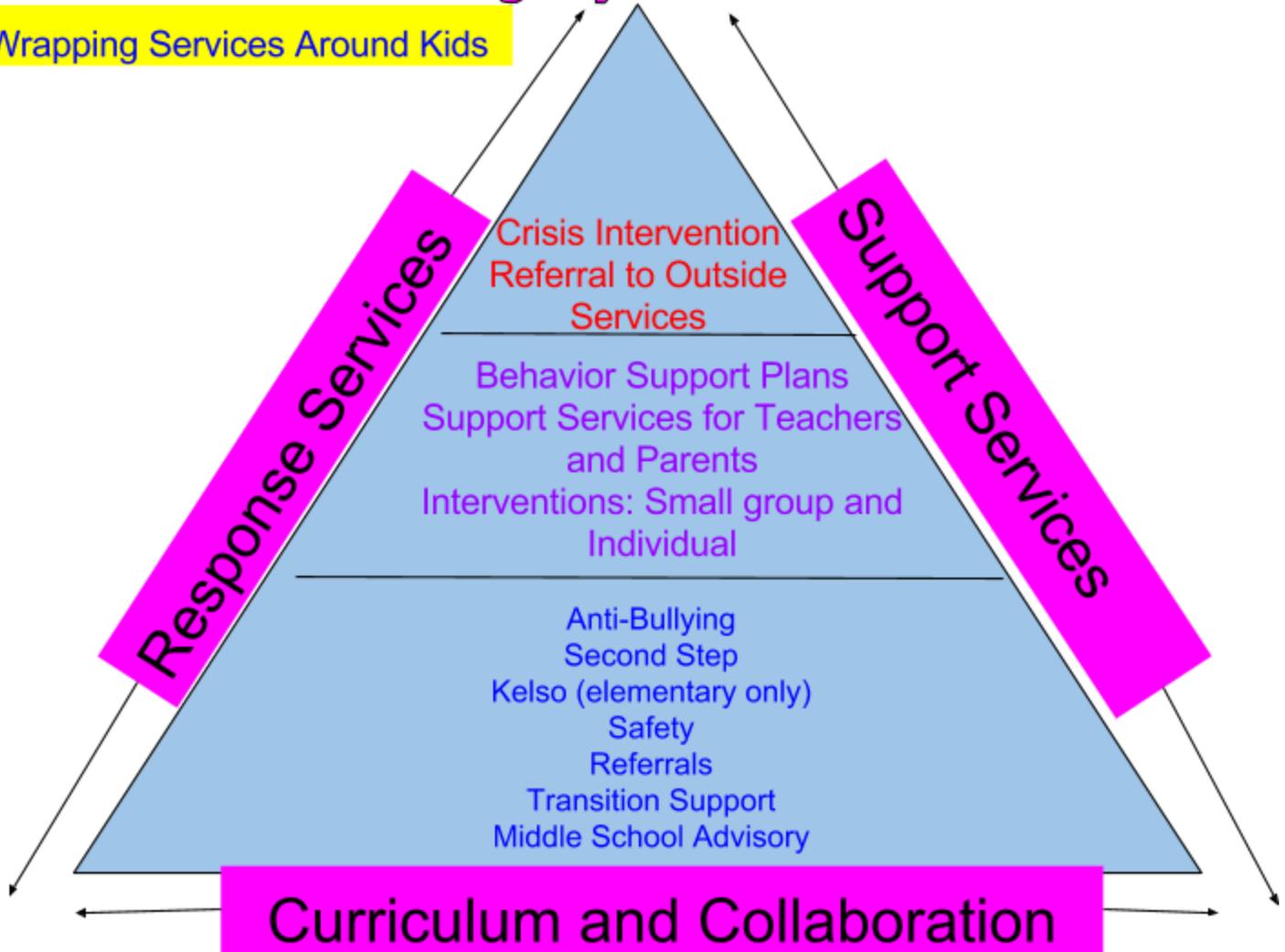
## GAA Tiers of Support For Gifted, Talented & High Ability Learners





# GAA Counseling Pyramid of Interventions

Wrapping Services Around Kids





## Student Support Referral Process

**CRISIS SITUATIONS:** If a student is in danger of hurting themselves or others – or is acting in such a way as to interrupt the teaching and learning of others in a serious way, Grade or Department Coordinators should make the referral immediately to the Vice Principal, Counselor, Head of Support Services or Principal.

### Elementary School / KG Referral Process

#### Referral process:

##### 1. Teacher Observations (Tier 1):

- A teacher observes behavioral patterns or learning areas where the child appears to be not making effective academic progress.
- Teachers apply differentiation strategies, document what strategies are being utilized, and chart the success (please be specific). Instructional Coach may be involved.
- Parents are contacted, made aware and involved. This may be informal contacts, (3 times) but well documented by the classroom teacher.

##### 2. Success Plan (Tier 2):

Teacher and Instructional Coach develop, implement, review and adjust a Success Plan.

##### 3. Referral Form for Tier 3: See [Referral Form KG1 - 5](#)

- Areas where difficulties are occurring
- Evidence specific to the observations
- Interventions used to support student
- Evidence of Parental contact and outcome
- Share with Grade or Department coordinator

##### 4. Student Services Team (Tier 3):

- Receives referral for Tier 3 services from Instructional Coach and teacher
- SST Coordinator and school counselor may conduct observation(s) and/or a 30-minute problem solving meeting
- A determination of appropriate interventions is made (may include clinical cognitive assessment, medical assessment(s), IEP)
- Information gathered is then delegated to the appropriate staff
- Provides feedback to classroom teacher as soon as possible
- Plan is reviewed at regular intervals for effectiveness, and adjustments made as appropriate



- In elementary, the [Strengths and Needs Committee Meeting form](#) needs to be completed when a team meets regarding a student (and when a parent is involved). It should also be used for the biannual review of the IEP.
5. **Assessment(s):**
- ELL - WIDA MODEL Language Assessment
  - LS - Grade Level math//DRA/MAP scores
  - Other informal/formal assessments
6. **Meeting set by SST specialist which may include:**
- Regular Classroom Teacher
  - Possibly the SST Coordinator
  - Learning Support/ Instructional coach/ Reading Interventionist and Counselor as required
  - Other specialist / classroom teachers (as required)
7. **Parent Meeting:**
- The referring teacher provides details about the areas where the student is not making effective academic progress and how they have addressed this
  - Specialist will review any observations that they have made
  - Recommendations are made regarding support options
  - If student eligibility is identified, and parents agree to services, the student will be assigned to a specialist who will deliver services
8. **Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for LS, Accommodation Plan for ELL, and Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for Gifted**
- All students found to be eligible will have either a Success Plan or an Individualized Education Plan, as appropriate. These will have specific and measurable goals – along with clearly written and measurable objectives on how to help the student make accelerated academic progress towards these goals (both in LS and ELL).
  - Instructional Coaches will provide teachers, specialists and Arabic teachers with the student's goals/objectives, strategies to help the student in the classroom, and accommodations for assessments and enrichment.
  - In-class small group instruction, In-class one-to-one instruction
  - Teachers will be expected to work towards goals and objectives in the class

## **Secondary School Referral Process**

When a student is not making Effective Academic Progress in class(es) the following procedures will be implemented.

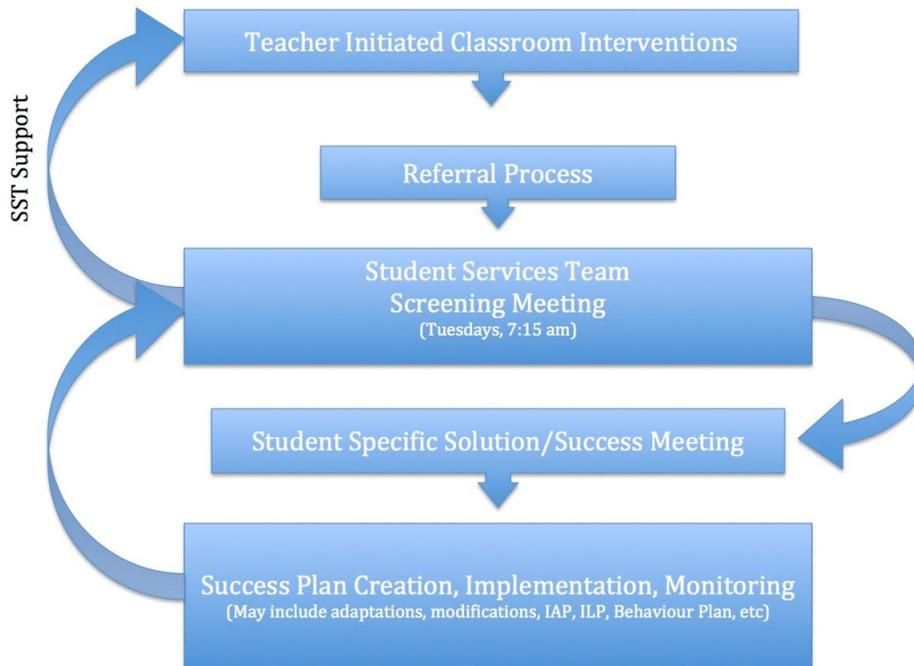
1. Teacher identifies students experiencing learning difficulties
  - A teacher observes behavioral patterns or learning areas where the child appears to be not making effective academic progress.



- Teachers apply differentiation or intervention strategies, document what strategies are being utilized, and chart the impact, if any.
  - Parents are contacted, made aware and involved. This may be informal contacts, but well documented by the classroom teacher.
2. Teacher reviews the teaching strategies for the student (s). This may include consultation with other classroom teachers or in school specialists (Learning Support, ELL, Counseling, Gifted and Talented)
  3. Teacher completes the Teacher Referral Form:
    - Area(s) where difficulties are occurring
    - Evidence specific to the observations
    - Intervention that are used to support the student
    - Strengths/ weakness of student / parent communication
    - Next steps
  4. Referral is reviewed by the Secondary Student Team. This review process generally results in 1 of 3 outcomes:
    - i. Determination is made that adequate support levels are in place. Support team for that student proceed with previously documented plan.
    - ii. Determination is made to support the classroom teacher with additional strategies and approaches for that student.
    - iii. Student is referred to an Support and Success Intervention meeting which will include, where appropriate, classroom teachers, specialist teachers, administration, and possibly parents and student.
  5. In the event of a Support and Success Intervention meeting, an action plan will be created with students, parents and teachers.
  6. The SST and teachers discuss the steps and implementation of interventions for a period of three to four weeks. Progress and adaptations will be monitored and communicated throughout.
  7. **Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for LS, Accommodation Plan for ELL, and Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) for G&T**
    - All students found to be eligible will have either an Accommodation Plan for ELL, or an Individualized Education Plan (based on outside assessments), or an Advanced Learning Plan for G&T. These will have specific and measurable goals – along with objectives on how to help the student make effective academic progress towards these goals (LS, ELL, and G&T).
    - All teachers will be provided with the student’s goals/objectives, strategies to help the student in the classroom, and accommodations for assessments and enrichment.
    - Teachers will be expected to work towards goals and objectives in the class



### Secondary Student Services Flow Chart



### Refusal of Services:

- Student Services is NOT obligatory. It is a voluntary, additional service that GAA is able to offer to parents to further help students in making Effective Academic Progress. If a family does not elect to use the services of the SS department, they will **not** have any additional support, adaptations, or accommodations (including extra time on standardized assessments) except for best practices already in place in the classroom.

**If parents have elected not to have services, and the student is not making satisfactory progress, the parents will be notified as soon as possible as they may elect to make other arrangements.**