

Student Response Teams (SRT): Status Update for 2019-2020



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BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Student Response Teams (SRT) initiative is to assist students in being successful in the general education classroom. The SRT initiative involves staff collaboration and using data for decision making to provide a multi-tiered system of support for students primarily in the areas of academics, behavior, or attendance. The SRT process involves developing, implementing, and monitoring interventions for students referred to the SRT.

The School Board approved the SRT initiative for an evaluation readiness report September 6, 2017. The recommendation from the evaluation readiness report was that SRT undergo an implementation evaluation in 2018-2019 and an outcome evaluation in 2019-2020. The recommendations were presented to the School Board August 28, 2018 and were approved September 11, 2018. The results of the year-one implementation evaluation for 2018-2019 and recommendations were presented to the School Board October 22, 2019, and the recommendations were approved November 12, 2019. Recommendations included reviewing the current data log system and investigating the feasibility of alternative methods for collecting SRT data divisionwide to allow for more efficient and effective means of monitoring students' progress and determining the initiative's effectiveness; improving the consistency of SRT processes and practices at the high school level, including the involvement of teachers, the process of referring students to SRT, and data monitoring; and ensuring professional learning opportunities related to interventions and data monitoring as part of the SRT process were provided and effective, especially for high schools and non-instructional/professional staff involved with SRT. The outcome evaluation began in 2019-2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closure in March 2020, data collection was unable to be completed, and the outcome evaluation was postponed to 2020-2021. As a result of the school closure, academic and behavioral data were not available for the full school year, SRT data logs were not complete, and the surveys that were planned to assess stakeholders' perceptions and progress toward goals were not administered. Although the evaluation was postponed, the Office of Research and Evaluation developed this status update to provide stakeholders a brief summary of information about the SRT processes and actions taken regarding the implementation evaluation recommendations, the impact of the school closure, the numbers and characteristics of students referred to SRT, and reasons for SRT referrals during 2019-2020 based on available data.

SRT PROCESSES

Students should be referred to their school's SRT if they struggle with a behavior or skill in the areas of academics, behavior, or attendance that interferes with the student's academic progress. However, students should only be referred to SRT if concerns remain after staff have gathered data, used the data collected to develop strategies to support the student, implemented the strategy for *four to six weeks*, and continuously monitored student progress.

A key component of the initiative involves collaboration between staff who represent multiple roles (e.g., teacher, school social worker, school nurse, reading specialist). The composition of the team should vary based on the individual needs of the student and may include staff members with expertise in the referral concern area. In general, the team composition is at the discretion of the school's SRT lead administrator, who leads the SRT at each school site. Since the 2017-2018 school year, it was advised that the SRT lead administrator be an assistant principal. It is also recommended that parents/guardians and referred students be involved with the SRT.

Appropriate interventions and strategies to address students' needs are chosen and planned as a team during initial and follow-up SRT meetings. The team is expected to review previously collected data and attempted strategies. To assist SRTs with choosing appropriate interventions, each school SRT lead administrator received the Prereferral Intervention Manual (PRIM), which details research-based interventions by grade level across the areas of academics, attendance, and behavior. When interventions are being implemented, individualized progress monitoring should occur regularly (i.e., at least weekly) to determine the effectiveness of interventions and strategies. The goal of progress monitoring is to gauge whether students are improving or not making adequate progress.

During 2019-2020, school staff received professional learning as a refresher course during a two-week period in October 2019. The refresher course was provided through Schoology and included an overview of SRT processes and the initiative's goals. In addition, information was provided regarding supports and strategies for addressing attendance and behavior concerns. School principals and school SRT lead administrators were directed to include all appropriate staff when completing the training. In addition, if school administrators needed guidance on the SRT processes, the director of student support services provided individual in-person support, which was provided to one school during 2019-2020.

Due to lower percentages of non-instructional/professional staff (e.g., school counselors, psychologists, and nurses) indicating they participated in professional learning in 2018-2019, one recommendation from the implementation evaluation focused on ensuring professional learning opportunities were provided and effective, especially for non-instructional/professional staff involved with SRT. According to the director of student support services, SRT lead administrators were directed to work with their teams to ensure non-instructional/professional staff were included when participating in the professional learning in October 2019. Further, non-instructional staff were expected to attend SRT meetings based upon the nature of the meeting. For example, social workers were expected to attend and be a part of the SRT related to attendance and school psychologists were expected to attend meetings based on mental health issues and behavioral and academic related concerns.

Survey results from the implementation evaluation also showed that compared to other school levels, there were lower staff agreement percentages regarding consistency of SRT practices at the high school level and lower percentages of high school teachers being involved with the SRT. As a result, a recommendation from the implementation evaluation focused on improving the consistency of SRT processes and practices at the high school level, including involvement of teachers, the process of referring students to SRT, and data monitoring. According to the director of student support services, due to approximately half of referrals at the high school level being due to attendance reasons in 2018-2019, the professional learning offered in October 2019 focused on addressing student attendance concerns to educate high school SRT staff. The information on supports and strategies for attendance concerns addressed potential myths of attendance issues as well as barriers, student aversions, and disengagement issues that may contribute to problems with attendance. The session also addressed the importance of prevention, identifying and treating the main issue, and identifying students at highest risk. High school SRT staff were also provided a link to the Attendance Works toolkit website, which offers resources for improving student attendance.

IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLOSURE

School buildings were closed beginning in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Email communications were sent from the director of student support services to school SRT lead administrators in late March to provide guidance on SRT procedures during the closure. SRT lead administrators were directed to evaluate the need to hold follow-up SRT meetings for students who had previously been referred to SRT. If meetings were able to be deferred, then it was recommended to schedule the follow-up meetings in fall and winter of 2020-2021. Further, it was expected that there may be fewer SRT meetings during the school closure. According to the director of student support services, although SRT meetings may not have been officially held and documented, school administrators and school counselors continued to monitor student data during the school closure, such as daily Schoology course log ins, and followed up with students and parents as needed.

SRT DATA LOG COLLECTION

Student Response Team data logs were submitted quarterly by each school to the Office of Student Support Services in the Department of Teaching and Learning. The data logs contained student referral information, including referral reason and source, date and result of initial meeting, and intervention selected. Overall, 82 of 83 schools documented on their SRT data logs that SRT meetings were held during the 2019-2020 school year. The majority of schools (n = 64) provided updated SRT data logs at the end of the school year (June or July), while two schools provided updates in April and 17 schools provided logs that had been last updated in the first or second quarter.

Due to consistency and efficiency issues encountered during data analysis in 2018-2019, a recommendation from the implementation evaluation was to review the data log system and investigate the feasibility of alternative methods for collecting SRT data divisionwide. The formatting of the SRT data log file for the 2019-2020 school year was adjusted to

improve the consistency of information received (e.g., restricting data entry options such as referral reason being limited to selecting from a list of options). In addition, according to the director of student support services, staff in the Office of Student Services have been researching various systems that allow for documenting SRT-related information, such as tracking student information, interventions, and progress monitoring; however, cost has been a barrier.

REFERRED STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Based on the SRT data logs collected in 2019-2020, 1,656 students were referred to SRT at their schools across the division. Nine students were referred twice, resulting in a total of 1,665 referrals during the school year. Nine referrals were submitted after March 13, 2020, during the school closure. Likely due to the school closure, fewer students were referred to SRT in 2019-2020 than in 2018-2019 when 2,008 students were referred. Overall, approximately half of all referred students in 2019-2020 were in elementary school (see Table 1). This pattern by school level was consistent with 2018-2019 when 51 percent of referred students were in elementary school.

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Students Referred to SRT

Measure	ES	MS	HS
Number of Students	854	217	585
Percent of Total	51.6%	13.1%	35.3%
Percent of Population	2.6%	1.3%	2.8%

In comparison to the division, at all levels, higher percentages of students referred to SRT were economically disadvantaged, while lower percentages were identified as gifted (see Table 2). In comparison to the division at the elementary and middle school levels, higher percentages of students referred to SRT were male, while lower percentages were female. In addition, at the elementary and middle school levels, higher percentages of students referred to SRT were African American, while lower percentages were Caucasian in comparison to the division.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Students Referred to SRT

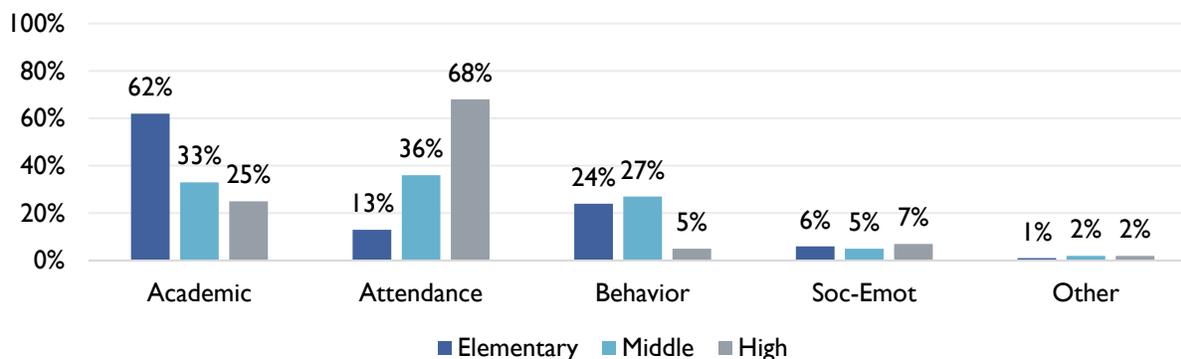
Characteristic	ES	MS	HS
Female	37.1%*	40.1%*	45.0%
Male	62.9%**	59.9%**	55.0%
African American	35.5%**	40.1%**	28.9%
American Indian	0.2%	0.0%	0.5%
Asian	1.1%	1.4%	4.3%
Caucasian	37.6%*	35.9%*	47.4%
Hispanic	14.1%	13.8%	12.5%
Nat Haw/Pac Islander	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Multiracial	11.5%	8.8%	6.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	60.7%**	72.4%**	53.5%**
Special Education	8.7%	8.3%	8.7%
English Learner	2.9%	4.1%	3.9%
Gifted	3.9%*	5.1%*	8.4%*

Note: *More than 5 percent below the percentage at the division level. **More than 5 percent above the percentage at the division level.

REASONS AND STATUS FOR SRT REFERRALS

Referral reasons were documented in the SRT data logs and were categorized as being due to academics, attendance, behavior, social-emotional needs, and other. Overall, 95 percent of referrals were due to one referral reason, 5 percent had two referral reasons, and less than one percent had three or four referral reasons. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of elementary school referrals were due to academic reasons (62%), while the majority of high school referrals were due to attendance (68%). Approximately one-third of middle school referrals were due to attendance (36%), academics (33%), and behavior (27%).

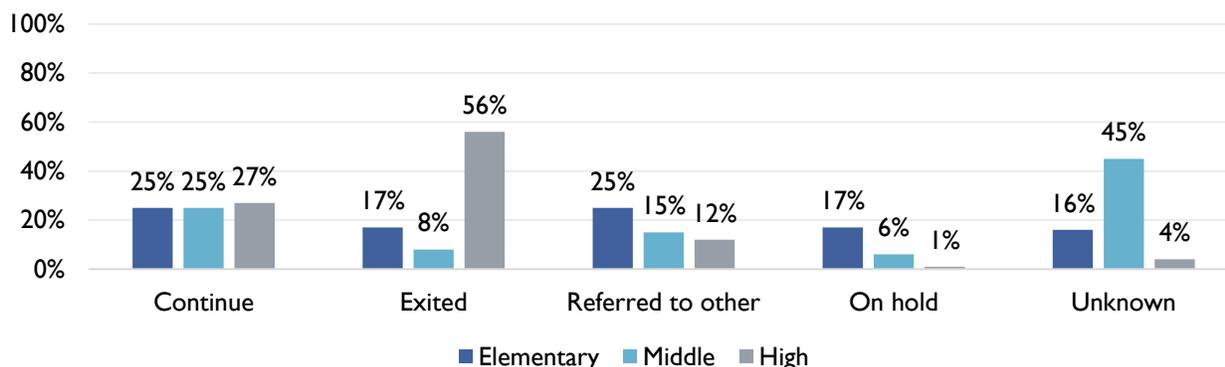
Figure 1: Percentage of Referrals by Referral Reason



Within the SRT data logs, information regarding the final status of each referral was provided, such as exited SRT, continuing to receive SRT support, or referred to another service (e.g. special education committee, 504, or English as a Second Language). If the final status was not indicated, research and evaluation staff reviewed other comments or information in the data log to decide if a status could be determined. If there was any reference that the status of the referral was impacted by the school closure (e.g., unable to follow up due to the school closure), then the status was coded as being “on hold due to the school closure” with expected follow up occurring in the fall of 2020. If the status was not able to be determined and there was no documentation that the referral was impacted by the school closure, then it was coded as “unknown”; however, it is possible that these “unknown” SRT statuses may have been impacted by the school closure without official documentation in the logs.

Analysis of final status showed that the majority of referred high school students were exited from SRT, which indicated the student no longer needed SRT support. The highest percentage of middle school referrals had an unknown status. Elementary school referrals were relatively evenly distributed between the various status types (see Figure 2). Approximately 17 percent of elementary school referrals were specifically identified as being on hold due to the school closure.

Figure 2: Percentage of Referrals by Final Status



NEXT STEPS

The School Board approved the 2020-2021 Program Evaluation Schedule September 9, 2020, which included the SRT initiative. During 2020-2021, the outcome evaluation of SRT is planned to include a review of the program operations, characteristics of students referred and served, progress toward meeting goals and objectives, stakeholders’ perceptions, and the additional cost of SRT to the school division. Particular emphasis will be placed on the outcome goal and objectives. In addition, the evaluation will include actions taken regarding the year-one implementation evaluation recommendations. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic will be considered as the academic and behavioral data, SRT data logs, and stakeholder perceptions obtained through surveys are collected and analyzed as part of the 2020-2021 evaluation.

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