Oroville Union High School District
Student Success Team (SST) Parent Information

Just what is the Student Success Team?

The Student Success Team is a positive school-wide early identification and early intervention process. As a team, the student, parents, teachers, school administrator and other related staff, work to identify the student's learning strengths and needs, upon which an improvement plan can be designed.

As a regular school process, the SST develops recommendations based on teacher/school concerns that will facilitate the student's success within his or her current program. Concerns are seen as obstacles to student success and not descriptors of the student or his or her character. The Team creates a plan with measurable, targeted interventions assigned to the student, the teacher(s), and the parents intended to support and encourage academic growth and a positive learning experience. Follow-up meetings are planned as needed to provide a continuous casework management strategy to maximize the student's success.

Is the SST process mandated?

California Education Code 56303 states, "A pupil shall be referred for special educational instruction and services only after the resources of the regular education program have been considered and, where appropriate, utilized." The SST develops recommendations that facilitate the student's success within his/her regular education program. It is only after those interventions have not been successful that the SST would refer for evaluation to determine if the student requires special educational instruction and services.

Why go through the SST process?

The SST process supports regular education teachers as they work with struggling students to identify their needs prior to the referral for evaluation of more specialized instructional supports. The 2004 authorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) emphasized that students with disabilities should receive the maximum time appropriate in the regular classroom.

The SST also serves as the first step to determine the need for evaluation to assess eligibility for Section 504 Accommodation Plans and Special Education services. The SST process helps teachers to develop interventions to assist the student. Specific areas of concern are identified; information is gathered through observation, interview, review of school records and informal assessment.

The SST develops new strategies to help address the concerns. For example, a teacher may implement a behavior contract for a child who has difficulty maintaining appropriate classroom behavior and completing classroom assignments. Classroom teachers and parents implement these strategies for several weeks. The SST then reconvenes to assess the student's progress.

If the interventions are not successful, however, the SST may refer the student to the school Guidance Team who would determine if evaluation for a Section 504 Accommodation Plan or Special Education eligibility is appropriate.

The SST is usually run by your student's Counselor as an administrative designee. In addition to you, as the student's parent/guardian, the student's teachers may be invited as well as any other support staff that is appropriate to that meeting (such as other teachers, special education teachers, and the school nurse or school psychologist). Community service providers may also be invited to attend.

Who may request an SST?

The expertise of the SST is for the benefit of the entire school. Any unresolved problem that impedes learning may lead to a request to the SST by a teacher, administrator, parent or student. Typically, the student's teacher will initiate a meeting with the parent/guardian to discuss his/her concerns about the student's progress. Other times, the parent/guardian might request a parent/teacher conference in response to a school concern. Together, you will come up with strategies to address those concerns. If, after a sufficient period of time to implement the strategies, the concerns persist, the student's teacher initiates the referral to the SST for more support.

What happens at an SST meeting?

The SST works hard to maintain a positive, student-focused environment. The meeting usually begins with a statement from the parent/guardian (as well as other members present who know the student) about the student's strengths in any area. Identifying these strengths are extremely important in brainstorming possible intervention strategies; building off of what the student is already good at to increase the chances for his/her success.

Following the conversation about the student's strengths, relevant background information is discussed. At this time any important education information (like retention or previous school attendance), family information (such as changes in the family structure, primary caregiver, etc.) and health information (any medical conditions that may impact the student's academic success) is discussed. The parent/guardian is asked to complete a Background Information form prior to the SST meeting so that this information is readily available to the team. Following the SST, all documents including the Background Information form would be placed in the student's confidential educational record.

At this point, the team members discuss the main concerns that brought the student to the SST. The team brainstorms different strategies to address these concerns and creates a timeline for implementing and monitoring the strategies. The SST will discuss if a follow up meeting is necessary to review the student's progress and determine the need for future intervention.

What is my role in the SST as a parent/guardian?

You know your student best. Therefore, your insight into his/her background and behaviors at home is a critical part of viewing the whole child. Prior to the first SST meeting, you may be asked to complete a Background Information form about your student. Please complete this information and either return it to the school before the meeting or have it ready to share at the first SST. Next, be prepared to share your thoughts of your student's strengths, as well as any concerns you have. The SST will ask for your input about what you have successfully tried to help your student. Historically, the SST is most successful when the teacher(s) and parents work together to set similar expectations for behavior and learning for the student. The school will send home a pamphlet for parents/guardians about the SST process prior to the first SST meeting which you can review for additional information.

Must a parent/guardian be present at an SST for their child?

Parents/guardians are invited to all SST meetings regarding their student and strongly encouraged to attend. However, if a parent/guardian cannot attend, the SST meeting can take place without parent consent and the SST plan can be implemented (except where parent consent is required, such as in the case of screenings or evaluation or change to the general education program). When the parent/guardian is absent, SST notes will be sent home and placed in the student's confidential educational record.

What kinds of recommendations come out of an SST?

The SST is a brainstorming process used to generate recommendations for addressing the specific teacher and parent concerns about the student. Therefore, recommendations are unique to the individual student and vary case by case. However, the SST might recommend different instructional strategies not yet tried by the teacher, or homework strategies not yet tried by the parent.

Sometimes, the SST will refer the teacher and/or parent to other support systems where available, such as school-based counselling, academic intervention programs or after-school tutoring. On occasion, the SST may recommend that a specialist conduct a screening in the area of concern, such as attention or speech, at no cost to the parent. If there are health-related concerns, the SST may recommend that the parent/guardian look into further supports available through community resources. As a last resort, the SST can refer the student for consideration of a special education assessment.

Is parental consent required for screenings and evaluations?

The parent/guardian must give their consent for any screening, evaluation or participation in a program that will remove their student from their regular education program. However, the SST may request additional hearing and vision screenings; because these are given to every student in a particular grade, they would not require parental consent.

On occasion, the SST may request a screening of the student's abilities/skills in a particular area (such as attention or speech). With parental consent, these screenings are conducted by a specialist working for the school district who has expertise in that area. The results are shared with the parent/guardian, the SST, and become a part of the student's cumulative educational record. The screening is not an assessment for special education and does not result in a change of the student's academic placement.

Can the SST refer students for evaluation for special education consideration?

Yes, but only after several important decision criteria are met: 1) that reasonable classroom interventions of sufficient duration have been carefully attempted, without success; and 2) that the cause of the problem is suspected to be a disability that cannot be resolved without special education services.

Do all referrals for special education need to go through the SST?

Generally speaking, all referrals should go through the SST referral process. The SST interventions can be bypassed for students for whom it would be detrimental or for students whose difficulty is so severe or so unusual as to render the SST of no help. This is a decision to be made by the school with parent input. The referral from the SST goes to the school's psychologist who reviews the student's records and interventions to date. The psychologist informs the parent/guardian of the decision to evaluate for special education (and obtains parental consent for the evaluation) or explains why the referral is not appropriate at that time.

How do you know that the SST is effective and not just delaying the special education evaluation process?

Many factors can show success of the SST process, from teacher/parent satisfaction to pre/post student performance. As a problem-solving process, the SST is a crucial step prior to special education referral to make sure all that can be tried within the general education environment has been tried. Only those students who have not shown a positive response to the SST intervention strategies should be referred for special education assessment. These students are likely to require special education support as all else has been unsuccessful.