

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Student Support Teams

Who makes up the Student Support Team?

Membership varies from school to school. Typically there are three to five members. They may be an administrator, a counselor, a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, a school social worker, a parent, a media specialist, a school psychologist or other central office persons, as appropriate.

How does one get on this team and how long would one serve as a member?

Members may be appointed or may volunteer, and some are invited to serve on a particular case that needs their expertise. Service time for standing members may vary from a semester to several years.

Who may request assistance from the SST?

The problem-solving expertise of the SST is for the benefit of the entire school. Any unresolved problem that is impeding the learning process may be referred to the SST, by a teacher, administrator, parent or even a student.

What happens when SST addresses a problem?

A brainstorming process is used to generate recommendations for solving the problem. These are usually given to a teacher to implement with a student.

How long is the SST strategy implemented?

This depends on the specific problem. Usually, two to six weeks are sufficient to determine whether the recommendations will succeed. If not, the process may be used again to fine-tune the strategy. Some cases are of short duration, yet a few students may be followed by SST for their entire school career.

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

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

Exceptions would be pre-schoolers; and seriously disabled students for whom SST would delay obviously needed special education services. They may bypass SST, with the reason documented.

What data could be cited to indicate the effectiveness of an SST?

Many indicators could be gathered in a school that would show success of the SST process, from teacher satisfaction to pre/post student performance. In systems that are regarded as having excellent SSTs, one measure is that, of students referred on by SST for special education evaluation, 80 percent to 90 percent of them end up qualifying for such services.

What factors limit the effectiveness of SST?

Turnover of team members without sufficient training for new members; burnout from too long a period of service.

What incentives can be used to encourage SST member service?

Extended day contracts, extended year contracts, Staff Development Unit credit, prestige and satisfaction.

What benefits can accrue to a school from successful SST efforts?

Higher graduation rates, better test scores, fewer students retained in grade, better attendance (by both teachers and students), less teacher turnover, better discipline, data on teacher training needs, more parent involvement, more successful inclusion of special education students in regular classes, and more.