# Guidelines
# For
# Student Support Teams
# (SST)

dodea

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

# Table of Contents

**Foreword** **3**

**Introduction** **4**

**Understanding the Student Support Team (SST)** **5**
Goals of the Team Process 5
The Role of the Team 5
Overview of the Process 5
The Continuum of Intervention Services 6
Intervention Continuum 6
Relationship of the SST to Special Education 7
Relationship of the SST to the Accommodation Team 7

**Design of a SST** **8**
The Core and Ancillary Teams 8

**Team Procedures** **9**
Meeting Times and Locations 9
Encouraging and Handling Requests 9
Team Member Roles 10
Conducting the Meeting 10
Meeting Steps and Procedures 11
Follow-up/Monitoring 12
Recordkeeping 12
The SST Intervention Plan 12
Intervention Follow-up Report 12
Team Log 13

**DoDEA Accommodation Plan** **13**

**The Problem-Solving Process** **14**
Problem Identification and Description 14
Brainstorming, Evaluating, and Selecting Interventions 16
Writing the Intervention Plan 17
Monitoring Implementation 18
Conclusion 18

**References** **19**

**Appendixes**
A. Team Process 20
B. Request for Assistance 21
C. Meeting Steps and Procedures 22
D. Intervention Plan 23
E. Intervention Brainstorming 24
F. Intervention Follow-up Report 25
G Intervention Team Log 26
H DoDEA Accommodation Plan 27

# Foreword

This handbook offers guidance on the development and implementation of Student Support Teams (SST) and is intended to assist administrators and teachers when planning and operating such a team. A systematic approach for the establishment and operation of an effective SST is provided and is designed to be flexible and adaptable for individual school use. The guidelines focus on the key priorities of the SST process, design, and procedures.

A school-based problem-solving team similar to the SST is also addressed in this handbook. It is the DoDEA Accommodation Team. In public schools in the United States students with disabilities who are not eligible for special education services, but have a physical or mental disability that substantially limits a major life activity, may be provided interventions and accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973[1]. **This group of students makes up one percent of the student population in public schools.** In DoDEA, the same students may be provided interventions and accommodations as determined by the DoDEA Accommodation Team under DoDEA Regulation 2500.14, "Nondiscrimination and Accommodation on the Basis of Disability in DoDEA Conducted Education Programs and Activities," October 30, 2007.

The SST and Accommodation Team have many similarities in process, design, and procedure. Both teams use a collaborative model and identify interventions to improve student performance. The guidance in this handbook identifies the similarities between the two teams but makes it clear that they serve two separate functions.

**Note:** It is appropriate for SST members to serve on the DoDEA Accommodation Team however; the members of the SST must be cognizant of their changing roles and the differences between the two teams.

[1] In public schools in the United States, an Accommodation Team is often referred to as a "504 Team".

# Introduction

Today the child at the schoolhouse door is considerably more complex than at any time in our history. Never before, have the stakes been higher for ensuring a high quality education for every student. Educators have always looked to specialists for support when challenged to make classroom instruction work for some students. While classroom teachers continue to use the expertise of specialists, they have come to rely more and more on the promising practice of school intervention teams. Educators have found that dialog and problem solving with colleagues is a very effective way to gain the support needed to work with a diverse student population.

The school-level intervention team first emerged in the late 1970's (Chalfant, Pysh & Moultrie, 1979) and has steadily grown as an effective tool. The outcomes of such teams have been remarkable. Studies show that individual student interventions resulted in a positive impact, not only on the identified student, but also on other students, entire classrooms, and schools as a whole. Documented outcomes of effective intervention teams include: 1) use of appropriate consequences, 2) increased student engaged time and academic achievement, 3) improved student social competency, and 4) an improved school climate and collaborative culture. "The team is … a model that encourages communication and enhances the classroom teaching and learning environment, recognizing the value of the relationship between students and staff …" (Noel, Love 2002). Our challenge is clear, to ensure high learning outcomes for all. The school-level intervention team clearly establishes a process to meet this challenge.

This handbook provides guidance on the development and implementation of effective and efficient school intervention teams to assist all struggling students. In DoDEA where many intervention teams are already in place, these guidelines are intended to assist teachers and administrators in planning effective interventions for struggling students through the intervention team process. Where an intervention team is not in place, these guidelines will assist in the establishment and effective functioning of such a team.

# Understanding the Student Support Team (SST)

## Goals of the Team Process

School intervention teams have many names and advocates such as; School Assistance Team (SAT) (Chalfant & Pysh), Student/Staff Support Team (SST), (Phillips & McCullough), Student Intervention Team (SIT), and Problem-Solving Team or Mainstream Assistance Team (Fuchs & Fuchs). In this handbook, the acronym SST is used to reference a school-level intervention team.

The SST process emphasizes that early intervention for struggling students is a function of the general education program and not of special education. The SST is a school-based problem-solving team composed primarily of general educators who provide support to teachers to improve the quality of the general education program and reduce the underachievement of students. One might think of the SST as a "think-tank", a peer support group, or a forum for structured and routine focus on addressing student needs. The intervention team is a common sense approach that offers a systematic process to successfully close the gap through which students have traditionally fallen. The team is not so much a "new" service, but rather it builds on existing services and efforts in order to upgrade the school's ability to respond effectively to student needs. The SST has a vital role in creating a high achieving school as expressed in the following goals: 1) enable teachers to teach students more effectively, 2) enable students to acquire academic and social competencies, achieve standards, become independent learners for life, and 3) create a collaborative culture among all staff. The SST should not be viewed as a gatekeeper to the special education process.

## The Role of the Team

The Student Support Team's primary function is routine, structured problem solving in conjunction with teachers requesting assistance, and the resolution of student-centered problems. Teams work effectively with other teachers and staff members, analyze student problems, and design interventions powerful enough to effect the desired change. The functions and services the teams provide vary with the needs of the individual schools.

## Overview of the Process

The process begins when a teacher makes a request for assistance. A member of the SST is identified to meet with the teacher to review and clarify the problem and, in some cases, conduct a classroom observation. Once the problem has been defined and any needed data gathered, the Team Leader promptly schedules a team meeting. At this meeting, the team focuses on brainstorming, evaluating, and selecting high probability interventions and creating an action plan. An implementation period of a sufficient length of time follows with support provided to the teacher to assist with the interventions. The team reconvenes for a follow-up meeting to review the outcomes and determine the next steps. The problem-solving process continues until the intervention(s) is successful or until a determination is made that a more in-depth evaluation for special services is required (see Appendix A).

## The Continuum of Intervention Services

School teams often become caught up in their distinct functions and have difficulty seeing how they can work in synchronization with other teams or services. The SST is viewed within the context of a continuum of intervention services. These services extend across programs that begin with the individual classroom teacher, progress through several sources of assistance within the general education program, including the process for ensuring nondiscrimination and accommodation on the basis of disability, and may advance to a broader level of support from other special areas such as English as A Second Language (ESL), Gifted Education (GE) and Special Education (SPED). This process should be fluid with all members working in concert and seeking greater intensity of interventions as needed.

On one end of the continuum, when it becomes apparent that a student is not responding to standard teaching or behavior management techniques, the classroom teacher identifies and implements different strategies independently or with the assistance of colleagues and/or parents. If outcomes are still unsatisfactory, then a request for assistance from the SST is an appropriate next step. The team works closely with the teacher to develop and implement strategically selected interventions, meets as needed, and draws upon school, district, or community expertise as beneficial to effect change. If the student is not making the desired changes, it may be necessary to make a referral to other specialists.

The continuum should never be misconstrued as a lockstep sequence. Referral to the Case Study Committee (CSC) or other specialists can take place any time a parent, team, or teacher determine the need for more intensive individual intervention. As services move along the continuum in search of problem resolution, the process grows in the intensity, duration, and frequency of interventions along with an increased emphasis on monitoring student progress.

## Intervention Continuum

<u>Individual Teacher Intervention</u>

Teacher implements different approaches or strategies independently or in collaboration with colleagues and/or parents.

<u>Increased Resources for Interventions</u>

The teacher requests assistance from the SST. The team engages in problem solving to assist the teacher in developing and implementing strategic interventions. The team may draw upon school, district, and community expertise if needed. The team may ask for assistance from specialists in areas such as reading instruction, ESL, and SPED. The team may take action leading to the development and implementation of a SST Intervention Plan or may refer the student's case to the Accommodation Team or to the Case Study Committee (CSC) for Special Education intervention.

- The Accommodation Team determines if a student is eligible for a DoDEA Accommodation Plan due to an existing physical or mental disability substantially limiting a major life activity. A teacher or parent may refer the student directly to the Accommodation Team.

- A parent, teacher, individual, SST or Accommodation Team determines the need for more intensive individual intervention and refers the student to the CSC.

**Relationship of the SST to Special Education**

The SST addresses classroom or student issues at the request of a teacher or school personnel. The SST does not determine eligibility for special education services. Its existence does not prevent or impede a direct referral to the CSC by a parent, teacher, individual, or school team. It makes recommendations regarding the full continuum of interventions available at the school from coaching the teacher regarding interventions through the decision-making process for referring a student to the Accommodation Team or CSC. While underscoring the general education ownership of this team, it is equally important to emphasize that the SST cannot be a substitute for special education services. When a student is not benefiting from interventions and the SST Team or an individual suspects the presence of a disability, a referral to the CSC must occur as directed in DoD Instruction 1342.12, "Provision of Early Intervention and Special Education Services to Eligible DoD Dependents", April 11, 2005.

**Relationship of the SST to the Accommodation Team**

The SST is not a substitute for the Accommodation Team and does not determine eligibility for an Accommodation Plan. The SST may refer a student to the Accommodation Team if they suspect that the student has a physical or mental disability that substantially limits a major life activity. For example, a student is referred to the SST for not completing his work. The classroom teacher reports that he appears uninterested in learning and is apathetic. The SST collects information regarding the student's performance and during the collection of evidence, the parents present documentation that the student has severe allergies requiring prescription medication. At the point, when parents present evidence of a physical disability the SST may refer the student to the Accommodation Team.

All or some of the members of the SST may sit on the Accommodation Team and when serving on that team follow the decision making process to determine student eligibility for a DoDEA Accommodation Plan.

| |
|---|
| Successful practice recommends that members from the SST also serve as members of the Accommodation Team. |

# Design of a Student Support Team

The thoughtful design of the SST and selection of members is critical in achieving a viable and valued intervention service. Planning should include consideration of team configuration, the team selection process, and team members' areas of expertise. Team configuration will vary based upon school and faculty size, training level of staff, and availability of planning time for staff. Therefore, a model that may be appropriate in one school, may not work for another. However, the design must enable the team to achieve its purpose to assist teachers, to intervene early, and resolve student problems collaboratively. The following are only suggested models. It is understood that there a variety of ways to set up SST's and the use of core and ancillary teams is one model.

## The Core and Ancillary Teams

The Core Team, as the name implies, is the mainstay of the intervention process. Typically comprised of 3-5 educators, the team is small enough to easily coordinate meeting times among members and ensure that each is personally engaged in the team's activities, but large enough to provide the needed collective wisdom and skills. While it is important to keep the team small to ensure productivity, it is equally as important that staff feel someone on the team understands their concerns. There are numerous ways to achieve the goal depending on the size of the school, educator schedules, and staff involvement. It may be necessary to have more than one team in schools with over 600 students. Multiple teams may be formed to serve specific grades or student groupings. The Ancillary Team members serve at the request of the Core Team when needed for the resolution of the presenting problem. A list of ancillary support may be drawn from a broad range of school and community personnel including school psychologist, school nurse, special education teacher, school counselor, administrator, mental health counselor, social worker, mentor, parents.

*School resources and needs vary, therefore it should be noted that the school staff listed above as possible members of the Ancillary Team may instead be members of the Core Team.*

Two levels of the SST are described below:

<u>Core Team</u>

- 3-5 educators
- Representative of school staff
- Varied experience and expertise
- Standing committee of consistent membership

<u>Ancillary Team</u>

- Broad and diverse representation
- School or district-based support personnel (e.g., school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, special education teachers, gifted education teachers, English as a second language teachers, administrators)
- Community child service workers (e.g., mental health counselors, social workers, juvenile case workers)
- Other teaching staff with particular curriculum, instruction, or behavior expertise
- Serve on an "as needed" basis

The two-level team format has some distinct advantages. Because the Core Team members are the overseers of the teaming process, it promotes general education teacher ownership. Since team membership can be extended via the Ancillary Team, it allows for specific expertise for any case while still maintaining a small productive group. Ancillary staff is called in only when the problem merits. The success of the team is not restricted by itinerant or specialized staff who may have limited time in the school, thereby ensuring that requests are addressed promptly

## Team Procedures

Once the SST is configured, thoughtful planning for how the team will operate within the school must occur. Topics to be addressed include when and where to meet, how to market the team, how to encourage and respond to requests, definition of team and administrator roles, how to conduct efficient meetings, and identification of the record keeping process.

### Meeting Times and Locations

The first task of the SST is to determine what days and times they can convene, making sure that they are accessible to the majority of the staff. A typical schedule is a weekly meeting providing time for team business as well as problem-solving discussions. A regularly scheduled meeting provides constancy and ensures team-planning time. The team should also be prepared to meet on a more flexible basis, if necessary, to ensure a timely response to staff requests. These meetings are often briefer single case problem-solving sessions, scheduled to accommodate the teacher requesting assistance. In addition to before or after school meetings, many teams have found time within the school day. Some of these include: 1) coordinated planning periods for team members, 2) an additional planning period each week for team members, 3) combining classes for activities to free teachers, and 4) meeting during "club time." However meeting times are arranged, flexibility and a willingness to accommodate staff members are the hallmark of a successful team.

The meeting location is also a key factor in team procedures. Meetings are held in a private area to preserve confidentiality and to avoid untimely interruptions. An ideal setting is a small office or conference room. The team should not conduct meetings in teacher workrooms or an open area (i.e., library) where others may be present. The importance of teaming and respect for teachers is conveyed through a pleasant professional meeting location. Once the meeting schedule and location have been set, the team communicates this information to the staff through channels such as presentations at a staff meeting, bulletin boards, newsletters, announcements, or email.

### Encouraging and Handling Requests

Procedures for handling requests are important. *A focus on extensive form completion as a means to access the team will discourage utilization by teachers.* A teacher friendly approach includes creating a request for assistance form and providing a submission process that insures privacy (see Appendix B). The information required on the form should be minimized to include only teacher name and grade, date, preferred meeting time(s), and a brief description of the concern. One model would be to have the team leader review requests and assign a case liaison who, in turn initiates a personal contact with the teacher to clarify the presenting problem and establish a time for the teacher to meet with the SST. A clear means of communicating meeting times and agendas among team members is essential. A systematic email communication may be used for follow-up. *Finally, it should be noted that the terminology "request for assistance"*

*has expressly been used instead of "referral", which is closely associated with special education and the CSC.*

**Caution: Procedures for handling requests can, if the team is not careful, serve as a roadblock to efforts for early intervention and a collaborative culture.**

## Team Member Roles

Intervention teams succeed or fail based upon the group process they employ to operate cohesively. As a team considers member roles, an overarching goal should be shared leadership and full participation by all. Example of roles of highly successful teams can be:

- Team Leader/Coordinator: The team leader or coordinator oversees all planning and organizational activities such as receiving requests, assigning a case liaison, setting meeting times, communicating with other Core Team members as well as Ancillary Team members, and serving as a contact with the school administrator or other school committees. In addition, the coordinator may also facilitate the meetings, articulating the agenda, anticipated outcomes, and timelines.

The SST Team Leader/Coordinator or a member of the SST may also hold the position of the Accommodation Team Leader.

- Case Liaison: When a request is received, a case liaison is assigned. This individual is responsible for meeting with the requesting teacher to pinpoint the problem, gather data, including observing the student if needed, and possibly talking with others who might have additional information to help clarify the presenting problem. Based upon this information, the case liaison may consider the need to engage Ancillary Team members. The team coordinator is consulted prior to the inclusion of Ancillary Team members. The case liaison supports the requesting teacher at the meeting.

- Recorder(s): One team member is assigned the task of documenting the key meeting discussion points, decisions, responsibilities, and time frames for conducting the interventions. Recording the Intervention Plan is essential.

- Timekeeper: In order to remain focused on the task and to help avoid protracted meetings, one member serves as timekeeper to keep the team aware of the time constraints. A best practice is the use of a timer to structure the pace of the meeting.

## Conducting the Meeting

As time is a limited resource, the SST should make every effort to restrict the meetings to a thirty (30) minute timeframe. The meeting should begin with introductions, if necessary. The team coordinator then makes a brief statement regarding the meetings' purpose and anticipated outcomes followed by a review of the agenda and timelines. The heart of the problem-solving meeting has five basic components: 1) review and clarify the problem, 2) brainstorm possible interventions, 3) discuss and evaluate interventions, 4) choose intervention(s), and 5) develop an action plan. These steps are more thoroughly addressed in the next section. When the problem solving is concluded and the Intervention Plan is written, the team coordinator brings closure to

the meeting by verbally summarizing the major decisions and identifying the individuals responsible for implementation of the plan.

## **Suggested Meeting Steps and Procedures** (Appendix C)

***Welcome & Expectations*** *(2-3 minutes)*

- Team Coordinator welcomes and introduces invited personnel, thanks requestor; sets positive tone
- Confirms meeting purpose, outcomes, agenda, and timelines

***Problem Identification & Clarification*** *(4-5 minutes)*

- Requesting teacher and case liaison summarize problem succinctly

***Brainstorm Interventions*** *(6-8 minutes)*

- Team Coordinator leads focused brainstorming
- All present generate as many interventions as possible without critiquing
- Recorder takes minutes

***Evaluate Interventions*** *(6-8 minutes)*

- Team Coordinator leads discussion to analyze interventions, their match to the presenting problem and the feasibility of implementation
- Recorder takes minutes

***Select Intervention(s)*** *(3-4 minutes)*

- Team Coordinator assists requesting teacher, with the support of team, to select preferred interventions

***Write Action Plan*** *(4-5 minutes)*

- Team Coordinator leads team to complete the plan including interventions, support to the teacher, person(s) responsible, timelines, data to be collected, date for follow up meeting
- Recorder captures plan in writing; retains copy and gives to requesting teacher

***Summarize & Close*** *(1-2 minutes)*

- Team Coordinator verbally summarizes major points of the meeting and prompts about next steps

## Follow-up/Monitoring

In many cases, the amount of support provided to the teacher determines the success of the intervention. Support in planning and conducting interventions and gathering data is critical to achieving positive outcomes for students. The case liaison or other designated team member schedules a personal planning meeting to review and clarify the selected intervention(s) and help in development of needed materials or procedures. Support may include conducting observations using a fidelity checklist, coaching, and providing feedback. Team members may also need to provide assistance with data collection.

## Recordkeeping

The intervention team establishes a straightforward procedure for maintaining documentation of their meetings and student plans. Many teams simply assemble a three-ring binder with alphabetical tabs where intervention plans, supporting data, and follow-up reports can easily be inserted. Others choose to use individual folders stored in a central location. Once a case is closed, the information is transferred from the binder or the folder to the student's cumulative file. Special record keeping policies are not required.

Confusion exists about the amount of intervention documentation that is required, and many schools have made this record keeping unnecessarily cumbersome. The resulting stacks of documentation are often unwieldy and ineffectual. Practice tells us that two to three forms, completed concisely, provide the needed documentation:

## The SST Intervention Plan

The intervention plan is a one-page, two-sided document that succinctly summarizes all of the SST meeting's key discussion and decision points. The front side of the form includes space to document the student's name, date of birth, school, date of meeting, and names of participating team members. It also includes an area for a brief summary of the student's academic and social behaviors. Additional space is provided to document information regarding target behaviors, replacement behaviors/goals, functions of behaviors, as well as student's strengths. This information guides the team in the selection of interventions and means to measure their impact. Preparation tasks, support activities and follow-up requirements are recorded on the plan along with the person(s) responsible for monitoring the student's plan. (see Appendix D). The Intervention Brainstorming graphic organizer captures all of the possible interventions for ongoing reference (see Appendix E).

## Intervention Follow-up Report

The follow-up report allows the team to record the outcomes from the original plan and to continue or extend planning, if necessary. Identifying information is kept to a minimum since this form is attached as an addendum to the intervention plan. The form includes space to summarize implementation results, check outcomes, and engage in further intervention planning (see Appendix F).

### Team Log

Some teams prefer to maintain an at-a-glance log of their meeting date(s), case name(s), presenting problem(s), and the conclusion (see Attachment G). This log is helpful in establishing a meeting history and in monitoring needed follow-up and review activities.

When these relatively simple forms are carefully maintained along with any data collected before and/or during interventions, educators can communicate effectively about intervention efforts to other teachers or the CSC. Again, this information is transferred to the student folder at the end of the year or shared with the CSC if a referral is determined necessary.

## DoDEA Accommodation Plan[2]

The DoDEA Accommodation Plan is used to document information for students with disabilities who are not eligible for special education, but are eligible for accommodations (see Appendix H). A DoDEA Accommodation Plan is a written plan developed by the Accommodation Team specifying the nature of the student's disability and the major life activity it limits, the basis for determining the disability, the educational impact of the disability, the area(s) for accommodation(s), the accommodation strategies and documentation as to how the student's progress will be determined. DoDEA Regulation 2500.14, "Nondiscrimination and Accommodation on the Basis of Disability in DoDEA Conducted Education Programs and Activities," October 30, 2007 authorizes services for students with disabilities who are not eligible for special education services.

Note: The Intervention Follow-up Report and the Team Log may be used for tracking and documenting information regarding students with DoDEA Accommodation Plans.

[2] An Accommodation Plan is called a 504 Plan in U.S. public schools.

## The SST Problem-Solving Process

Once the team has established operating procedures and roles, the challenging next step is to utilize a practical and efficient problem-solving process. Problem-solving is the method for defining the presenting problem clearly, generating and selecting high probability interventions, and planning and monitoring implementation.

### Problem Identification and Description

It is crucial to have an objective description of the academic and/or behavioral problem before the team can begin to assist the teacher. A concrete definition avoids confusion and ensures that everyone is talking about the same thing. It helps to eliminate negative labels such as "lazy," "rude" or "insubordinate" that defy change, and do not allow for measurement of progress. There are five steps to problem identification:

**(1) Pinpoint the problem.** The concerns must be articulated in objective and specific terms free of judgments about the nature of the behavior. For the teacher who states that the student "*just doesn't care*" the prompts or questions might be, "Tell me *exactly* what the student does that makes you think he/she *does not care*?" (e.g., he ignores directions, does not do his work, and sleeps in class.)

- For the teacher who states that the student is insubordinate," or "immature," the prompts or questions might be, "Tell me *exactly* what the student does." "What does the student do that makes you think he/she is *insubordinate*?" e.g., he argues with me, he refuses to do as told.

**(2) Conduct Observations.** Academic and social behaviors that can be seen or heard provide the needed clarity of the teacher's concern(s). Sometimes the list of problems is lengthy and decisions need to be made regarding where to begin. Usually two or three concerns are all that can be successfully addressed at any given time. It is suggested that the teacher prioritize the problems. The questions to ask might include, "Which problem occurs most frequently?" or "Which one of the student's behaviors do you find most distressing?" In some cases, a behavior if changed could have a "domino effect" on other troublesome behaviors.

- If one intervenes with a child who is ignoring directions, not attempting work and sleeping in class, by addressing "not attempting work" the other behaviors will likely improve as well.
- If one intervenes with a child who is out of his seat, roaming the room, seldom completing work, and disrupting other students, by addressing "staying in his seat," the other behaviors will likely improve as well.

Sometimes the intervention team will want to choose a problem that can be quickly or easily changed in order to gain momentum. To fully understand the behavior we must look at *antecedents*; when or under what conditions the behavior occurs. We are looking for setting variables, activities, or interactions with others that lead to the behavior of concern.

- Identify what happens immediately before the sleeping behavior occurs, e.g., teacher is beginning instruction and student puts head down on desk and goes to sleep. Also, look for a pattern of the behavior, e.g., sleeps during reading, writing and math, but does not sleep during music, P.E., art or computer lab.

- Identify when the student argues with the teacher, e.g., when corrected, when requests are denied, etc.

It is also necessary to discover what *consequences* are currently at play; that is, what happens when the student behaves appropriately and what happens when the student misbehaves. Question such as the following will help to identify the consequences:

- "What does the teacher do when the student behaves appropriately?" The teacher expects the student to cooperate and therefore does not comment on appropriate behavior.
- "What does the teacher do when the student sleeps?" The teacher warns the student then ignores the behavior and lets the student sleep.
- "What happens immediately after the student argues with the teacher?" The teacher sends the student to the office.

**(3) Consider function of behavior.** Awareness of consequences leads to functional thinking that establishes the purpose the behavior serves. In its simplest form, the function is determined by asking the questions "Why is he doing this?" or "What is the payoff for sleeping, or arguing?" All behavior has a function driving it. Students behave either to *avoid* or *escape* something; feelings of inadequacy, anxiety or discomfort or to *gain* or *obtain* something; attention, power, or revenge. **Considering the function of the behavior also helps to clarify whether the student cannot do the work or will not do the work.** Clearly interpreting the function will guide the selection of useful interventions. For example, a student throwing tantrums each time she is told to join her reading group is being sent to time out; once in time out she quiets down quickly. When questioned about the function of the behavior, the teacher can now see that the student is escaping reading instruction, which is difficult for the student. Continued use of the exclusionary interventions (such as timeout) is not appropriate.

**(4) Establish replacement behavior/desired outcomes.** Once behaviors of concern have been pinpointed and antecedents identified, it is relatively easy to pair the behavior with the opposite, alternative, or replacement behavior. For the child that is out of his seat, the desired behavior is to remain in his seat or ask permission before leaving. For the child who argues with the teacher when corrected, the replacement behavior is accepting correction calmly. The question to ask is "What is the goal?", "What do you want the child to do or achieve?", or "What is the preferred behavior?" Alternative or replacement behaviors are always stated as the presence of the preferred or desirable behavior, not the absence of the problem behavior e.g., "accepting correction calmly" instead of "not arguing".

**(5) Identify student strengths and interests**. Knowing what the student likes and what s/he does well is essential to seeking solutions that build on assets. A student that is passive and not involved in academic learning may have talents in other areas and that potential can be used and channeled to engage the student in positive behaviors. Interests can also be used to develop reinforcing activities. Questions to ask might include "What does this student do well?" or "What does he choose to do when s/he has free time?" Defining the problem succinctly in this way requires some skill and initially some time. It is therefore recommended that the case liaison and the teacher do this prior to the team meeting. This provides a non-threatening private setting for the teacher to respond to questions, uncovers the need for observation, and allows the case liaison

A student that is bossy with others may have leadership potential that can be used and channeled

to engage the student in positive behaviors. Interests can also be used to develop reinforcing activities. Questions to ask might include "What does this student do well?" or "What does he choose to do when s/he has free time?" Defining the problem succinctly in this way requires some skill and initially some time. It is therefore recommended that the case liaison and the teacher do this prior to the team meeting. This provides a non-threatening private setting for the teacher to respond to questions, uncovers the need for observation, and allows the case liaison to determine if Ancillary Team members will be needed. It also ensures efficient use of the team meeting time. At the team meeting, the case liaison can provide a succinct description, including all of the above variables, within 2-3 minutes. The team can then spend the majority of their time on solutions and planning for intervention.

## Brainstorming, Evaluating, and Selecting Interventions

When the problem has been stated concisely and one or two desired outcomes have been chosen, the team is ready to recommend interventions using a collaborative process. One example is brainstorming. This process guarantees efficiency and that each person, including the requestor, will contribute. There are four steps to brainstorming:

1. Silent generation of ideas in writing.

Begin by asking the team to take a minute to write as many possible interventions as they can. This one-minute think-to-write time results in a broader range of intervention generation. The Team Leader or individual facilitating the meeting should set up this activity by reviewing the goal or desired behavior(s), the function of the behavior, and student strengths. This will provide focus and increase the likelihood that ideas generated will be relevant to the problem. It may be helpful to prompt the team to think of interventions that: 1) teach missing academic skills in conjunction with alternative behaviors, 2) recognize or encourage appropriate behavior, 3) intervene or provide consequences when the problem behavior occurs, as well as 4) strategies that deal with setting variables. The team should be encouraged to consider all possible solutions from simplest to complex, to more obvious or obscure. They can also be prompted to prioritize their ideas should they have time.

2. Round robin sharing and recording of ideas.

At the conclusion of the silent generation, the leader asks all present, in turn, to share an intervention, continuing to go around to each member until an exhaustive list is obtained. Teams easily generate as many as 8-12 strategies. All comments, judgments or discussion are deferred until the list of ideas is completed. Each idea is listed. The recorder may use the same graphic organizer found on the back of the Intervention Plan on an easel or whiteboard to record the ideas for all to see. The silent generation of ideas and round-robin sharing should take no more than 6-8 minutes.

3. Clarification and discussion.

The next step is to seek clarity on interventions, as needed, to eliminate any that might conflict with the nature and function of the problem, and to advocate for those perceived as workable and powerful. Preference should always be given to interventions that are instructional and positive in focus. In addition, some feasibility considerations include: 1) degree of disruption to

classroom procedures and teacher routines, 2) possible side effects on the student or peers, 3) amount of support services required, 4) the difficulty of the strategy and prerequisite competencies required to implement, and 5) the power of the intervention and probability of success. Six-eight minutes should be enough time for thorough consideration of intervention possibilities.

4. Decision.

The individual who has the primary responsibility for implementation (the requestor) should, in the end, select the interventions that are most desirable. If the teacher is not comfortable with the intervention(s), he or she may not implement it with fidelity. Final selection can be guided by the wisdom of the other team members. Sometimes 3-4 interventions may be identified, with some being very easy to implement (e.g., increase rate of positive feedback or change seating) and 1-2 that require more effort. The selected interventions are circled and dated on the brainstorming graphic organizer (on both the form and the easel). This list then be available at subsequent meetings should further intervention consideration occur, avoiding the need to retrace the team's steps. The interventions to be implemented are entered on the front of the intervention plan form. Details about implementation do not need to be ironed out at this time, but addressed later at a personal planning meeting with the teacher.

**Writing the SST Intervention Plan**

The recorder has been entering much of the information on the form as the meeting has progressed (e.g., Brief Summary of Presenting Problem, Target Skills/Behaviors and Replacement Skills or Goals, Function of Behavior, and Student Strengths). Now that interventions have been selected, the written plan can be finalized. For each intervention, data that will be used to determine effect is noted. After this notation has been made, the preparation, arrangements, and materials development needed for implementation occur. Minimally, this includes a team member with the required skills meeting with the teacher to plan and prepare. Finally, a specific time for a follow-up meeting with the entire team is set. Typically, *two weeks* is a reasonable interval for full implementation and a good indication of intervention impact.

**Monitoring Implementation**

Team participation in implementation and monitoring of outcomes is often overlooked by teams as they put their efforts into problem-solving meetings. The collaborative nature of the team must extend throughout the intervention phase and includes support to the teacher, and data collection. A team member arranges to get together with the teacher following the team meeting to help prepare for implementation. This might include reviewing and explaining the interventions, developing an implementation checklist, modeling or role-playing the instruction or strategy, arranging with other school staff, or creating materials.

Ongoing encouragement should be provided during implementation. It might include observing, data collection, and coaching. The greatest success is realized when team members work collaboratively with teachers, to achieve positive outcomes.

Data collection. The behavior of concern should be monitored both prior to the intervention and after the intervention to measure its effectiveness. This may sound like a lot of work, but

monitoring behavior does not have to be difficult or time-consuming. It is, however, something that initially may require some assistance from a team member. Perhaps the most commonly used data is the frequency of a behavior (e.g. times seatwork is completed, times out of seats, interruptions during class, etc.). Use of existing records such as attendance/absentee records, or number of assignments completed/turned in, or number of disciplinary referrals can also be useful. Reviewing products, conducting interviews, completing rating scales or using sociograms are also possible tools. Schools using curriculum-based measures or direct daily measurement such as reading fluency provide a readily available source of achievement data. Collecting data is not an end, but a means to make clear decisions. Accordingly, the more important the decision (e.g., shift to a more or less difficult curriculum, increase or decrease the number of assignments, refer a student to the Case Study Committee, etc.) the more important it is to gather and analyze data. Data is also used to report progress accurately to the students, to other teachers, parents, and administrators.

## Conclusion

The SST is a powerful resource for schools. This school-based problem-solving team is composed primarily of educators who provide support to teachers to reduce the level of underachievement of students. The intervention team uses a common sense approach that offers a systematic process to successfully close the gap through which students at risk have traditionally fallen. The team members work together to uncover the underlying reasons that a student might be experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties and to assemble and implement practical interventions to address the student's problems.

## References

Bay, M., Bryan, T., & O'Connor, R. (1994). Teachers assisting teachers: A pre-referral model for urban educators. T*eacher* E*ducation and* S*pecial* E*ducation,* 17, 10-21. 17 Beck, R. (1991). Project RIDE. T*eaching* E*xceptional* C*hildren,* 23(2), 60-61. Brown, J., Gable, R.A.,

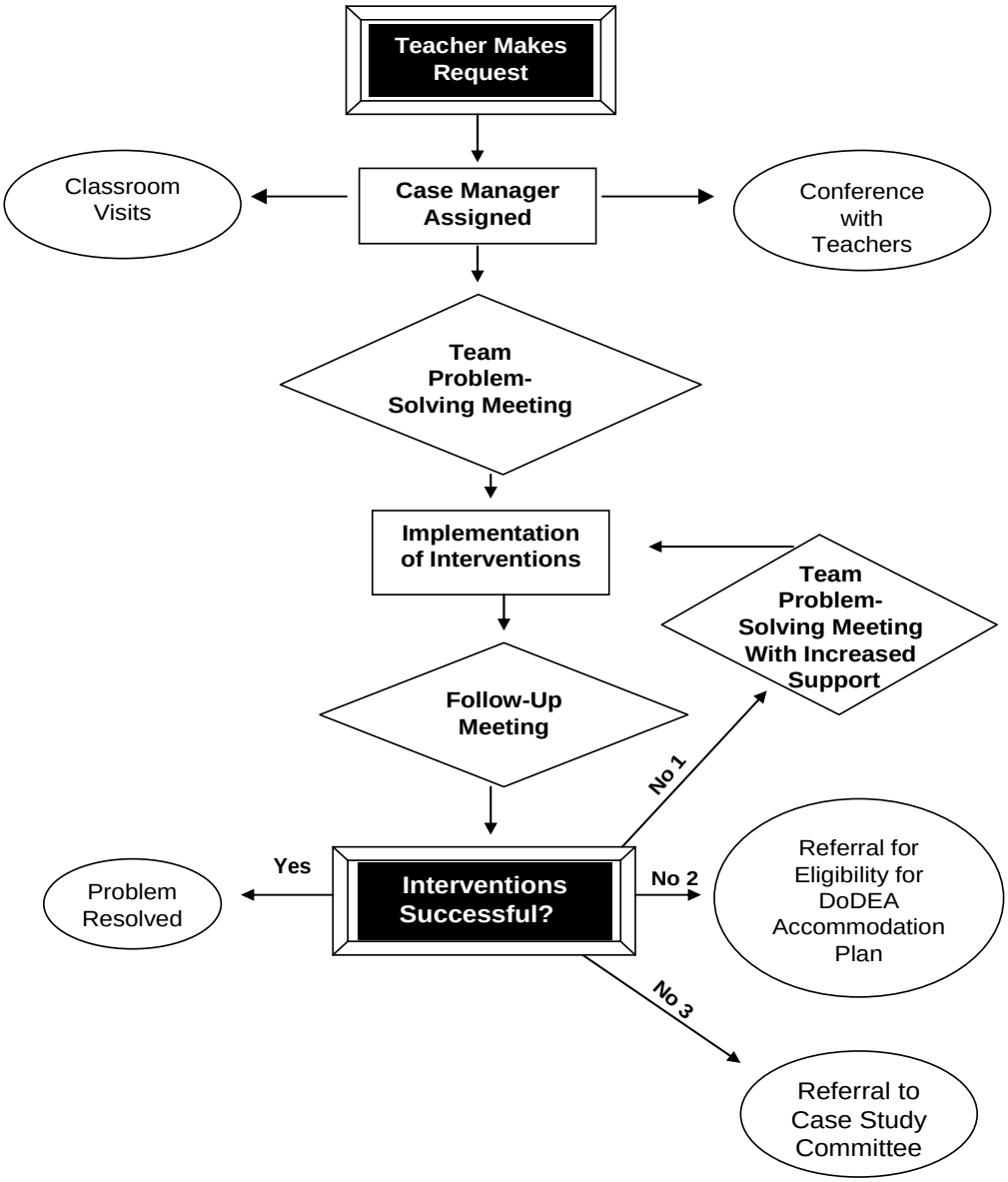
Chalfant, J.C., Pysh, M., & Moultrie, R. (1979). School: A model for within school based problem solving. L *earning* D*isabilities* Q*uarterly,* 2, 85-96.

Fuchs, D. (1991). Mainstream assistance teams: A pre-referral intervention system for difficult to teach students. In G. Stoner, M.R. Shinn & H.M. Walker (Eds.), I*nterventions for achievement and behavior problems* (pp. 241-267). Silver Spring, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Love, N. (2002) Student assistance program: *A guidebook for implementing and maintaining a core team process.* Round Rock, TX: Rising Tide Publications.

Suggested

## Team Process




Reprinted with permission from Sopris West June 01, 2006

# SAMPLE
# REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

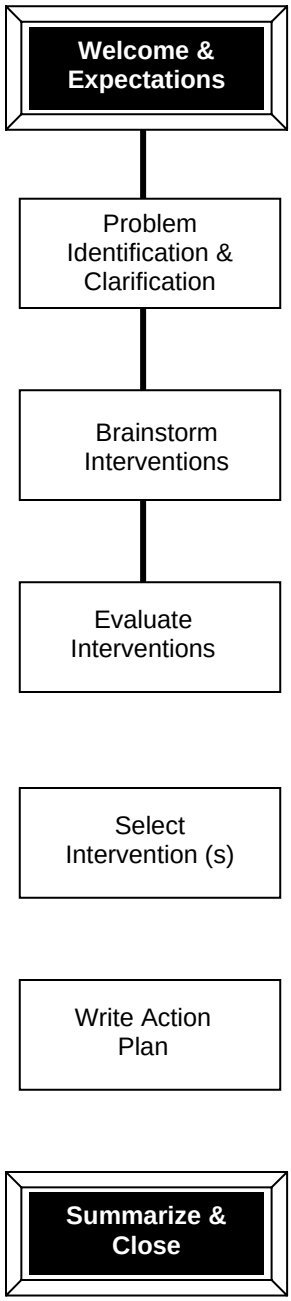
| | |
|---|---|
| **Date of Request:** | |
| **Student's Name:** | |
| **Teacher:** | |
| **Grade:** | |

| **Please Specify The Preferred Dates and Times to Meet with the Case Liaison:** | |
|---|---|
| **Date:** | **Time:** |
| **Date:** | **Time:** |
| **Date:** | **Time:** |

**Brief Description of Concern:**

**Signature of Person Making Referral:**

# Suggested Meeting Steps and Procedures




**Welcome & Expectations**

- Team Coordinator welcomes and introduces invited personnel, thanks requestor, and sets positive tone.
- Confirms meeting purpose, outcomes, agenda, and timelines.
- **2-3 minutes.**

**Problem Identification & Clarification**

- Requesting teacher summarizes problem succinctly
  - Case Liaison provides support to the teacher, e.g., clarifies information as needed
- **4-5 minutes.**

**Brainstorm Interventions**

- Team Coordinator leads focused brainstorming.
- All present generate as many interventions as possible without critiquing.
- Recorder takes public minutes.
- **6-8 minutes.**

**Evaluate Interventions**

- Team coordinator leads discussion to analyze interventions, then match to the presenting problem and feasibility of implementation.
- Recorder takes public minutes.
- **6-8 minutes.**

**Select Intervention (s)**

- Team Coordinator assists requesting teacher, with the support of team, to select preferred interventions.
- **3-4 minutes.**

**Write Action Plan**

- Team Coordinator leads team to complete the plan, including interventions, support to the teacher, person(s) responsible, timelines, data to be collected, date for follow-up meeting.
- Recorder captures plan in writing; retains copy and gives to requesting teacher.
- **4-5 minutes.**

**Summarize & Close**

- Team coordinator verbally summarizes major points of the meeting and provides prompts about next steps.
- **1-2 minutes.**

Reprinted with permission from Sopris West June 01, 2006

SAMPLE

Team Name

# INTERVENTION PLAN

Student Name:_____ DOB:_____ Date:_____
School: _____ Teacher(s):_____
Team Members:_____
_____

Brief Summary of Presenting Problems(s):

| Target Behaviors: | Replacement Behaviors/Goals: |
|---|---|
| Function of Behavior: | Student Strengths: |
| Selected Interventions: | Measurement: |

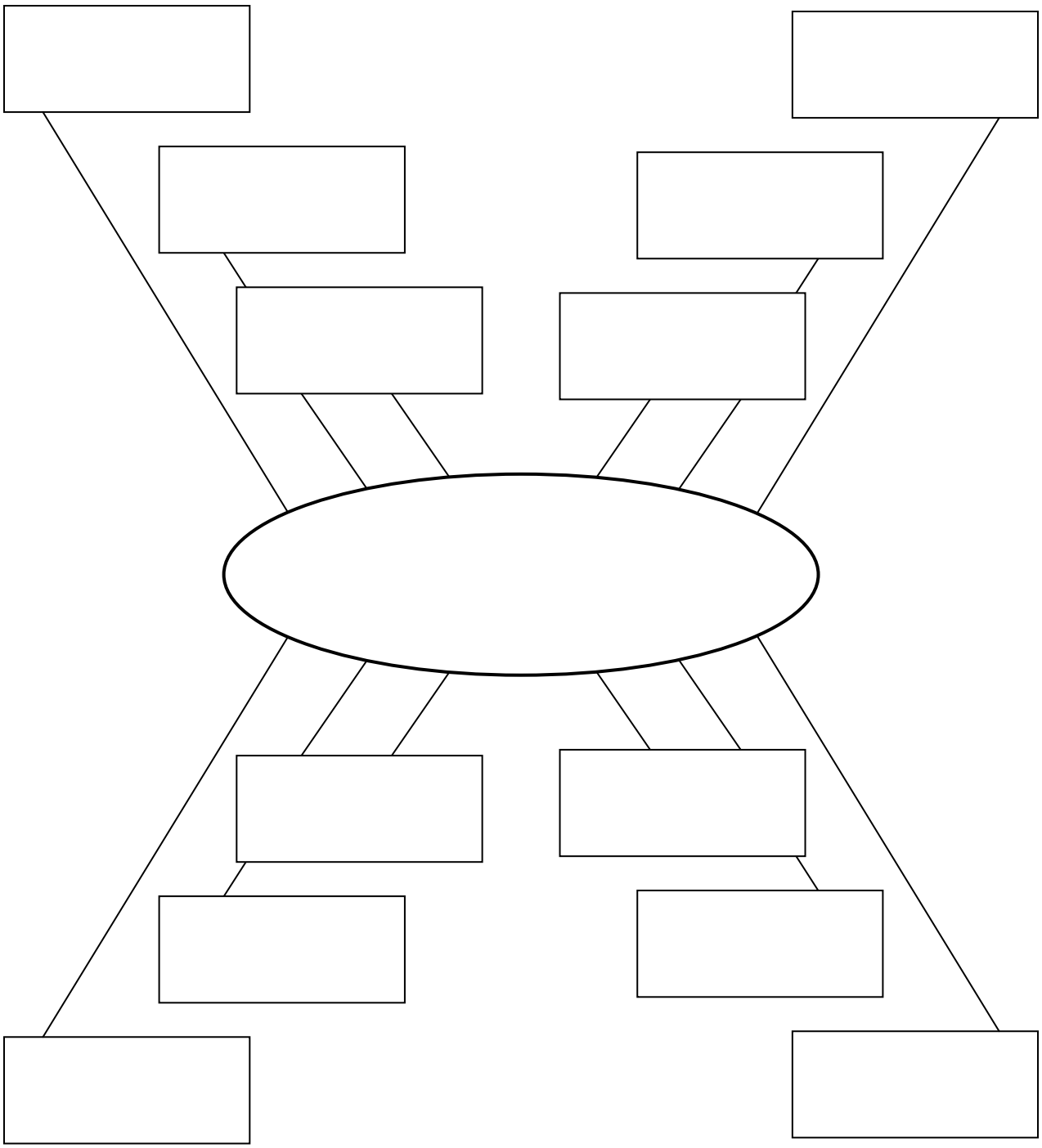
Person(s) Responsible, Preparation, Support, and Follow-up Plans:

Reprinted with permission from Sopris West June 01, 2006

**SAMPLE**

# INTERVENTION BRAINSTORMING

**Directions:** Place selected replacement behaviors/goals in the center and put possible interventions in outer boxes. When completed, prioritized interventions can be circled and dated.



Reprinted with permission from Sopris West June 01, 2006

# SAMPLE: INTERVENTION FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Student Name:_____ DOB:_____ Date:_____

Summary of Results/Outcomes:

| Selected Interventions: | Measurement: |
|---|---|

Person(s) Responsible, Preparation, Support, and Follow-up Plans:

Case Status (Check One.)

- ☐ Significant improvement, problem resolved-case closed.
- ☐ Problem resolved, new problem identified-new Intervention Plan developed.
- ☐ Problem not resolved-new interventions recommended.
- ☐ Referral for eligibility for Accommodation Plan.
- ☐ Referral to Case Study Committee.
- ☐ Other:

Reprinted with permission from Sopris West June 01, 2006

**Team Name**

## SAMPLE Intervention Team Log

| Date | Student | Teacher | Presenting Problem | Decision/Action* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

***Decision/Action:**

-Initial Intervention Plan Developed
- Case Closed
- New/Revised Plan Developed
-Referred for Accommodation Plan
-Referred to the Case Study Committee

Reprinted with permission from Sopris West June 01, 2006

# DoDEA ACCOMMODATION PLAN

**SCHOOL:** _____

## PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

**AUTHORITY:** 20 U.S.C. 921-932 and 10 U.S.C. 2164, as amended; E.O. 9387 (SSN) and 13160 (Nondiscrimination); and the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, 5 U.S.C. 552a.
**PRINCIPAL PURPOSE(S):** The information will be used within the DoD to determine the appropriate accommodations to be made to the educational programming for a particular child to ensure the child receives a free public education.
**ROUTINE USE(S):** Disclosure of information on this form is authorized by 5 U.S.C. 552a (b) (2) within DoD when required to perform an official duty, and outside DoD by 5 U.S.C. 552(b) (3) in accordance with the "Blanket Routine Uses" universally published at http://www.defenselink.mil/privacy/notice/osd.
**DISCLOSURE:** Disclosure to the Agency of the information requested on this form is voluntary; but failure to provide all requested information may result in the delay or denial of student services.

Date: _____

Student: _____

Grade: _____ Subject(s)/Class (es): _____

Date of Implementation: _____ Review Date: _____

Identify the nature of the student's disability (ies) and the major life activity (ies) it limits.

_____

_____

_____

Describe the basis for determining the disability (ies): (medical and/or other pertinent evaluations, (if any)

_____

_____

_____

Describe the educational impact of the disability (ies): (relate information/data provided by teacher, progress reports, school history)

_____

_____

_____

Identify area(s) for accommodations(s):

_____ Classroom/Curriculum Tests
_____ Projects
_____ Transition Activities
_____ Environment
_____ System-wide Assessment Program
_____ Classroom Assignments
_____ Homework
_____ Note taking
_____ Grading
_____ Other (specify)

Describe the accommodation(s) that will be provided for the student: (attach additional sheets as needed)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Student progress will be documented by:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4._____

Signatures:

Parent/Sponsor/Guardian: _____

Student: _____

Administrator: _____ Counselor: _____

Teacher: _____ Teacher: _____

Designated Monitor: _____ Other: _____

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION: (optional)