

Pre-Referral Playbook

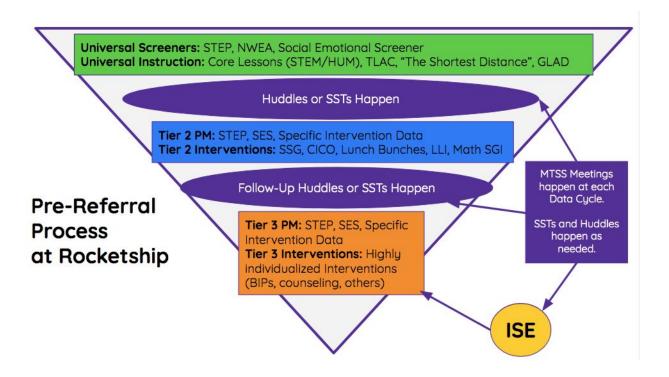
Section 1: Overview of the Pre-referral Process and Purpose

What is a pre-referral process?

"Pre-referral process" refers to any of the general education interventions that occur for students who do not have IEPs. It's a bit of a misnomer, because pre-referral interventions don't always lead to a referral for a special education evaluation – in fact, when we are executing a high quality pre-referral process, we will be able to successfully intervene early with many students, **preventing the need for a special education evaluation** and "label."

There are many components of the pre-referral process at Rocketship, ranging from the LLI small groups that occur with tutors in the learning lab to the handwriting intervention groups to actual SST meetings. The focus of this playbook is on the 'Student Study Team' (SST) component of our pre-referral process, and how it fits within the greater Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework at Rocketship.

The SST meeting is a problem-solving process during which stakeholders come together to generate solutions for the most serious individual student challenges in the educational setting. SSTs are held when other classroom-based or small-group interventions (generated through universal screenings or MTSS meeting decisions) have been unsuccessful, in order to address a range of student needs. Areas of concern may include academic, behavioral, social-emotional, ELL, sensory motor, self-care, speech and language, or attendance difficulties. SSTs are a function of general education, although ISE team members are sometimes involved as consultants (particularly when a referral for Special Education assessment is being considered).



What legal requirements inform pre-referral policies and procedures?

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) governs the identification, evaluation and implementation of special education services. Interventions within the general education program shall be implemented before referral for a special education evaluation. (Cal. Ed. Code Section 56303). Rocketship also recognizes the requirement to proceed without delay in the initiation of an evaluation when the school has reason to suspect that a child has a disability. For that reason, even when a formal evaluation of a student is in process, academic and/or behavioral interventions are planned and implemented in order to support the student while the evaluation is completed.

Rocketship also responds formally to all parent and staff requests for special education evaluation in accordance with state and SELPA guidelines and regulations. If a verbal request for special education evaluation is made by a parent or staff member, the receiving staff member assists the parent in putting their request in writing. Written requests are day and time stamped by the receiving staff member and immediately delivered to the grade level school leader who connects with the school psychologist. The school team then schedules a formal SST meeting, which includes the parent, to respond to the formal request for evaluation. During that meeting, if it is determined that there is reason to suspect the child may have a disability, an assessment plan is drafted and provided to the parent. Parents will receive a written Assessment Plan within 15 days. Rocketship Redwood City will also notify the District and/or SELPA of the assessment request within five days of receipt. Parents will be given at least 15 days to provide consent. If the parent provides consent to proceed with the evaluation, the special education team completes the evaluation and schedules an IEP meeting to discuss the results, including a recommendation for eligibility for special education services, within 60 days of the receipt of written consent. Assessment Plans and Prior Written Notice documents are always provided to parents in their primary language, and are accompanied by a current copy of the SELPA's Procedural Rights and Safeguards.

Section 2: The Student Huddle Process (Optional)

At Rocketship, an *optional* step in the pre-referral process is known as a "Student Huddle." Student huddles happen before SSTs meetings, as a way to engage in some initial brainstorming and problem solving, before needing a more formal and intensive meeting. The "Student Huddle" is a grade level, team-based problem solving process which focuses on generating interventions and supports for an individual student, with the intention that the supports generated for that student will benefit several students in the cohort. Supports generated in the Student Huddle process should be relatively low lift for teachers – the idea is to assess the degree to which the student responds to low level supports in the classroom before investing in the time intensive process of generating targeted, intensive supports.

Rocketship began implementing the Student Huddle process in 2013-14, and teams that implemented the process with fidelity reported a range of positive outcomes, including increased teacher capacity to support struggling students.

What happens during a Student Huddle?

During a Student Huddle, the grade level school leader (or other named staff) facilitates a discussion with the grade level team regarding the individual student of concern. The presenting concern can be academic, behavioral, or both. The team clarifies the concern, brainstorms potential solutions, commits on a plan of action, and schedules a date to revisit the plan to evaluate success and determine next steps.

What happens after a Student Huddle?

After the Student Huddle occurs, teachers implement the committed next steps and supports that were agreed upon, and the school leader monitors and supports the implementation of these supports. The grade level team should revisit the student approximately 4 weeks after the initial Student Huddle.

Based on the responsiveness of the student, the team may decide to:

- Discontinue the support(s) (if the student has made adequate progress and the concerns have diminished)
- Continue the support(s) (if the student is making good progress but is not yet ready to function without the support)
- Refer the student to SST, a more intensive level of support

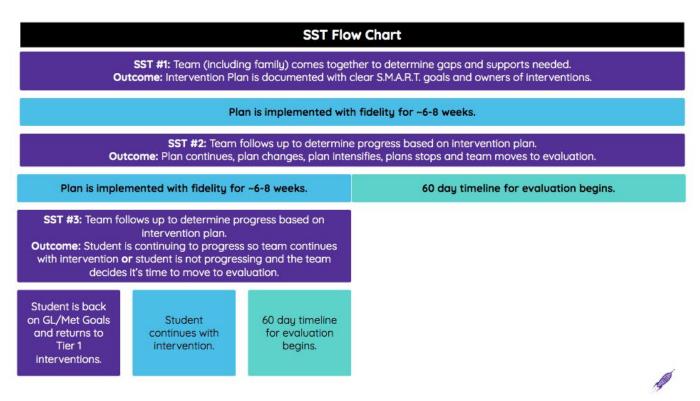
How do we know if a student should be referred to an SST?

Based on the responsiveness of the student, the team may decide to:

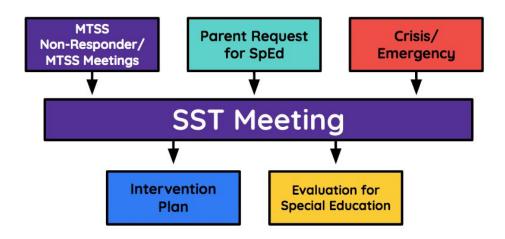
- Multiple teachers are struggling to support the student
- The student is struggling in more than one area

Section 3: Overview of the SST Process

The Student Study Team, or SST, is a more intensive team-based problem solving approach, in which a team of individuals creates an intensive, individualized support plan for a student who is demonstrating significant and persistent academic and/or behavioral challenges. An SST is also held any time a parent request for special education assessment is made (see Section 4 of this playbook for more information on how to respond to parent requests for special education assessment). The various ways that a student can arrive at an SST, as well as the potential outcomes of an SST meeting, are summarized in the graphic below:



What leads to an SST? What is the outcome of an SST?



How do staff prepare for an SST meeting?

Teachers should come to SST meetings prepared to share quantitative and qualitative information on the student's present levels of performance, including rates of progress and performance compared to the class average. If the student is participating in an intervention(s), the intervention provider(s) should be prepared to share the student's current progress monitoring data (e.g. STEP data, CICO data, etc.). If behavior concerns are indicted, the school leader/grade level coach should be prepared to share any relevant discipline data (e.g. suspension reports or BDF data). If special education assessment is being discussed at the meeting, the school psychologist/mental health provider will prepare any required paperwork and invite any relevant related service providers.

What happens during an SST meeting?

During an SST meeting, staff review available data and generate interventions to support the student. See the "resources" section of this playbook for more guidance on creating interventions for individual students. Team members create specific goals for the student, along with a plan for monitoring progress towards the goals. The team aligns on next steps and responsibilities, and schedules the follow-up SST meeting.

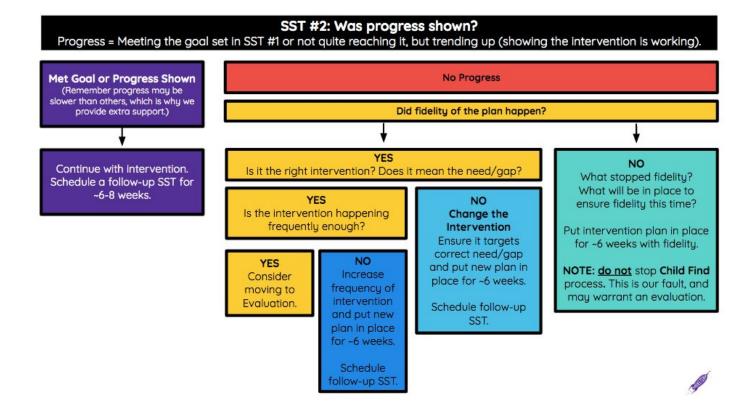
What happens after an SST meeting?

After the SST meeting, the interventions are implemented and progress is monitored. The school leader/grade level coach monitors and, if necessary, supports the implementation of interventions and the monitoring of student progress. A follow-up SST meeting is held within 4-6 weeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions and generate next steps.

Based on the responsiveness of the student, the team may decide to:

- Discontinue the intervention(s) (if the student has made adequate progress and the concerns have diminished)
- Continue the intervention(s) (if the student is making good progress but is not yet ready to function without the support of the intervention)
- Intensify the intervention if student is not seeing the progress set
- Change the intervention, if it is not targeting the correct need/gap

^{*}see chart on next page to help determine next steps



How do we know if and when we should consider a special education evaluation for a student?

The same guidelines described in the "Student Huddle" section of this playbook apply here as well. Please note that the school psychologist or speech language pathologist (in cases of suspected speech or language impairment) **must always** be involved in the decision to assess for special education eligibility and related service providers **must always** be involved in determining whether or not to assess in their area of expertise.

Students may be appropriate candidates for a special education evaluation when:

- They are not "on track" to meet their goal after at least 2 rounds of intervention
- They have not made significant progress towards grade level standards despite individualization of Tier 3 interventions
- They remain at least 2 years below grade level, despite a history of small group Tier 2 interventions
- Their behaviors significantly impact the learning of the class, or their own learning despite Tier 2 interventions (CICO, social skills groups, lunch bunches, etc.), Tier 3 interventions (counseling, behavior plan), and the teacher is successful at all executing TLAC skills at a Tier 1 level.
- Any behavior that is dangerous to students or staff (boulder level) and has occurred repeatedly (3 or more boulder level behaviors).
- Student is unable to care for personal needs at an age-appropriate level (feeding, toileting, following routines, age-appropriate independence skills, etc.)

In addition, the psych services team and principal will hold have bi-weekly meetings where the principal can consult about:

- Whether or not a specific student concern warrants additional support
- Potential interventions to discuss at an upcoming SST meeting
- To pre-meet regarding appropriate next-steps at a follow-up SST (including the possibility of offering an assessment).

Can I refer a student with an IEP for an SST meeting?

No! If a team member has concerns about a student who already has an IEP (including a speech only IEP), they should work with the student's case manager to schedule an IEP meeting to discuss the concerns and next steps. Any changes to the educational program of a child with an IEP must be made through the formal IEP process.

If a concern is expressed by a member of the student's IEP team (ex. Parents or teacher) that concern must be addressed in the form of an IEP meeting within 30 days.

Section 4: Responding to Parent Requests for Special Education Testing

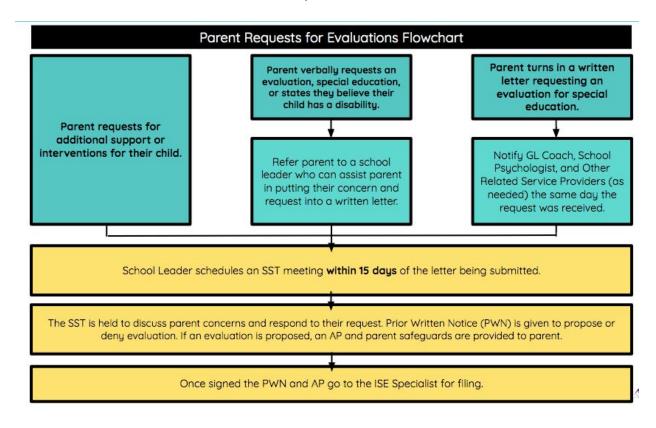
There are several IDEA guidelines that mandate how schools must respond when a parent makes a formal request for special education testing. Schools are **required** to:

- Assist the parent in putting the request in writing, if the request is made verbally.
- Respond formally and in writing to the request within 15 calendar days of receiving it.
- Consider the request for assessment and, unless the available data demonstrates that there is **no reason** to suspect the child may have a disability (e.g. the child is performing on grade level in all areas and is not displaying any maladaptive behaviors), comply with the request.
- If a request is being denied a PWN must be completed. The written request, SST notes, and PWN must be filed into the student's CUM (in the red folder).

At Rocketship, we utilize our Student Huddle and SST process as the formal mechanisms for responding to parent requests for special education assessment. See process below.

What?	Who?	When?
Assist the parent in putting the request in writing (if necessary)	The individual receiving the request (usually the OM or a school leader)	Immediately upon hearing the request
Notify the school psychologist and the appropriate related service providers based on the concerns (ex. speech pathologist if language concerns and occupational therapist if sensory, motor, and/or self-care concerns)	The individual receiving the request	Immediately (same day!) upon receiving the request
Schedule and facilitate a Student Huddle meeting	The school leader managing the grade level	Ideally within 7-10 days of receiving the request
Conduct a record review to gather historical data for the team to review	School Psychologist	Prior to the Student Huddle meeting
Determine, based on the available data, if the school will proceed with a special education evaluation	The Student Huddle team (classroom teachers, school leader, school psychologist, and speech pathologist <if applicable="">)</if>	During the Student Huddle meeting
Prepare the paperwork based on the decision	The School Psychologists and Speech Pathologist (if applicable)	After the Student Huddle and prior to the SST meeting
Schedule and facilitate an SST meeting wherein the school's decision and appropriate paperwork is presented to the parent	The school leader managing the grade level (in collaboration with the school psychologist and/or Speech Pathologist, if applicable)	Within 15 days of receiving the request (remember that this is our legal mandate)

Parent Request FlowChart



Section 5: SST Roles and Responsibilities

Grade Level School Leader:

- Schedule SSTs for their grade levels
- Facilitate SST meetings for their grade levels, and ensure action steps are completed
- Schedule follow up SST meetings and ensure the team re-visits intervention data and progress.
- Complete screening referral forms, submit to service provider, invite service provider to follow up meeting, engage in communication regarding results if service provider cannot attend follow up

Psych Services Team Responsibilities:

- Available for designated SST 30 minute blocks (2 per site per week)
- Will attend SSTs when special education evaluation is be considered (within SST blocks)
- Will attend on-going meetings with SST lead to prepare for upcoming SSTs (recommended at least bi-weekly)
- Will attend SSTs held to respond to parent requests for evaluation
- Will attend SSTs for high level behavior needs
- Will hold weekly meetings with Principals to consult about upcoming SST meetings, or discuss the need for SSTs for specific students of concern.

Teachers:

- Refer students to the school leader if serious concerns exist outside of data cycles
- Bring relevant student data to Student Huddles and/or SST meetings
- Implement interventions and monitor progress
- Contribute information to speech and/or OT screening request paperwork when needed

Speech Language Pathologists/Occupational Therapists/Adapted Physical Education:

- Speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and adapted physical education providers, operating under ESSA as specialized instructional support personnel (SISPs), are referred to throughout this document as related service providers.
- When receiving screen requests coming out of MTSS meetings, complete screenings by next MTSS cycle date.
- When receiving screen requests coming out of SST meetings,
 - o Screen is completed within two-three weeks
 - o SST meeting to review screen occurs three weeks from the screen request. Team determines the next steps for intervention and support.
 - o Follow-Up SST Meeting in 6-8 weeks after implementation of related service intervention to determine the next stages of support.
- Attend SST meetings when needed (pending outcome of screens)

ISE Specialists

ISE Specialists typically do not attend Student Huddles or SSTs, as these are a function of general education. They may however attend in unique cases, such as:

- If an Assessment Plan will be proposed
- Tier 3 interventions with ISE groups are being considered (pending capacity)

Section 6: Support Requests for Speech, OT & APE

Teachers and School Leaders can identify student needs that may fall under the realm of speech and OT support. This could be a range of things from speech and language development, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, perceptual abilities, self-care skills, or sensory-related behaviors.

Here is the process for identifying the need and right supports for related services:

- Team identifies a concern for a student
- Submit a Related Services (OT, SLP & APE) Support Inquiry
- Related Service Provider connects with school team based on needs and school team schedules an SST in the following week for the Related Service provider to attend.
- Based on the initial SST meeting, the team decides the proper interventions and next steps. Depending on the need, a subsequent SST meeting is scheduled in 3-6 weeks to review intervention data.

What types of concerns might indicate a related service support inquiry: Speech

- Peers cannot understand the student
- The student struggles to follow simple (1-2 step) instructions, or comprehension is a significant area of concern
- Language appears significantly delayed, but not related to being an English language learner.

OT

- Difficulty with age-appropriate fine motor tasks, such as drawing shapes, opening containers, writing letters/numbers, cutting, or copying work from the board
- Inability to maintain a safe, seated position for a significant portion of class or difficulty navigating classroom or campus spaces safely (ex. stairs/playground)
- Difficulty completing age appropriate self-care tasks necessary for the school environment: eating, toileting, dressing
- Student engages in disruptive or unsafe sensory-related behaviors (eating or mouthing non-food objects, extreme responses to loud sounds or touch, unusual need to touch objects/textures, rocking/spinning)

APF

- Student has a severe orthopedic or other health impairment which prevents his/her from safely or successfully participating in the physical education program
- Student is unable to imitate basic motor actions (ex. hands over head), stand on one foot, jump, run, throw, or catch a large ball thrown from 5 feet away in spite of multiple teaching attempts.
- Check out the <u>APE Playbook</u> for all the information

Section 7: SSTs and Statewide Testing Supports

SBAC Testing (California and Wisconsin)

There are three types of supports available to students on the SBAC assessment. "Universal Supports" are available to all students and include things like scratch paper and a digital highlighter. "Accommodations" are available **only** to students who have them documented in a 504 or IEP, and include things like a scribe or use of a multiplication table. There is a third type of support, "Designated Supports" that are available to "any student for whom the need has been indicated by an educator." This includes things like testing in a separate setting and read aloud or scribe for math items.

TNReady (Tennessee)

Similarly, the TNReady assessment in Tennessee makes available several accessibility features to students for whom the need has been designated and documented.

Designating and Documenting Statewide Testing Supports (all regions)

At Rocketship, we use the SST process to identify required "Designated Supports" or "Accessibility Features" for students who may require them. In order to make these supports available to students in the SST process, you must:

- Discuss the need for the supports as an SST meeting, and **document** the need for the supports on the SST paperwork (there is a section for this)
- In the spring, the site-based testing coordinator will work with the analytics team to complete the ISAAP tool, wherein the designated supports are assigned to each individual student

See the "Resources" section for several SBAC and TNReady accessibility resources.

Section 8: Best Practices

Before the Meeting- Scheduling and Reminders: Keep SSTs scheduled during specified SST blocks when possible and try to avoid having more than 2 SSTs scheduled per week. Call parents to invite them to the meeting when it is scheduled and set up a calendar invite with appropriate school leaders, grade level teachers, ILS (optional), School Psych (if during SST blocks), other service providers, and translator (if needed). Call to remind parents of SST the week before. Sometimes, an OM can take the lead in scheduling with regular communication structures and management from the SST lead. At the SST meeting, the school leader (facilitator) will schedule the follow up meeting 6-8 weeks later. The school leader should add the meeting to the SST scheduling doc as well as send a gcal invite.

Sample Parent Scheduling Script:

"Hello Ms. Garcia, I wanted to let you know that a team of our staff including Valeria's teachers, the school psychologist, and the assistant principal who oversees 2nd grade would like to meet to discuss some ways to better support Valeria with reading. The team will be meeting on Monday October 12th from 7:15 - 7:45. If you are available, it would be great for you to join in order to share more information about Valeria and help with our problem-solving process. I know this time may be inconvenient, so if you'd like to call in to the meeting or have us send you home the paperwork with our notes and decisions afterwards, we can do that as well. Our office manager will be calling to remind you a few days in advance that there is a team meeting for Valeria on Monday October 12th at 7:15. We hope to see you there. Thank you."

During the meeting- Intervention Planning: The intervention plan is the action plan that is created in the SST meeting after student gaps are identified. The following guidelines should be considered with planning SST interventions. More information on intervention planning can be found "Resources" section of this playbook.

- Intervention should be directly aligned with the identified area of need
- Start with interventions and structures that are already available on your campus
- Consider how a Tier 1 or 2 support could be modified to be a tier 2 or 3 support (e.g. LLI 1:1, or double-dose of guided reading)
- Consider training select staff on additional interventions to allow for greater flexibility (e.g. Touch Math, Sound Partners, fluency routines, etc.)
- Accommodations **are not** interventions

During the meeting- Generating a Progress Monitoring Plan: As part of the intervention plan, a plan for monitoring student progress with intervention should also be developed. It is important that this plan is developed and implemented in order for the team to make decisions about next steps in follow up SST meeting. For example, if a student's progress monitoring data suggests little or no gain, the intervention should be modified. Conversely, if the data suggests that the student is on track to meeting the goal, the intervention should be continued. See below for additional guidelines in setting up progress monitoring plans.

- All SSTs should result in a specific goal. Example goals:
 - Master all letter names/sounds, or X number of sight words
 - Pass the comprehension portion on STEP 5
 - Be able to solve single digit addition problems at 80% accuracy
 - Meet CICO goal of 80% for 4/5 days consecutive days
- Whenever possible, use an already-existing assessment systems:
 - STEP
 - BDFs (Behavior Disciplinary Forms)
 - CICO
 - Formative assessments or benchmarks

Section 9: Common Pre-Referral Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Rocketship's pre-referral and SST process is designed to identify students needing support and match them with the appropriate intervention, as well as ensure that schools are adhering to their child find obligations. However, over the years we have observed several common pre-referral pitfalls, which are described below along with recommendations for avoiding them.

Pre-Referral Pitfall	Recommendations for Avoiding
Certain grade levels move students through the pre-referral process appropriately while other grade levels don't refer any students to SST.	Add a regular standing item to school leadership meetings wherein each school leader reports out how many students in their grade level are at each phase of the pre-referral process.
Schools focus heavily on student huddles and interventions in the learning lab for most of the school year without referring many (or any) students to an actual SST meeting, resulting in a large influx of special education assessment referrals for students who haven't been progressing in interventions.	 In general, if a student is at the second or third round of an SST meeting and has not been making progress in interventions, the team should <i>consider</i> the need for a referral for assessment. Schedule regular consultation with your School Psychologist to review the data of students in the intervention process and identify appropriate referrals. Student huddles should be for general concerns and should not last for more than 2 huddles.
School teams wait too long to schedule a Student Huddle meeting after receiving a parent request for special education testing, so they are unable to adhere to the 15 day timeline for formally responding to the request.	 Ensure that all staff members are aware of their obligation to support parents in putting verbal requests for assessment into writing. Ensure that all staff members are aware of the 15 day timeline requirement. Notify your school psychologist and/or speech language pathologist immediately when a request for evaluation for special education is received. Schedule the Student Huddle and follow-up SST meeting as soon as possible after the request for testing is received.
Students receive informal interventions (e.g. the ISE Specialist pulls them along with ISE students in a small group) but none of the interventions are documented. School teams want to refer students who are still struggling for a SPED evaluation, but it is difficult for	Ensure that SST meetings are held for students that require Tier 3 (individualized) interventions. In addition to the importance of documenting these interventions, parents must give permission in order for a student to be pulled out of their general program for intervention. The SST process ensures that

the ISE team to determine the	parents have provided informed consent for
appropriateness without documentation.	Tier 2 and 3 interventions.
Pre-Referral Pitfall	Recommendations for Avoiding
ISE is the only option for individualized, Tier 3 interventions. If the ISE caseload is full, there are no options for additional, non-ISE students who require that level of support.	Tier 3 just means that the intervention is targeted and individualized, and schools can be creative in thinking about who can deliver these services. See the "Resources" section for guidance.
SST teams fail to create a goal and a progress monitoring plan during the SST meeting, so when the follow-up meeting is held, they are unable to determine if the student has made adequate progress.	Pace SST meetings appropriately to ensure the team has time to align on a measurable, ambitious yet realistic goal, as well as a progress monitoring plan. Be sure to document the goal on the SST paperwork for reference in the next meeting.
Teams run out of time to assign owners to next steps, and when the follow-up meeting is held, none of the next steps have been completed because the team was unsure of who was responsible for each step.	 Pace SST meetings appropriately to ensure the team has time to align on ownership of next steps. Send an email to all meeting participants summarizing next steps.

Section 9: Behavior Intervention Plans

Students are often referred to the SST process because of concerns with maladaptive behavior (either in isolation or co-occurring with academic challenges). Most students will first be placed in social-emotional or behavior interventions as a result of MTSS meetings. For example, students may be placed in individualized plan named in SST, Check-In Check-Out (CICO), social skills groups, or counseling. In some cases, students will not respond adequately to these Tier 2 and 3 supports, and will continue to demonstrate highly disruptive, unsafe, or otherwise concerning behaviors.

In these cases, SST teams are encouraged to consider an assessment. If a student is at a level that they require an individualized behavior plan we should be formally assessing that area of need.

A behavior intervention plan identifies the target behavior as well as an appropriate replacement behavior, and outlines the approach the team will take to teach and reinforce the replacement behavior, as well as norm on a plan to respond when the problem behavior occurs. Behavior intervention plans are most effective when they are based on an identified function of the problem behavior. There are several resources in the "Resources" section of this playbook to help with intervention ideas prior to needing a full Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) to develop a BIP, but should a FBA be deemed necessary, the following will take place through the FBA process.

- 1. Identify the behavior the plan will be targeting.
- 2. Establish the baseline (i.e. how frequently the problem behavior occurs).
- 3. Hypothesize a function of the behavior (i.e. what need is currently being met for the student? What is the student trying to obtain or avoid with the behavior?)
- 4. Identify a replacement behavior (i.e. how can the student meet that same need with an alternative, acceptable behavior?)
- 5. Develop a SMART goal and a progress monitoring plan.
- 6. Identify the environmental changes that will need to be made in order for the student to use the replacement behavior.
- 7. Create a plan to teach the student the new replacement behavior.
- 8. Identify the strategies that will be used to positively reinforce the student for using the replacement behavior.
- 9. Align on how the team will respond if and when the problem behavior occurs again.

Note: School teams must get parental consent in order to collect behavioral data when developing a behavior intervention plan. The parent consent form can be found in the "Resources" section of the playbook.

The school site Mental Health Provider are available to support SST teams with the development of behavior intervention plans.

Section 10: Resources

Google Sites:

- MTSS
- Social-Emotional and Behavior

Student Huddle and SST Paperwork:

- Pre-Referral and 504 Dashboard (template)
- <u>Huddle and SST Notes</u> (template)

School SST Tracking Resources:

• <u>School MTSS Dashboard</u> (template)

Pre-Referral Graphics:

• RSP Pre-Referral Graphics (ppt format)

Resources to Support Teams in Generating Interventions:

- Tier 2/3 Academic Intervention Toolbox
- ELL Interventions Website
- <u>Tier 1 Speech and Language Strategies</u>

Behavior Intervention Planning Resources:

- Functions of Behavior Worksheet (template)
- <u>Internal Working Model</u> (template)
- <u>BIM</u> (template)
- Tier 3 Behavior Intervention Protocol
- Notice of Intent to Collect Data (parent permission form)
- <u>Progress Monitoring for Behavior Interventions</u>
- <u>Writing Function-Based Behavior Intervention Plans</u> (PD designed for school leaders)

Statewide Testing Accessibility Guidelines:

- TNReady Accessibility Guidelines
- SBAC Resources Guide (for CA and WI see page 5 for accessibility guidelines