SHOULD MY STUDENT BE TESTED BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Determining the Need for Assessment

It is the requirement of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) that, prior to a special education assessment, attempts to intervene in the regular education program using appropriate strategies and services will have been implemented and found to be insufficient. That is, the student will continue to show an inability to access and participate the general education despite these interventions. These interventions must be documented over time.

Student Study Team

- **If you are thinking your student may need an evaluation for Special Education, contact your student's classroom teacher or the school principal.**
- **Parent and teacher meet to discuss student's concerns.**
- **Next step (if issues continue) would be to set up a SST meeting.** Assessment is rarely necessary at this point. The SST team will develop strategies and interventions to support this student in the general education setting. The SST meeting is an important way to document the interventions that are being implemented and whether they are successful. A follow-up SST should be scheduled to review the effectiveness of the interventions. With every district, this process varies slightly.

WHEN DOES THE SCHOOL DISTRICT ASSESS A CHILD?

The school district will conduct a psycho-educational evaluation when there is reasonable basis to suspect that a student has an educationally handicapping condition that requires Special Education services.

Purpose of Assessment

The purpose of a school district administered psychoeducational assessment is to fulfill the mandate under federal and state law – The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – to search and serve with respect to the specified thirteen educational handicapping conditions. These educational handicapping conditions are:

- Autism
- Deaf-blind
- Deafness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disabilities
- Speech-Language Disabilities
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

Once an assessment is initiated, it must be completed within 60 days. An IEP meeting must then be convened to determine eligibility for Special Education services.

Consideration for Teachers and Parents

1. **Does your student have a history of academic underachievement?** A disability does not usually just show up; there is usually a history of academic deficiencies over an extended period of time.

2. **Have there been SST meetings on this student in the past?** If this is the first SST meeting on a student, then an assessment for Special Education is probably not appropriate because it suggests that interventions in the regular education setting have not been attempted.

3. **What interventions have been tried?** Has the student responded to these interventions? The District must attempt to remediate your student's difficulties within the general education setting before considering Special Education. If the student fails to show improvement with these interventions, then Special Education can be considered. Federal law dealing with (Least Restrict Environment) requires students to be educated in the general education setting as much as possible. Therefore, if a student is able to participate successfully in the general education setting with accommodations or modifications, then we do not need to consider Special Education. Many students have disabilities, but do not

need services because they can receive educational benefit without them.

4. **Is the student performing below grade level in one or more academic areas?** If the student is meeting grade level expectations, then an assessment for Special Education may not be appropriate.

5. **What are the student's STAR scores?** A student who receives Proficient to Advanced STAR scores probably does not require Special Education.

6. **What are the student's grades?** If the student's report card indicates grades of A's, B's, and C's (or 4's and 3's), then this student may not require Special Education.

7. **What is this student's cultural and socioeconomic background?** If a student's disadvantaged background is a primary cause of his or her academic underachievement, then that student may not be found eligible for Special Education services.

8. **Is your student an English Language Learner (ELL)? How long has this student been speaking English?** In order to qualify for special education, lack of English proficiency cannot be the primary cause of their academic underachievement.

9. **What is this student's school attendance record?** If a student misses a significant number of school days, then that student may not be eligible for Special Education services. Lack of instruction cannot be the primary cause of academic underachievement.

10. **Have there been any big changes in your student's life recently?** A death or birth in the family, a move, a divorce, trouble with friends – these can all cause students to have difficulties in school. They may look unfocused in the classroom

and/or their grades may suffer. This does not mean they have a disability.

11. **Do you have concerns about your student's emotional state?** If the student is anxious or depressed, this can affect your student's ability to concentrate in the classroom and perform well on tests. The student's emotional state should be addressed first with interventions.

12. **What is your student's motivation like? Does your student try hard in school? Do they care about getting good grades? Are they motivated to do well? Could this be the explanation for their academic underachievement?**

Should you have continued concerns regarding your child contact your district representative.
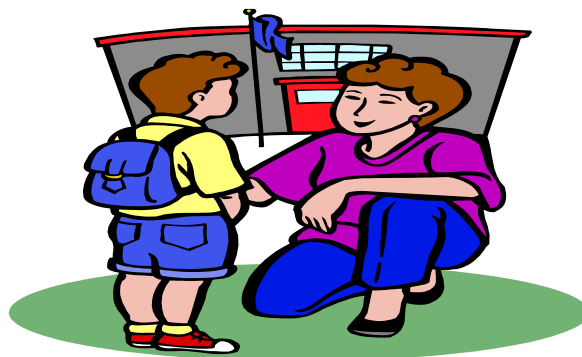
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INFORMATION
FOR
PARENTS

SAN MATEO COUNTY SELPA
101 Twin Dolphin Drive
Redwood City, CA 94065-1064

SELPA Coordinator
(650) 802-5473 Phone
jvepps@smcoe.k12.ca.us