

Guidelines for Student, Staff Assistance Teams (SSAT)



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Foreword

This handbook offers guidance on the development and implementation of Student Assistance Teams (SSAT) and is intended to assist educators when planning and operating such a team. A systematic approach for the establishment and operation of an effective SSAT is provided. The guidelines focus on the key requirements of the SSAT process, design, and procedures.

This handbook provides guidance on the development and implementation of effective and efficient school intervention teams to assist all struggling students. In Manchester Public Schools 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.

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Understanding the Student Support Team (SSAT)

Goals of the Team Process

The SSAT process emphasizes that early intervention for struggling students is a function of the general education program and not of Special Education. The SSAT is a school-based problem-solving team 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 SSAT as a “think-tank” or a forum for structured and routine focus on addressing student needs. The SSAT is a common sense approach that offers a systematic process to successfully close the gap through which students have traditionally fallen. The SSAT builds on existing services and efforts in order to upgrade the school’s ability to respond effectively to student needs. The SSAT has a vital role in creating a high achieving school as expressed in the following goals: 1) enable teachers to teach students more effectively using the resources provided by the district, 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 SSAT is not a gatekeeper to the Special Education process.

The Role of the Team

The SSAT’s primary function is to maintain a routine, structured problem-solving space in conjunction with teachers requesting assistance, and the resolution of student-centered problems. One school based SSAT will consider all concerns, including Academic and Behavioral. Teams work effectively with other teachers and staff members, analyze student problems, and design tier 1 differentiation powerful enough to effect the desired change.

Overview of the Process (Academic / Behavioral Flow Chart)

The process begins when a teacher makes a request for academic assistance or a student is displaying tier II or III behaviors. A member of the SSAT will meet with the teacher to review and clarify the concern and, in some cases, will conduct a classroom observation. Once the concern has been defined and any needed data gathered, the teacher will be scheduled to attend an upcoming SSAT meeting. At this meeting, the team focuses on brainstorming, evaluating, and selecting high leverage differentiation and creating an Action Plan ([Academic](#) + [Behavioral](#)) to support the student. The team reconvenes for a follow-up meeting to review the outcomes and determine the next steps. The problem-solving process continues until the tier 1 differentiation is successful or until a determination is made that a more in-depth evaluation for special services is required.



<u>SSAT Guideline</u>	<u>What to do:</u>
Staff members are seeing a pattern of Tier II and Tier III behaviors with a student in their classroom.	<p>Establish Tier I + Contact the Parent Meet with SSW/s to review current Tier I Classroom Strategies to be sure they are in place and identify additional classroom supports. Teacher should implement suggested interventions and strategies for at least 1-3 weeks (Dependent upon intensity of behavior(s)). Contact parents to discuss concerns.</p> <p>Note: Fidelity of Tier I classroom strategy implementation should be monitored</p>
If behaviors have not diminished / been eliminated:	Teacher completes a Request for SSAT . (Building specific) Case Liaison assigned will confer with the teacher and complete a classroom observation prior to Initial SSAT Meeting. Teacher to notify parent of a referral to SSAT.
Initial SSAT Meeting Occurs.	Complete SSAT Minutes for Initial SSAT Meeting. Based on classroom observation and response to Tier 1 interventions, the team will determine if SRBI intervention is needed. If so, the team will identify behaviors of concern and operationally define them for data collection.
Teacher collects ABC Data for 5 school days and completes the SEL Checklist .	Information shared with SSW/s who will develop a draft Proactive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP) to bring to the Follow-up SSAT Meeting.
Follow Up SRBI Meeting Occurs.	Team formalizes PBSP and enters information into the SSAT Minutes for Behavior.
Implement PBSP with fidelity (suggested timeline is 4-6 weeks).	<p>If the plan does not achieve desired results within a reasonable amount of time, reach out to your Case Liaison who will reach out to districtwide supports (BCBA / Coordinator of SEL / etc) and will schedule a Follow Up SSAT Meeting based on recommendations.</p> <p>Note: Fidelity of PBSP implementation will be monitored</p>
Review of Plan / Follow Up SSAT Meeting Occurs	Plan should be updated as needed if the team feels changes will improve student behavior.

Tier 1

Academics

K - 4 Classrooms should follow the Instructional Framework for Literacy and the [Instructional Framework for Numeracy](#) to ensure there is fidelity of implementation of instructional expectations. Literacy and Numeracy Coaches, Reading Consultants, and STEM Teachers are available to support teaching and learning around Tier I instruction; utilizing their expertise is essential.

Behavior

PK-4 Classrooms should maintain a [Positive Behavior Reinforcement System](#) and the additional [Tier 1](#) interventions. Secondary Classroom teachers should work in conjunction with their building based School Social Workers, School Counselors, and Behavior Technicians to ensure that appropriate Tier 1 interventions are in place; utilizing their expertise is essential.

Considerations for Utilizing the SSAT Process

The Student Assistance Team process outlined in these Guidelines has a strong focus on the individual student; however, that does not have to always be the case. The purpose of the process is to support the teacher to effectively educate and accommodate the needs of a student, with support. The SSAT process can also be used to support teachers that recognize they need assistance with more global concerns that affect all children. These areas might include: the effective use of classroom-wide positive reinforcement systems, the centering of race and the lived experiences of marginalized communities and the inclusion of culturally responsive teaching practices, classroom management and family engagement / communication.

In Manchester Public Schools, the same student(s) may be provided interventions and accommodations as determined by the 504 Team. The SSAT and 504 Team have many similarities in process, design, and procedure. Both teams use a collaborative model to identify researched based best practices and differentiated strategies 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. The existence of an SSAT does not prevent or impede a direct referral to Special Education or 504 by a parent, teacher, individual, or school team. While underscoring the general education ownership of this team, it is equally important to emphasize that the SSAT cannot be a substitute for Special Education or 504. When data presented implies that a student is not benefiting from research based interventions that have been implemented with fidelity, and the SSAT Team or an individual ***suspects*** the presence of a disability including but not limited to, learning, physical, mental or medical, a referral to special education or 504 must occur. Keep in mind that a student with an IEP or 504 plan ***may*** be referred to SSAT to address skills not currently addressed in the plan.

Helpful Scenarios

Student A: Student has primary disability of SLD in reading, however, the student has been getting frustrated and being physical with peers at recess. Although the student has IEP goals and objectives for reading, this does not preclude them from being referred through the SSAT process for behavior to support peer interactions.

Student B: Student has a 504 plan for ADHD that includes preferential seating and extended time on work. The child is now exhibiting much increased frustration and refusal during math. The student continues to score poorly on district assessments in math. The 504 plan does not preclude the child from being referred through the SSAT process to support math.

Process and Procedures for SSAT

The thoughtful design of the SSAT and selection of members is critical in achieving a viable and valued intervention service. The Core SSAT Team will meet weekly, virtually or in person.

SSAT Members

Within Manchester Public Schools, the Core SSAT should comprise of the following staff: Administrator(s), School Social Worker(s) and Behavior Technician(s) (as needed), the Reading Consultant/Specialist (or similar), the Math Coach / STEM Specialist (or similar). A list of ancillary support may be drawn from a broad range of school and community personnel including the School Psychologist, School Nurse, Special Education Teacher(s), School Counselor(s), CHR Clinician (or other Mental Health Clinicians), BCBA, Mentor, Parent/Guardians.

The Team, as the name implies, is the mainstay of the intervention process. The team is small enough to meet weekly and to ensure that each is personally engaged in the team's activities, but large enough to provide the needed collective wisdom and skills. Ancillary members serve at the request of the Core Team when needed for the resolution of the presenting problem.

The Core Team should identify the following members of the Core SSAT:

- **Coordinator** to be responsible for scheduling meetings as well as prioritize referrals.
- **A Case Liaison / SSAT Case Manager** to support the teacher throughout the SSAT process (ie Social Worker, Reading Consultant, Math Interventionist/STEM Teacher).
- **Recorder** to complete the Minutes + Action Plan ([Academic](#) + [Behavioral](#)).
- **Timekeeper** to keep the team focused throughout the meeting.

SSAT Referrals

In order for a student to be reviewed by the Core SSAT, a [Request for SSAT](#) will be used for all areas of concerns. Individual schools should turn this Google Doc into a Google (Purple) Form so that when their teacher's submit a form the information enters into a spreadsheet. The referral must be completed and submitted to the SSAT Coordinator. Referrals will be reviewed weekly by the Core SSAT and subsequent meetings will be scheduled in a timely fashion.

SSAT Procedures

All SSAT Teams should function as follows:

- The Core SSAT will meet weekly (virtually or in person) to review referrals (recommended: 30 min weekly)
- One School Based (Core) SSAT will consider all concerns including academic and behavioral.
- The Core SSAT should schedule initial meetings (with the classroom teacher to hear presenting concerns and to develop an Action Plan ([Behavioral](#) / [Academic](#)) (recommended: 60 minute meeting).
- Review dates will be scheduled every 4-6 weeks as necessary and applicable.

Conducting the Meeting

The team coordinator 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 strengths and clarify the concern, 2) brainstorm possible T1 differentiated strategies, 3) discuss and evaluate strategies, 4) choose continued T1 differentiation and/or formalize tiered 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 plan is written, the team coordinator brings closure to the meeting by verbally summarizing the major decisions and follow-up plan, and identifying the individuals responsible for implementation of this plan.

Follow-up/Monitoring

In many cases, the amount of support provided to the teacher(s) determines the success of the tiered intervention(s). Support in planning and conducting strategies and/or 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 differentiated strategie(s)/intervention 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. Please note the process for data collection in flow charts on page 5 and 6 of this document.

Recordkeeping Expectations

The SSAT should establish a straightforward procedure for maintaining documentation of their meetings and student plans. The SSAT Meeting Minutes and Student Plan must be completed in a school based Google folder. Each individual template needs to be labeled First Initial, Last Name (i.e. B. Fink.) The purpose for the Google folder is for information to be shared more succinctly between personnel and across schools. Files can be shared and moved as a student moves. By sharing information in a timely fashion, the support put into place will continue seamlessly for the benefit of the student.

SSAT Process Conclusion

The SSAT is a powerful resource for Manchester Public 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. SSAT uses a common sense approach that offers a systematic process to support children. 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.

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