

# **SCHOOL CLIMATE AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

## School Climate and Infrastructure

While most of this Guidebook provides questions to consider relative to CSE actions on each specific child, this section addresses the overall school climate and infrastructure that provide for an effective leadership to all personnel who work with students with disabilities.

It is important that certain administrative elements be in place in a school building to effectively offer a full continuum of special education programs and services to all students with disabilities, including full access to the general education curriculum. This section addresses many of these issues, including least restrictive environment practices and procedures, and prereferral and intervention strategies. Each section references a requirement on best practices immediately followed by a checklist of strategies that could be used to implement the requirement or practice. As a CSE chair, you could inventory current practices with a Y/N or simply (✓) those items you would like to follow-up on through local planning processes.

Citations beginning with “300” refer to federal regulations to implement I.D.E.A., citations beginning with “200” refer to Part 200 (special education) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education for the State of New York; citations beginning with “100” refer to Part 100 (general education) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education for the State of New York. Other citations refer to applicable New York State Education Law.

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## PREVENTION AND PREREFERRAL STRATEGIES IN GENERAL EDUCATION

The use of prereferral instructional strategies in the general education setting is required to address the needs of students with learning and/or behavioral problems prior to a referral to the Committee on Special Education (CSE). Part 200 Regulations requires a description and documentation of any attempts to remediate a student's performance prior to a referral to the CSE.

### **Sections 200.2 (b) (7) and Part 200.4(d) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education**

#### **1. General education support services, instructional modifications, alternative instructional approaches, or alternative program options have been attempted to address the student's performance prior to a referral to the Committee on Special Education (CSE).**

\_\_\_ There is a commitment of general educators to have in place supports, strategies and accommodations to meet students' needs.

\_\_\_ A system is established to support the delivery of prereferral supports, services and modifications.

\_\_\_ Appropriate opportunities exist for collaboration between general educators and special educators (e.g. time is set aside for this purpose).

\_\_\_ Consultation and support are available to teachers and other school personnel to assist parents and teachers in exploring alternative approaches for meeting the needs of any student prior to formal referral for special education.

\_\_\_ The determination of prereferral interventions considers the student's strengths, environment, social history, language and cultural diversity in addition to teachers concerns. Interventions may include bilingual education or English as a Second Language for Limited English Proficient students.

\_\_\_ Team teaching, cooperative learning, and smaller instructional groups are used.

\_\_\_ Innovative ways to use existing resources to implement prereferral supports and services are in place.

\_\_\_ Concepts of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are incorporated into curriculum development.

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Formal Child Study Teams (CST)/Instructional Support Teams (IST) or other school-based teams are formed and are in operation.\***

\_\_\_ Criteria are established for the selection of Instructional Support Teams members. Staff have been involved and agree to selection process.

\_\_\_ Instructional Support Teams include representatives from general and special education as well as other disciplines and include individuals with classroom experience including bilingual education or English as a Second Language in the case of Limited English Proficient students.

\_\_\_ Meetings of the Instructional Support Team establish a statement of purpose.

\_\_\_ Instructional Support Teams establish goals for meetings and progress is assessed on an ongoing basis.

\_\_\_ Forms are viewed as helpful in the implementation and review of prevention and prereferral strategies. (Forms include necessary information, are user friendly and are not cumbersome.)

\_\_\_ Members of the Instructional Support Team are knowledgeable about students who are at risk and students with disabilities.

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Administration facilitates the process as necessary.**

\_\_\_ Administration views and supports Instructional Support Team meetings and functions as a priority (e.g. discourages meeting cancellation).

\_\_\_ A mentoring and consultative system is in place and supported by administration.

\_\_\_ Administration is accountable to ensure implementation of prereferral strategies. Enough time is given to see results of interventions.

\_\_\_ There is accountability to ensure that recommendations of the Instructional Support teams are implemented in a timely and quality manner.

\_\_\_ District-wide training to general and special educators is provided.

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**\*NYC Child Study Teams are known as School Based Support Teams and Instructional Support Teams are known as Pupil Personnel Teams**

**4. Parents are involved in developing prereferral strategies.**

\_\_\_ Parents participate in CST/IST meetings.

\_\_\_ CSE/IST actively seek parents' specialized knowledge about their child.

\_\_\_ Intervention and strategies incorporate parent information.

\_\_\_ CST/IST solicits feedback from parents on the success of the interventions/strategies.

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. General and special education staff have knowledge and skills necessary to perform their duties.**

\_\_\_ The distinction between students who require general education support services versus students with disabilities is understood.

\_\_\_ The referral process is clearly defined and made available to all staff.

\_\_\_ Curriculum modifications, language and cultural issues, and the role of the CSE members and the CSE process is understood by all, including the difference between language differences and disabilities in the case of Limited English Proficiency students.

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Recommended prereferral instructional modifications, supports and services are implemented.**

\_\_\_ There is a review of what was recommended compared to what was implemented.

\_\_\_ Prereferral strategies are reviewed and evaluated to determine effectiveness.

\_\_\_ Supervisors/Principals ensure that prereferral supports and services recommended are implemented and supports/services/adaptations are available.

\_\_\_ The paperwork associated with the prereferral system reflects accountability and is available for review.

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. There is collaboration between outside agencies and the school prior to a referral of a student to the CSE.**

\_\_\_ CST/IST actively seeks input and/or assistance of outside agencies, where appropriate.

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**8. Parents are knowledgeable of and participate in the CSE process.**

\_\_\_ The CSE referral process is clearly defined and available to parents.

\_\_\_ Parents are informed of their rights regarding special education.

\_\_\_ Parents are notified regarding the purpose of the meetings.

\_\_\_ Meetings are convenient and language is clear and understandable so that all may contribute, including the use of translators to ensure parent participation.

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **ACADEMIC INTERVENTION SERVICES (AIS)**

**ACADEMIC INTERVENTION SERVICES (AIS)** is additional instruction designed to supplement the instruction provided in the general curriculum and assist students who are at risk of not achieving the New York State Learning Standards, and/or student support services which may include guidance, counseling, attendance and study skills needed to support improved academic performance. Academic Intervention Services are available to students with disabilities on the same basis as non-disabled students. Districts are required to have a plan describing the criteria for student identification, their strategies for implementing AIS services and criteria for concluding AIS.

### **Section 100.2 (ee) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education and January 2000 New York State Education Department Guidelines for Implementing AIS**

\_\_\_\_ Does the district have a plan describing criteria for student identification, strategies for implementation and criteria for concluding AIS?

\_\_\_\_ Are the specific AIS services delineated in a written plan?

\_\_\_\_ Are all CSE members knowledgeable of AIS services?

## **EDUCATIONALLY RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES (ERSS)**

### **Section 3602 of the Education Law, amended by Chapter 82 of the Laws of 1995**

All students are eligible for Educationally Related Support Services (ERSS) including students in general education, students with 504 accommodation plans and students with disabilities. ERSS are general education services.

### **Section 100.2(v) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education**

Does the district provide the following ERSS:

- Psychological Services
- Social Work
- Speech and Language Improvement
- Curriculum and Instructional modification
- Direct Student Support Team Services
- Non-Career Counseling
- Special Instruction

Are ERSS available as part of the district's CST/IST structure?

## **LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE) FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) means that placement of students with disabilities in special classes, separate schools or other removal from the general educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that even with the use of supplementary aids and services, education cannot be satisfactorily achieved. Any time services are not provided to the student in the general education setting, an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate in general education programs must be provided on the IEP.

The concept of LRE reinforces the idea that special education is a service, not a place. Districts should have specific practices and procedures in place regarding LRE, describing how responsibilities are carried out within the district.

### **Sections 200.4 (b and d) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education and Federal Regulations Section 300.347 (a)**

\_\_\_ Does the school have evaluation procedures to assure that students are assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, where appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, vocational skills, communicative status, motor abilities and assistive technology?

\_\_\_ Does the school have general education classes with consultant teacher services?

\_\_\_ Does the school have supplementary aids and services provided in general education classes or other education-related settings that enable students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate in the least restrictive environment?

\_\_\_ Does the school have support for school personnel to address participation and progress in the general education curriculum and extracurricular/nonacademic activities?

\_\_\_ Do students with disabilities have access to and opportunities to participate in district-sponsored programs and activities?

\_\_\_ Does the school have program modifications or supports for school personnel and students to allow the student:

\_\_\_ to advance appropriately toward attaining annual goals

\_\_\_ to be involved and progress in the general curriculum and to participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities

\_\_\_ to be educated and participate with other students with disabilities and nondisabled students?

\_\_\_ If the student's behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others, did the CSE consider, when appropriate, strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, and supports to address that behavior?

\_\_\_ In the case of a student with limited English proficiency, did the CSE consider the language needs of the student as such needs relate to the student's IEP?

\_\_\_ Does the district have adequate space to provide all services?

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_