



Special Education in Plain Words! RTI's SST's & IEP's

“Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy” IDEA

WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education is specially designed instruction, support, and services provided to students with an identified disability requiring an individually designed instructional program to meet their unique learning needs. The purpose of special education is to enable students to successfully develop to their fullest potential by providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

[\(http://www.dodea.edu/\)](http://www.dodea.edu/)

Under the IDEA, there are 13 areas in which a child can qualify for special education. For a student to qualify for special education, **they must have one of the listed 13 identified disabilities, it must adversely affect their educational performance, and the child must require a specially designed instructional program.** This means that even if a student exhibits a disability such as Autism, if their grades and/or behavior are not adversely affected by this disability, they would not necessarily qualify for special education services.

If a student qualifies for special education services under the IDEA (which is often determined after a thorough assessment of that child) he or she must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). An IEP is a written document listing the special educational services that the child will receive. This plan is developed by a team that includes the child's parents and school staff including the school psychologist.

FAIR ISN'T
everybody getting the
same thing.....

FAIR IS
everybody getting
what they need
IN order to be
SUCCESSFUL.

So what happens to the children that have medical conditions or disabilities that may not warrant an IEP but may still need accommodations? Other options are still available. This legal requirement essentially says that some students with disabilities may not meet the state or district requirements. While the student may have a disability, it may not be

impacting their learning in ways that qualify them for special education services. These students however may meet the requirement to have a **504 plan if their disability “substantially limits them in performing one or more major life activity.”**

13 Areas of Special Education according to IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act)

1. *Autism*
2. *Blindness*
3. *Deafness*
4. *Emotional Disturbance*
5. *Hearing Impairment*
6. *Intellectual Disability*
7. *Multiple Disabilities*
8. *Orthopedic Impairment*
9. *Other Health Impaired*
10. *Specific Learning Disability.*
11. *Speech/Language Impairment*
12. *Traumatic Brain Injury*
13. *Visual Impairment*

Pre- Referral Process

1. When there is a concern of student's education, talk to the teacher or principal.
2. Ask questions about Response to Intervention (RTI)- A general education function for all students that show a need for help in either Math or English.
3. If child still struggles with RTI, parent or teacher should refer to Student Study Team (SST) which is composed of general education teachers who work together to develop intervention strategies that are effective with children.
4. If the SST process is ineffective, talk to the SST team about when it might be time to ask for a referral for an educational psychological evaluation or consideration for 504 Plan.

WHEN TO LOOK FOR HELP:

If a student does not respond to RTI (Response to Intervention), it may be time to request a Student Study Team. The purpose of the SST is to design a support system for students having difficulty within the general education classroom. The SST is a group that is formed within the school to further examine the student's academic, behavioral and/or social-emotional progress. The SST team can propose interventions for the student. The team usually consists of a teacher, administrator, and support personnel from the school. Sometimes a special education teacher will also participate to give his or her perspective. The student and parent are usually involved during this process.

If a student has been through all of the steps and has not shown improvement, they may then be referred for a psycho-educational evaluation by the school psychologist. The SST can refer or the parent. Once a notice has been given, the whole referral process begins. The main goal for the Student Study Team is to try all possible interventions before going to the referral process. Below are a list of resources that can be used to help understand the referral process and qualification's for special education services.

The Pre-Referral process provides steps that parents and teachers can take when they suspect that a child may be struggling with behavior and/or education. While it is not required to go through this process it is recommended for the best possible solution and intervention.

RTI plays a serious role in how students are identified as having a disability and needing special education services. For many years,

putting students that were struggling into special education was the only option for those children to receive help. Requirements for special education eligibility were outdated and left students to struggle for years before help was provided. Students fell further and further behind, making it more difficult to catch up once help was provided. RTI provided a solution to help children that may need extra support but not necessarily special education. RTI is available to all children at the general education level.

<http://www.nclld.org/>

<http://idea.ed.gov/>

