



Plumas Lake Elementary School District

Plumas Lake Elementary School District is an inclusive environment which cultivates creative, curious, resourceful, and inspiring learners who will make positive contributions within their local, national, and global communities.

• *Cobblestone Elementary* • *Rio Del Oro Elementary* • *Riverside Meadows Intermediate*

Dr. Jeff Roberts, Superintendent

Student Study Team Procedures

This document has been created in consultation with various team members and represents best practices, legal requirements, and local policy. It is in alignment with the Plumas Lake Elementary School District strategic plan.

The Student Study Team (SST) Defined

The purpose of the SST is to problem-solve and find adaptations, ideas, and solutions to address the needs of all learners in each of the Plumas Lake Elementary Schools, regardless of resources. Throughout this document, the acronym, SST will be used in reference to the Student-Centered Team meeting. Sites must have an SST process that adheres to this framework. Importantly, sites may customize their process including the name of the process and meeting/s, for example, the Student Success Team or Student Support Team.

The SST is a function of general education. The process serves to improve student performance and outcomes as well as provide support and collaboration for the general teacher. Local practice encourages *ONE* system of education over the separation of general and special education. Special Education designated staff are not excluded from the SST process. SSTs make use of all available resources in a school building. Education specialists, school psychologists, Speech and Language Specialists, intervention support providers, and the school nurse, should be included in the SST process when leadership deems it appropriate in order to fully address the unique needs of a learner.

The parent/guardian is an essential member of the SST and all attempts should be made to ensure the meaningful involvement of the parent/guardian. This may include the provision of a language interpreter, scheduling outside of a parent's work hours, and encouraging attendance.

The SST uses a systematic approach to assist students who display challenges with academic achievement, lack of adequate social, emotional, and developmentally appropriate behavior skills, attendance issues, and parent educational concerns. The SST process should not be viewed as either a barrier to or a means to obtain access to services and support typically provided through Special Education or a 504 accommodation plan. The SST is, however, a best practice process prior to a referral for either of these considerations. The SST is the appropriate process to support the needs of English Learners and to guide decisions regarding the reclassification of students who are English Learners.

The primary purpose of the SST is to support the growth of a learner. The process may also support a teacher by bringing together the collective expertise and talent within a school building. Parents may also be supported with the SST process by making connections with school personnel and possibly community resources. The SST will improve communication between school and home and can assist in discussing the *possibility* of referrals for consideration of evaluation for Special Education or a 504 Accommodation Plan.

The SST Membership may vary based on the unique needs of the student and the resources within a school building. In addition, the membership may reflect the uniqueness of the collaborative process of a school site. For example, the make-up of grade-level team planning and other systems of support.

Minimally, the SST will include the referring teacher, administrator, parent, and necessary specialist staff.

Roles of SST participants:

Referring teacher - to share student strengths and talents, clarify the reasons for the referral and concerns, describe all prior attempts to provide support and intervention regarding the concern, and solicit and accept new supports and interventions.

The referring teacher should clearly describe the SST process and expectations to the parent prior to the SST meeting. The parent should be coming to the conference table with a similar amount of knowledge regarding concerns as that of the school staff.

The referring teacher should have gathered all existing relevant data for the student prior to the meeting and documented on the referral form [SST Referral Form](#). As well as be prepared to share and provide more detailed information.

Parent - should be aware of the process and not be surprised by the SST referral. The parent may be further prepared by completing the Parent Input to SST form. [Parent Input to SST](#) The

parent will discuss strengths and concerns similar to the other team members and will be encouraged to have full participation in brainstorming and solution-finding.

If the team including the parent feels it to be appropriate, **the student** may participate in the SST meeting. For younger students, they may benefit from minimally participating in the strengths discussion at the beginning of the meeting. Older students may be well aware of their challenges and would benefit from experiencing the meeting and the knowledge they will be receiving support. This is of particular importance for our secondary students who may be experiencing any level of difficulty with social/emotional wellness.

Administrator or designee will facilitate the conversation of the SST using the framework provided on the SST summary form [SST Summary Form](#) or on the SST Summary Follow-up Meeting Form [SST Follow-up Summary Form](#). The administrator is knowledgeable of all support and resources of the site and should be prepared to share and plan to implement the support determined to be necessary. This role should assist in diminishing any possible barriers to these supports. The administrator should support the referring teacher in clarifying current data and recommending further data gathering when necessary.

Specialist staff, such as the school psychologist, counselor, speech therapist, and education specialist may be asked to participate in the SST process. Staff who have a particular level of expertise in various areas of student learning and appropriate intervention should not be excluded from the SST process due to a perception it is only for *general education*. Staff resources are available to all students.

The SST as a Legal Requirement

If a referral for evaluation to consider whether a student may have a disability and require Special Education is a recommendation of the SST, the SST documentation then serves to fulfill the legal requirement of attempting multiple interventions prior to a referral for Special Education. The SST will also document the requirement to exhaust all resources available within the general setting prior to considering options available only to students with special needs.

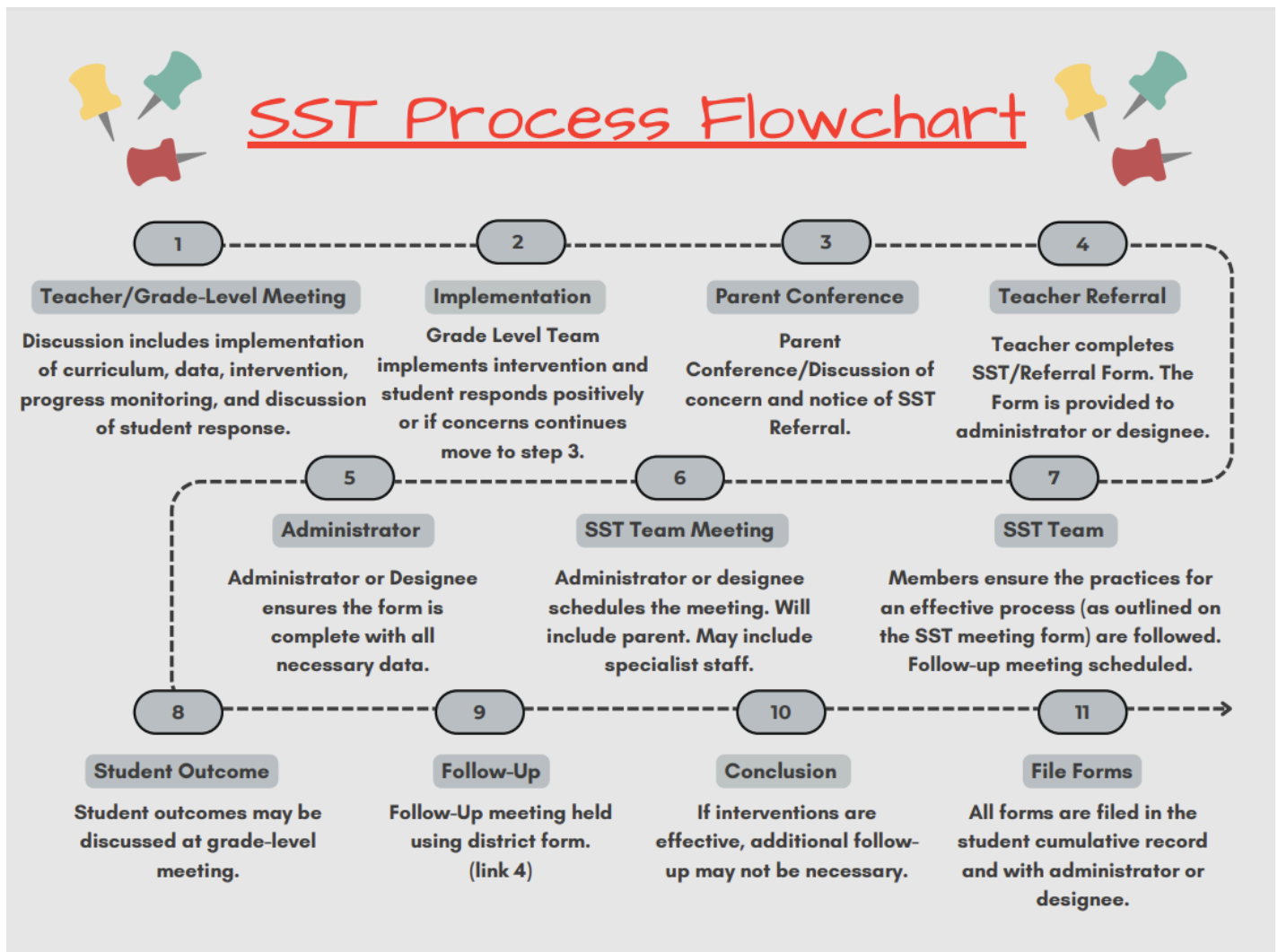
As a school team, in consultation with the Director of Special Education, we may see extraordinary student situations where it may be appropriate to assess for special education immediately without delay in the SST process. These situations should be of low incidence and discussed in consultation with special education administration.

If the SST is recommending a special education evaluation, the notes should include documentation of the data including:

- Adequate school attendance
- Consistent school enrollment

- Cultural and linguistic issues
- Clear vision and hearing results
- Fidelity of academic instruction and intervention
- Parent inclusion in the process resulting in the referral for special education evaluation

If a student is evaluated for Special Education and found to not be eligible for services but to still require support, the school may determine to continue to progress monitor and provide intervention through the SST process.



Clarifying Common Misconceptions

School staff other than the classroom teacher and a parent may request an SST meeting. The SST is an effective process for staff to work collaboratively and access resources.

The SST is not considered a legal meeting. Therefore, a meeting can occur without the parent/guardian in attendance. However, all efforts should be made to encourage full parent participation.

When staff reaches out to the parent to coordinate the SST meeting, this should not be a surprise to the parent. Effective communication between the classroom teacher and the parent will support any intervention moving forward.

Any referral to the SST is appropriate. Complete referrals will not be refused by the administration. New teachers in particular should understand the referral process and support available.

Vision and Hearing results are imperative. If students have acuity issues with either vision or hearing, difficulties in other areas of learning cannot be ruled in.

A student's school history is essential. The cumulative file should be reviewed and it is acceptable for a current teacher to reach out to the prior.

An SST meeting should last no more than 45 minutes. Sufficient ideas should be generated within that time. It is an acceptable practice to schedule a part 2 or follow-up meeting.

A school team should expect that certain students are followed by the SST process throughout their educational career. All learners are different and some students will present with *general* learning difficulties and are not eligible for Special Education. It may be necessary for an SST to continuously review support and interventions for certain students. There is no limit on the number of times a site team may need to meet in order to ensure the best support for a student.

The SST process may not always "solve the problem". Reasonable, research-based interventions may not always lead to success. However, ongoing communication with family and school-wide resources may continue to be in the best interest of the student.

It is appropriate to place the SST forms in the cumulative record. It is also acceptable to indicate on the cover of a cumulative file that a student has a history of SST meetings.

When an SST has followed a student for an adequate amount of time and provided interventions over a period of time and the team can assure instruction has been delivered with fidelity, the team may determine it is appropriate to make a referral for a student to be evaluated for special education or for a 504 accommodation plan. Site teams retain this authority and it is not acceptable to designate a specific number of SST meetings to be held prior to referral. Teams should keep in mind it is a federal requirement to attempt interventions over time prior to referring for a special education evaluation and to have documentation of these interventions.

All students have the right to receive an appropriate education. This includes appropriate support, interventions, and varied teaching strategies. Although not a legal process, an educator may not refuse to implement interventions designed by the SST.

If a parent or medical professional requests an evaluation either verbally or in writing, it is acceptable to discuss this request in an SST meeting. However, this meeting must be held within 15 calendar days (excluding school holidays) from the date of the request. Only the parent or guardian who holds educational rights has the authority to consent to move forward with the evaluation.

Procedure for Parent Request for Special Education Evaluation

A parent, guardian, or other holder of educational rights may request a special education evaluation. The preferred format of this request is in writing as this provides necessary documentation regarding the source of the referral. It is the policy of PLESD to accept a request verbally as well.

A parent may make this request of any school staff member. Staff members should ensure this request is forwarded to the site administrator. The site should attempt to gather additional information regarding this request by holding an SST meeting within 15 calendar days.

If during this SST meeting, the team, which includes the fully participating parent, withdraws the request for a special education evaluation, the administrator should ensure that the meeting notes capture this withdrawal and that the parent's signature and date are on the SST form. This should be communicated to the Director of special education and the form forwarded to the Special Education office.

If the team decides to proceed with the evaluation, the complete SST form and parent request is forwarded to the Director of special education in order to draft an assessment plan and begin the evaluation process.