THE PRE-REFERRAL PROCESS

Only students whose needs cannot be met in the general education program with accommodations and/or modifications are eligible for special education services.

A student will be referred for a special education evaluation only after the resources of the general education program have been considered, documented and where appropriately, utilized. Prior to a referral for special education by a staff member and/or parent, the principal, counselor or designee will utilize a Student Study Team (SST) at KHS and KMS, or Instructional Support Team (IST) at the district’s elementary schools, to document attempts of the general education program to provide accommodations and/or modifications to attempt to meet the student needs within the general education program.

Adapting the General Education School Program

It is important to remember that program accommodations and adaptations must precede special education referral. Although it is important to find and provide service to individuals with disabilities, it is equally important to be sure that a special education referral is necessary. Only individuals whose needs cannot be met by the general education program with appropriate adaptations, accommodations and/or supports are eligible for special education services.

A student shall be referred for assessment(s) only after the resources of the general education program have been considered, and where appropriate, utilized. Each school will utilize a study (i.e., SST or IST) program composed by both general education staff and specialists for the following purposes:

- Identifying data-based student needs
- Developing a set of program support alternatives
- Selecting from alternative accommodations and adaptations those appropriate to the individual student

Examples are:

- Alternative instructional methods or materials (such as: shorter assignments, easier materials, classroom contracts, peer/cross-age tutoring, special equipment, supplemental instructional programs, instructional aide assistance, etc.)
- Close home and school cooperation/agreements: Parent facilitator, parent education, home visits, and home contracts.
- Review available/applicable community agencies and services, and use as appropriate.
- School based general education intervention programs
- Tutorial programs
- Adjustment of school day, such as rearranging class schedule or placing into another class for partial or whole day
- Parent volunteer programs
- English as a second language program/bilingual programs
- Early Childhood/School Improvement Program resources
- Title I program resources
- General education alternative programs, such as opportunity classes or after school support programs
- Consultation with on-site staff
- Consultation with district support staff
• Any other local school/district option that is available and appropriate to student needs, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) supplemental education services

The absence of documented attempts to modify the student’s general education program precludes any placement in special education. Each student has the right to an education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to the student’s needs. Evidence shall be presented that shows the attempts that have been made to provide an appropriate program within general education, and the results of those interventions. Special education shall not act upon a referral prior to documented, appropriate interventions or modifications being implemented within the general education program for students who are capable of academic learning.

**Student Study Team/Instructional Support Team (SST or IST) Process**

Before a referral is made to special education it is mandatory that accommodations and adaptations attempted in order to serve the student in the general education setting are formally documented. The SST or IST, which includes the parent and the student when appropriate, is designed to systematically problem-solve difficulties encountered by a variety of students. Student Study Teams and Instructional Support Teams are school site teams established through general education to serve as the review process for students who encounter problems in the general education program. The team uses a collaborative approach to assist students who are not demonstrating satisfactory progress. The team offers suggestions, organizes resources, develops remediation plans, clarifies issues and problems, establishes accountability, and/or makes direct referrals to other support services. Composition of the SST/IST will include parents, teachers, site administration, support staff, and student when appropriate.

**SST/IST Meeting Steps**

• SST/IST Chair receives a meeting request from a teacher, counselor, parent, student, or administrator
• SST/IST Chair sets a meeting date, facilitates data collection, observation, file review
• SST/IST Chair notifies parents and appropriates participants
• The SST/IST meets and:
  o Identifies the student’s strengths and challenges
  o Clarifies concerns and provides feedback
  o Suggests possible accommodations/modifications/adaptations
  o Develops an action plan with team participant input and commitment
  o Sets a follow-up date

• A Follow-up meeting is held to:
  o Evaluate action plan results
  o Choose further options if needed

**Referral for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

In many cases, an individual may not require special education services as defined in IDEA but may be eligible for accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which requires school districts to address the needs of students who are considered “handicapped persons.” The definition of “handicapped persons” in Section 504 is “any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life function” (e.g. learning). Considerations regarding the need for a 504 plan rather than special education services may be made recommendation of the Student Support or Instructional Support team.