



# **The SAGE Encyclopedia of Abnormal and Clinical Psychology**

## **Student Support Teams**

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The student support team (SST) is a school-based, multidisciplinary problem-solving group that addresses academic, learning, and health issues relating to social, emotional, and behavioral problems for all students. Different names are used instead of SST to emphasize the functions of the team (e.g., prereferral intervention team, instructional consultation team, child study team, school-based problem-solving team, mainstream or school assistance team). SST mainly aims to assist students, families, and teachers to maximize students' potential in obtaining an appropriate education while providing an opportunity for the team members to discuss individual- or group-level student problems. There are many opportunities within the school environment for students to obtain support to help them address learning or health issues in order to reach their full potential. The team helps students perform in a school setting with immediate assistance focusing on intervention. In addition, SSTs provide other benefits to students and educators (e.g., the numbers of inappropriate referrals for special education evaluations, student retentions, and expulsions decrease). This entry focuses on the members, roles, and benefits of the SST.

## Members

Depending on the structure, the members of the SST can include administrators; general education and/or referring teachers; special education team chair and/or teachers; school psychologists or counselors; school social workers; parents, family members, or legal guardian of the student; and outside service providers. School administrations or principals decide on the most appropriate SST model (e.g., single team, two teams, subject area team) for their school. The factors that could influence the SST model decision process are the needs of educators and students, age of the students, instructional levels, and availability of resources in the school.

Each school should also have an indigenous SST manual that provides information about the team members, their responsibilities, and specific pathways for student services. The manual allows the team members and school administrators to access the procedures and processes related to serving the needs of the students. The core team members are commonly the SST chairperson, the SST administrator, the general education and/or referring teacher, a designated recorder, the individual initiating the referral, and the student's parents. Depending on the problem or the student being discussed, other team members can be invited to the SST meeting.

## Role of the Members

The primary function of the SST is to solve the student's problem in conjunction with the teachers. Achieving a successful outcome depends on working effectively with other teachers and staff members. All members in this team are active contributors. Although the process defines certain key roles, team members can change their roles from one meeting to another. The roles, with particular responsibilities, are assigned to each member. The SST chairperson, for example, is responsible for establishing the SST calendar, managing the operations, and scheduling meetings. He or she assists and organizes the team in understanding the intervention and referral procedures. The SST administrator provides leadership and management for the SST process and plans the comprehensive functions and activities of the SST. During this process, general education and/or referring teachers deliver information regarding the student's academic performance, classroom behavior, and social-emotional functioning. The teacher discusses interventions and implemented strategies to

assist the student by collecting and providing data for monitoring intervention strategies. Another important role in the SST is that of the designated recorder, who develops an agenda before the meetings and documents the work for future needs. Parents also play a critical role in ensuring the successful development and implementation, and continuing support of effective intervention approaches.

There are some other team members who assist in identifying the needs of students, depending on their specific areas of expertise (e.g., speech/language, hearing/visual impairments), and in developing, monitoring, and revising intervention tools. In this context, school psychologists or counselors can also play a crucial role by assisting in interpreting test scores, providing direct support, and using a variety of individual and group counseling strategies. In addition, school social workers are imperative, as they identify and assess the sources of academic problems related to school success and encourage positive parental involvement in school activities.

### Benefits

Research findings have shown that the SST improves students' education if the following six steps are pursued: (1) identification of the problem, (2) individualized assessment, (3) development of the plan, (4) implementation, (5) follow-up and support, and (6) monitoring and evaluation. The functional outcome for the SST is that the school meets the needs of every student enrolled and the students show progress during the intervention process.

**See also** [School Consultation, Components of](#); [School Psychologists](#); [School-Based Mental Health](#); [Special Education](#)

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### Further Readings

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