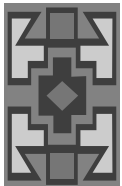


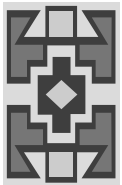
SAT Purpose and Mission



The Student Assistance Team (SAT) is a school-based group of people whose purpose is to provide additional Tier II support to students who are experiencing difficulties that are preventing them from benefiting from general education, because they are either performing below or above expectations. By “catching” these students in the child study phase, the SAT may not only help the student be able to remain and succeed in the general education program, but also reduce unnecessary referrals to special education. The SAT’s mission is to approach and arrive at appropriate solutions to problems in the school environment through a cooperative team effort. Although the team may make referrals to special education and other special programs, **the SAT is not part of the special education process, but rather a general education responsibility.**

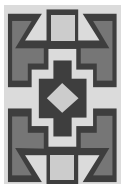


The SAT addresses problems found through general screening or those brought up as concerns by parents, teachers, or other staff. The SAT designs interventions for those students who show need for individual consideration. Further, the SAT suggests interventions and focuses on student strengths that may alleviate or resolve the situation prior to referral for a multidisciplinary evaluation. In many cases, the SAT is able to assist students who need interventions in order to succeed, but who are not necessarily disabled and therefore do not qualify for special education or Section 504 accommodations. **Simply put, the SAT is a “support group” for the regular education teachers and students who need it.**

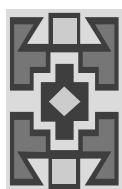
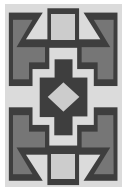
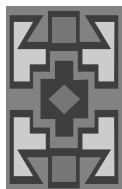
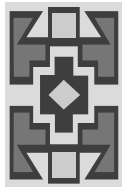


Definitions of Terms

Familiarization with the following terms will help clarify the roles and responsibilities of SAT teams as they are discussed in this guide.



<p>General Screening (Tier I): Tests given to all students to evaluate their health, language, achievement, and so on</p>	<p>Home Language Survey: Used to determine if the home or primary language is one other than English</p>
<p>Child Study Process (Tier II): Period during which a concern is raised and addressed with interventions prior to requesting a formal referral</p>	<p>EPSS: Educational Plan for Student Success: a school plan that addresses methods to improve and measure student success</p>



Response to Intervention (RtI): a significant increase/improvement in student performance (academic or behavioral) after implementation of intervention	Interventions: A set of school-wide or individual activities designed to assist a student in achieving grade-level proficiency or appropriate behavior
IDEA: (Federal law) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	IEP: Individualized Education Program (developed for students w/ disabilities)
FERPA: (Federal law) Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act: protects the privacy of student education records	AYP: Adequate Yearly Progress: see page 8 for the federal definition of AYP.
Section 504: (Federal law) Americans with Disabilities Act; Non-discrimination against individuals with disabilities; includes temporary disabilities and conditions not covered under the IDEA	Academic Improvement Plan: (AIP) Written document with content-based, grade-level objectives for student progress and specific remediation designed to achieve a proficient level of performance or better
Accommodation: As part of an intervention plan, any adaptation to the instruction, environment, presentation, and so on that enables the student to be successful in the regular education environment	

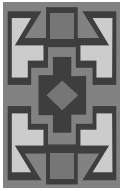
Federal Mandates



IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

This law governs special education. The IDEA is the federal law that provides financial aid to states in their efforts to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for eligible students with disabilities. To be eligible for special education, a student must have one or more of the 13 disabilities defined within the IDEA, and the disability must impact his or her ability to learn in the general education curriculum and/or environment. Qualifying disabilities include autism, deafness, deaf-blindness, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment including blindness, or speech or language impairment. Eligible students must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

NOTE: *New Mexico Regulations add giftedness to the list of conditions that qualify as eligible to receive special education and related services under an IEP.*

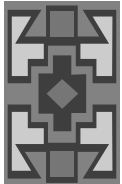


Section 504 (The Rehabilitation Act of 1973)

This is a Civil Rights law that protects the rights of individuals with disabilities. A person is eligible to receive accommodations if he or she has or has had a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity that impacts the student’s educational program. The accommodations and/or services are sometimes called a Section 504 Accommodation Plan. The SAT may be responsible for developing the plan, and funding comes from the general education budget. NOTE: An IEP team develops the education plan for a student who qualifies for special education under the IDEA. The SAT/504 team identifies and provides accommodations for students with disabilities who do not qualify as eligible for special education under the IDEA.

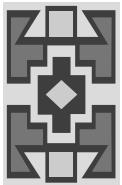


State Mandates



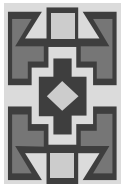
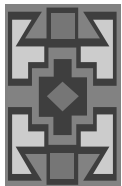
Subsection (C) of 6.31.2.10 NMAC (Prereferral Interventions)

This special education regulation provides that if, through general screening, a child is suspected of having a disability, further assessment should be considered in order to rule out other possible causes for the child’s educational difficulty. Prior to referral, interventions are to be considered, documented, and implemented, if appropriate. If prereferral interventions are not effective within a reasonable time, the SAT may refer the child for a full multidisciplinary evaluation. Prereferral interventions are provided through the SAT or similar process according to the district’s Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) as required by the state’s Standards for Excellence at 6.30.2 NMAC.



State Education Reform Act (NMSA 1978 Section, 22-1-1.2)

This state legislation recognizes New Mexico as having a diverse, multicultural population and that “no education system can be sufficient for the education of all children unless it is founded on the sound principle that every child can learn and succeed....” Further, it states how this can be achieved—“...the key to student success in New Mexico is to have a multicultural education system that...holds teachers, students, schools, school districts and the state accountable....” The legislation requires that “...students who do not meet or exceed expectations will be given individual attention and assistance through extended learning programs and individualized tutoring...[and that] public schools make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward educational excellence.”





State Education Reform Act (NMSA, Section 22-2C-6)

This statute addresses the responsibilities of districts to adhere to developing remediation and academic improvement programs to provide special instructional assistance to students who fail to attain AYP. For students completing grades one through seven, an academic improvement plan is to be developed by the SAT and is to include time lines and monitoring methods designed to ensure progress toward overcoming academic deficiencies. At the end of grade eight, the SAT must develop an academic improvement plan that delineates the specific deficiencies and prescribes specific remediation designed to enable the student to succeed in high school.



In addition to remediation, the SAT is responsible for ensuring that promotion and retention policies are followed and placement in an alternative program for those students who fail to make AYP for two successive school years is recommended. (See Part 5, pages 47–50 for more information about the SAT and this statute.)



Q & A about State/Federal Mandates and “Best Practices”

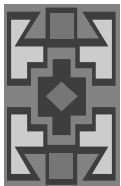
Q. What is “AYP”?



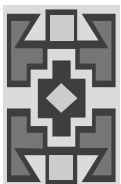
A. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) defines Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, as “a process of evaluating school, district, and state academic performance that applies the same high standards of academic achievement to all students, is statistically valid and reliable, and results in continuous and substantial academic improvement.” While federal law applies the term to the performance of schools, districts, and states, New Mexico Statute also applies the term to student-level achievement. Current legislation has not defined student-level AYP that outlines the level of achievement a student would have to attain in order to achieve AYP.

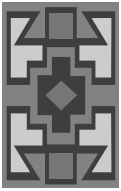


Q. How are an “academic improvement plan” and SAT different from an “individualized education program” and IEP team?



A. The SAT is a group of professionals that serves staff and students and their families who are experiencing difficulties in the general education program or environment. The SAT has the very important function of being a child study analysis, planning, and action team. When a student is identified through general screening or referred by staff or parents as having academic or behavioral issues, the SAT identifies the challenge, reviews existing information, synthesizes the information to develop a hypothesis as to what is causing the challenge, and decides as a group what can and should be done. The team identifies and implements interventions, monitors their





effectiveness through data collection and documentation, and makes decisions about what additional steps or strategies may be needed.



By contrast, an IEP team is assembled for the sole purpose of addressing the needs of an *individual* student who has one or more disabilities and qualifies for special education or related services under the eligibility requirements of the IDEA. (In New Mexico, gifted students may also be eligible for special education services.) The team develops an IEP tailored to that student. Though regular education teachers are usually members of an IEP team, the IEP team and the IEP are part of the special education process under the IDEA.



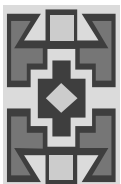
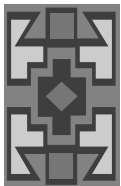
While the IEP team concentrates on one student receiving special education services, the SAT improves the quality of general education as a whole by offering interventions to other students who need them and specific help for regular education teachers about how to effectively handle and solve problems. The SAT has the vital role of eliminating unnecessary and inappropriate referrals due to misidentification of problems or a plain misunderstanding of the student’s culture, language, situation, or other needs.



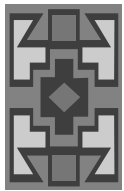
Q. The IDEA, the law governing special education, has many “musts” with regard to procedures. What are the “musts” and “best practices” for general education and for SAT teams in particular?



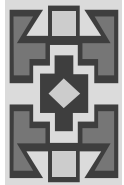
A. When a concern surfaces from general screening or is brought to the school’s attention by staff or parents, the student must be referred to the school’s group of professionals (SAT), which gathers and examines information about the student and then attempts to pinpoint the underlying issues that are causing the student to experience academic and/or behavioral challenges. The SAT then collaborates to design and implement academic and/or behavioral interventions that assist the student to be better able to benefit from his or her education. The SAT also needs to define a reasonable time frame for the intervention(s) to take effect, based on the nature of the intervention. (There is no standard time requirement; however, a period of 9–18 weeks is recommended in order to determine whether the student has demonstrated a significant positive response to intervention.) The SAT must keep documentation of all of its decisions and efforts on behalf of the student. SAT records must be kept confidential as required by the federal law known as FERPA, explained on page 6. (See 34 CFR, Sec. 99.)



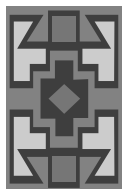
The SAT should make every effort to help the student succeed in the regular education setting. This includes involving the parent in the child study process as soon as a



challenge surfaces. If, after a reasonable period of time, the SAT finds that the student has not demonstrated a significant positive response to intervention, it may decide to formally refer the student to special education or to another program that will help meet his or her needs. **If any testing is to be done outside the scope of general screening or tests given to all students, prior parental consent is needed.** If parents are not English proficient, the SAT may enlist the help of the district’s bilingual education personnel or other supports to help find an interpreter, or other method of communicating with the parents.

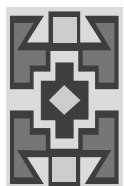
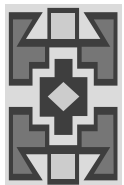


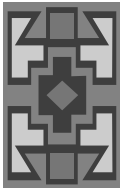
The SAT has very specific state mandates to follow with regard to **promotion** and **retention**, including preparation of academic improvement plans. (These are addressed later in this manual.) Although the SAT is not a function of special education, it may be responsible for providing accommodations under Section 504 for students with disabilities who are not being assisted under an IEP. One or more special education professionals may serve on the SAT, but must not serve as its “leader.” The goal is to achieve a balance of knowledge, skills, and perspectives in solving individual problems. It is a best practice to ask these and other specialists, such as speech therapists or school psychologists, to join the SAT on an “as needed” basis.



The Student Assistance Team (SAT)

The SAT is a cooperative, peer problem-solving group that assists students, families, and teachers in seeking positive solutions for concerns about individual students. Through the SAT, school staff, parents, community agencies, and others who can offer insight, work together to plan a positive course of action, assign responsibilities, and monitor results to determine whether the student has responded to intervention. By drawing upon school, home, and community resources, successful intervention can and does occur. Although the SAT is a vehicle through which a student may be referred for a multidisciplinary evaluation, the team’s main function is to use the resources available within the school and community to provide supportive and preventative measures needed to help students be successful in the regular education environment. Through offering appropriate interventions based on careful analysis of a student’s unique situation and strengths, the SAT not only helps students remain and succeed in the general education program, but also reduces unnecessary referrals to special education. The task of the SAT is to find and eliminate obstacles that are in a student’s path toward success. This is best achieved by focusing on the obstacle, not placing blame or judgment. **The SAT’s role is to be a support and resource to the teacher—not to**





replace or relieve the teacher of his or her responsibility for educating the child. By laying a foundation that recognizes that *all* members of the team have the same goal—to create a learning environment that contributes to the achievement of the student—the team can work united rather than divided.



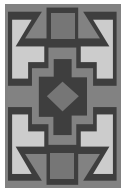
Who Comprises the Team



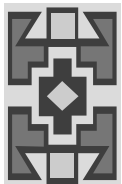
The SAT is made up of a core group that anchors the team. Core members must have good communication skills and a solid working knowledge about a variety of supports (types of interventions, educational and community resources, etc.). Core team members may vary by school, but should include at minimum professional staff from administration, regular education, and specialists and/or resource areas. For example, the core SAT may be the school principal, one or two classroom teachers, and a school counselor. Those who serve on the core team must be willing to commit the time and effort needed to produce the desired results. Ideally, all staff should be trained in the basic operations of the SAT, but the core members must have a good understanding of the purpose and process. Annual training in SAT procedures should be provided. Core members also need skill training in social services, as well as in the selection of instructional and behavioral interventions. Principals may want to appoint individuals yearly to the SAT on a rotating basis so that the responsibilities are shared among the staff.



When the team is called upon to address the needs of an individual student, in addition to the core members, the person who referred the student (whether educator or parent) or brought up a concern joins the team. A varying number of other individuals may serve on the team, depending on the types of concerns and expertise needed. Every effort should be made to include the parent (or the family member serving as the “parent”) and, if appropriate, the student on the team. In addition, specialists, such as speech therapists, special education teachers, bilingual education teachers, reading teachers, nurses, or social workers can bring valuable needed perspectives and ideas to the team.

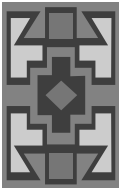


Procedural Guidelines for SATs



There is no one method or process for conducting the SAT meeting. However, the following guidelines may help your team work effectively and get results:

- ▶ The success of the SAT often hinges on the level of involvement of the parents and student. Always invite parents to participate and contribute,



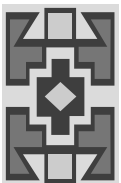
and treat them as equal team members. If possible and appropriate, include the student as well. He or she can be invaluable in providing insight into how to address the concern.



- ▶ One person serves as the SAT **supervisor** or **chairperson** and directs the activities of the team. This person could be an administrator or someone the administrator designates, such as school counselor. He or she receives referrals to the SAT from staff or parents and convenes SAT meetings. After a decision is made, this person is also responsible for seeing that the decision is implemented, proper documentation and data collection is maintained, and that timely follow-up is done.



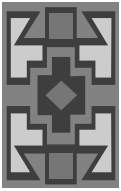
- ▶ Appoint one person as team **facilitator**. This person is not the “leader” of the group in the sense of dominating it, but rather takes the responsibility for the flow and tone of the meeting. The facilitator keeps the group focused, makes sure that everyone has opportunities to contribute, elicits responses and comments, and ensures that the tone of the meeting stays positive and productive, as well as watches the timeframe. The facilitator is responsible for seeing that the purpose of the SAT is met and that each aspect—identifying the challenge and student strengths, developing the intervention plan, and assessing the probable effectiveness of the interventions—is addressed and given the appropriate time and consideration. The facilitator then ensures that the discussion is limited to the student and the concern that brought the referral and that, given the allotted time, no component is weighted such that others are neglected. The facilitator can achieve this by using guided questions and comments that redirect the discussion.



- ▶ Have one person serve as **recorder**. This person documents the discussion on the *SAT Summary Form* (pages 63 to 67), as well as completes all relevant paperwork. The recorder also serves as timekeeper, announces agreed-upon periods of time for discussion and other activities, and lets the team know when time is running short. **Tip:** The recorder might enlarge this form and post it on the wall where all members can see it as the discussion evolves. Then transfer the information to the regular-size form and destroy the wall poster at the end of the meeting.



- ▶ Identify school and/or community resources that can provide the SAT training on cultural diversity or other relevant factors that must be considered.



- ▶ Obtain **staff training on the SAT process, including understanding cultural, language, and socioeconomic differences that may be misidentified as problems.** Core team members should seek more in-depth training in the details of the process and their roles. Ideally, parent groups should also receive information and training in the SAT process.
- ▶ Obtain staff training on the three-tiered model of student intervention and response to intervention (RtI).
- ▶ Remember: If any tests outside those given in general screening are suggested, the team must get written parental consent. For example, the team cannot suggest a test such the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT-3) without **prior parent consent**, since the test is not given school-wide.
- ▶ Make sure that the interventions selected are possible within the school setting and are measurable. Use the student’s strengths as the basis for designing interventions.
- ▶ Establish a close-ended time period for interventions to be implemented and reviewed. Allow enough time between implementation and review for the intervention to take effect. This will **vary according to the type of intervention and the individual circumstances, but about 9 to 18 weeks is recommended to ensure that interventions have time to take effect.**
- ▶ Assign responsibilities and time lines for providing materials or training to teachers to implement an intervention, for contacting outside resources, and for monitoring and documenting the progress.
- ▶ Document everything! See the last section of this manual for reproducible forms for documenting SAT communications, meetings, decisions, plans, and follow-up.

The SAT process can assist teachers by offering peer support, professional development, and school-community networking.

