

Process for Identifying Students Who Need Interventions or Special Education

Step 1. School OR Parent notices that student has academic or behavior challenges.

Step 2. Depending on who notices the challenges: **Parent should talk to the teacher(s)** of the student OR **Teacher(s) implements differentiation** (tier 1) or engages MTSS process. School and parents remain in consultation.

Step 3. **MTSS support is implemented and monitored.** Parents or guardians are notified of student progress at regular intervals. Many students improve with this additional support, but if they do not improve, they would advance to step 4. *For more information about MTSS, visit www.csdecatur.net/Page/4015.*

Step 4. **Student Support Team Meeting** is held with parents/guardians, teacher, MTSS lead, school psychologist and Instructional coach or principal. The team collaboratively makes decisions about next steps which may include further interventions, referral for a 504 evaluation, or a referral for special education evaluation.

***Please note:** this document is general guidance. Just as every child is an individual, so is every child's plan and journey through MTSS. Any of the following options could be implemented or multiple determinations might be considered such as an MTSS Tier 2 combined with a 504 plan.*

Important points for parents to remember if your child is having academic or behavioral challenges:

- All students receive differentiated instruction.
- All students learn differently.
- Some students demonstrate challenges at home only and not at school.
- One score does not define a student's progress, potential, or abilities.

Important information for parents to remember as your child begins the MTSS process:

- Georgia's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) ensures that students receive support and interventions at the appropriate level.
- Either the parent or teacher can request/refer a student for interventions.
- Data-based decision-making leads to the most effective support for students and is a best practice.
- In preparation for evaluation, the request is processed. This means that records are gathered and meeting is scheduled with required participants.

Evaluation requests: Evaluation request can be initiated by a CSD school referral, a parent request, or a private or home-school referral.

Possible options include:

- a. MTSS Tier 1
- b. MTSS Tier 2
- c. MTSS Tier 3
- d. Agree to evaluate for all suspected areas of need
- e. Section 504 Plan eligibility meeting
- f. Special Education eligibility meeting

The explanations of each of these outcomes are listed on the back.

Options a-c. MTSS Tiers 1-3:

- Interventions are determined, utilized, and monitored based on identified areas of need and collected data.
- Supports and interventions are designed to preemptively intervene and proactively address any child at risk in the areas of academics or behavior.
- School and parent may consider other support options for the student such as an MTSS Plan or Section 504 Plan.

Important points to remember during your child's MTSS process:

- Implementation with fidelity is key to seeing intervention success.
- MTSS/RTI is not just "waiting for the student to fail;" rather, it is a **preventative process** of finding evidence-based interventions that help remediate skill deficits.
- Some students may only need tier 2 interventions in order to be successful.

If a student does not improve or improves very minimally, a request to evaluate may be initiated by the school or parents.

Option d. Agreement to Evaluate:

A Comprehensive Educational Evaluation is conducted.

- A comprehensive evaluation must include both formal and informal data.
- An evaluation is more than just a psychological evaluation. (Psychological evaluations from private psychologists and medical reports from doctors are considered as *part of* the formal data available on the student.)
- Evaluations for special education must be conducted within 60 days of the signed consent for evaluation.
- The district may not agree with a parent requested evaluation. In such cases a Prior Written Notice (PWN) letter must be issued detailing why the evaluation is being refused.

When considering evaluation and eligibility:

- In Georgia Special Education eligibility under Specific Learning Disabilities (SDL) requires documented interventions for a minimum of 12 weeks.
- A psychological report (from within or outside the school system) and/or a diagnosis does not automatically "qualify" a student for an IEP.
- Decisions regarding referrals are based on student progress data and a determination that appropriate interventions have been implemented with fidelity.
- An SST meeting could have multiple outcomes or combination of outcomes (for example: A team could agree to a 504 Plan and Tier 2 interventions).

Option e. Agree to evaluate for Section 504 eligibility:

- An evaluation will be completed in order to assess specific areas of educational need related to a suspected impairment.
- If the evaluation shows that a student has a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, they may be in need of a 504 plan that provides accommodations and services to access the educational environment.

Option f. Special Education Eligibility:

- During this meeting a team comprised of school system personnel and parents decide **if the student meets the Georgia eligibility requirements** for special education services (for an Individualized Education Plan or IEP).
- **If eligibility is established**, initial IEP meeting is drafted within 30 days of the eligibility date.
- IEPs are reviewed at least annually, but may be reviewed more often at an Amendment meeting.
- IEP progress reports are completed at least as frequently as general education progress reports.
- IEP progress reports - Provide update on how the student is progressing on the IEP goals.
- **The district cannot issue an IEP for a student prior to conducting a comprehensive evaluation and conducting an eligibility meeting.**
- If the student is NOT eligible for Special Education, the team should go back to steps a-c to determine what supports are necessary.