

STUDENT ASSISTANCE CENTER



Student Support Teams – an Intervention That Succeeds

Educators have been able to identify struggling learners throughout the history of education. Just as a variety of reasons exist for why learners struggle, a variety of approaches to working with struggling learners is necessary. Mental health problems, substance use (both family and student use), relational violence (family, school, community and other), early sexual engagement, gender issues, family dysfunction or disintegration, poverty and other issues take attention away from learning leaving the best curriculum and behavior interventions ineffectual.

Non-Academic Student Support Teams as an Effective Strategy

Historically, the **non-academic student support team** has been a commonly utilized early intervention approach to improve the success of struggling students, and is recommended by educational experts as an important strategy in helping students succeed. The student support team (SST) is designed to strengthen and support students who are experiencing academic, behavioral, family, and/or emotional difficulties that interfere with learning. SSTs develop and implement action plans using classroom, school, family, and/or community-based strategies.ⁱ

- The American Institute for Research recommends the non-academic student support team as an important component of an effective school.^{ii iii}
- The use of student support teams is promoted by the National Association of School Psychologists as an effective intervention.^{iv}
- The American School Counselors Association's (ASCA) National Model, as well as literature in the field of school counseling, encourages collaborative approaches, such as school, family, and community partnerships, to enhance students' personal, social, academic, and vocational success.^v
- The US Department of Education promotes the use of school / student support teams as part of the school's Title 1 efforts.^{vi}

Student Assistance Programs: an Effective Student Support Team Framework

Student Assistance Programs are an evidence-based, low-cost, effective student support team model that has demonstrated success in Illinois. Student Assistance Programs promote evidence-based approaches to build success and foster positive youth development. Data



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Visit the Student Assistance Center

at www.prevention.org to learn more about free training, technical assistance, webinars, and resources for standards-based Student Assistance Programs in grades K-12 Contact Dale Gasparovic, SAC Administrator, at dalegasparovic@prevention.org or at 217.299.8803 for more information.

collected through the Illinois Association of Student Assistance Professionals (IASAP) and the Student Assistance Center (SAC) at Prevention First shows Student Assistance is an effective approach in improving student outcomes with **70 to 80 percent of students** with intervention plans improving or maintaining status in multiple areas, including academics and behavior. Both the high percentage over the report years and the consistency of the percentages tells us that Student Assistance makes a difference in success rates for many students receiving those services.^{vii}

Both Response to Intervention and the positive behavior supports model provide changes in instruction to address student need with the interventions centering on how adults deliver academic and behavior instruction. When implemented with fidelity through the three-tiered system, students with academic and behavior skill deficits who fail to meet academic and behavior expectations, show improvement. However, many general education students have life stressors that cannot be addressed through changes in instruction and whose needs are not being met through these two initiatives.

“Much of the attention currently given to improving students’ academic achievement addresses issues of curriculum, instructional strategies, and interventions or services for struggling learners, and rightfully so. However, even after addressing these issues, barriers still remain for some students. An estimated one-third of students fail to learn because of psychosocial problems that interfere with their ability to fully attend to and engage in instructional activities, prompting a call for “new directions for addressing barriers to learning.” ([Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom](#), published by the Institute of Educational Sciences)

Student Assistance is an effective intervention in addressing psychosocial problems, and utilizes a point-of-need student support team approach to address these and other issues allowing students to take advantage of curriculum and behavioral skill development. Student Assistance provides support interventions most often directly with the student which focuses on addressing non-academic or instructional needs. These often include connecting and coordinating professional services and community support programs for both students and families.

Integration as a Balanced Approach

Integration of Student Assistance as a student support model with instructional practices utilized by Response to Intervention and other support strategies a school may be implementing can provide a more comprehensive framework for addressing student needs.

ⁱ STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM EVALUATION, Evaluation & Research Department, E&R Report No. 05.07 July 2005 www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research

ⁱⁱ Dwyer, K. and Osher, D. (2000). *Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, American Institutes for Research.

ⁱⁱⁱ American Institute for Research, February 27, 2013, Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Education and the Workforce Committee Hearing on “Protecting Students and Teachers: A Discussion on School Safety”

^{iv} Alternatives to Grade Retention, <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/Retention%20WEB.pdf>, retrieved from the internet.

^v American School Counselor Association. (2003). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs*. Alexandria, VA

^{vi} Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html> retrieved from the internet

^{vii} www.prevention.org/Resources/documents/link_datasubmittedsince1999.pdf