

The 5 W's of an IST?

Who is the Instructional Support Team?

In the instance of an IST meeting the following people come together:

- Parents
- Homeroom teacher
- Guidance Counselor
- Instructional Support Program Director
- Principal and/or Curriculum & Instruction Specialist
- Reading Specialist from the Carbon-Lehigh Intermediate Unit
- Educational Consultant from the Carbon-Lehigh Intermediate Unit
- School Psychologist from the Carbon-Lehigh Intermediate Unit

Who can refer a student for an IST meeting?

A referral can be made by a parent, teacher, principal, or student.

What is it?

The Instructional Support Team is an innovative program whose goals are to maximize individual student success in the regular classroom, while at the same time serving as a screening process for students who may be in need of additional support in the classroom. IST is a positive, success-oriented program that uses specific assessment and intervention techniques to help remove educational, behavioral, or affective stumbling blocks for all students in the regular classroom.

The program shifts the critical question in education from asking "What's wrong with the student?" to asking "What resources can we use to increase the student's chances for success?" IST answers this question through a team approach that provides for greater cohesiveness, coordination and instructional continuity, and complements existing curriculum and instructional programs.

What usually happens in an IST meeting?

The team will have a facilitator who begins the meeting by stating the difficulties that have been reported by those who work with the student. The parent will be asked to describe some difficulties that the referred student has been having in the home setting (if applicable). Then, the team tries to define a goal for the child to accomplish within a certain time span. This is often an involved task, for the goal must be specific, positive and in measurable terms so that the team knows when the child has met the goal. After the goal has been set, the team brainstorms ways to help the teacher and/or parent help the child meet the goal. Once strategies are brain-stormed, the teacher may ask for further explanation on one or two of the strategies and then select those that she feels could be implemented in the classroom. Finally, the team sets a date and time for a follow up meeting so that it can be determined if the strategies have been successful. If the strategies were successful, the team may meet periodically in order to monitor the student.

What if the strategies don't work?

If, during the first follow-up meeting, the teacher reports that the strategies selected have not assisted with meeting the referred student's goal, don't despair. The team may need to readjust the goal or select different strategies. If, however, several repeated attempts at trying to get the child to attain a goal fails, it may be necessary for the child to be referred for a psycho-educational evaluation which is completed by your local school district.

Where did it come from?

In the state of Pennsylvania, the public school systems are mandated to implement Instructional Support Teams (IST) before a child is referred for an evaluation by a School Psychologist. Through a collaborative effort between the nonpublic, intermediate unit divisions of Carbon-Lehigh Counties, Colonial Northampton, Berks County and Schuylkill County, we aim to provide a similar service. Although this process is not "mandated" by the state within the nonpublic setting, the Diocese of Allentown is strongly encouraging this to be utilized.

Where is it?

These meetings are held in the conference room which is located off the foyer of the school. Please report to the main office to sign in. Let Mrs. Curran or Mrs. Costa know you are here for an IST meeting, and she will inform the team of your arrival.

When are these meetings scheduled?

Designated dates each month (the 2nd and 4th Wednesday mornings) have been determined by the availability of our IU specialists. Students are scheduled as they are referred if the paperwork is completed by parents and returned to school. The initial meetings can take 45-60 minutes. Follow up meetings are usually 30 minutes.

Why are students referred for an IST?

There is set criteria for a referral. A student must exhibit one or more of the following:

1. Standardized test scores at or below the 40th percentile (national norms)
2. Report card grades below average
3. Grade level performance below average: experiencing frustration with grade level material
4. Academic performance difficulties (i.e. work habits, attention, study skills, etc.)
5. Behavior which impedes the student's ability to learn and or demonstrate progress.

How does one make a referral?

Contact Mrs. Rush, the Director of Instructional Support about a student concern. She will begin the paperwork process. The person who makes the initial referral completes the initial paperwork. Instructional support program director will contact the parent regarding the challenges/concerns presented. Mrs. Rush will send the appropriate paperwork for the parents to complete and return. She will schedule the date of the meeting and inform the parents.