

Helping Students Succeed

Sara Woolverton Ph.D.

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District
October, 2009

1

The Pre-Referral Process

- All school districts have “focus of concern” processes to address the needs of students who are struggling academically or socially in school.
- SMMUSD schools have Student Success Teams (SSTs) designed to provide interventions and supports for any student who is having trouble being successful in school
- Teachers, administrators, support staff or parents can refer a student to the SST

2

The Pre-Referral Process

- The SST meeting is an opportunity for a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) and parents to discuss and clarify the reason for the concern(s) and come up with some interventions designed to help the student succeed in school
- The MDT will be composed of parents and those school staff members who might reasonably contribute to understanding and planning for the student (e.g. the teacher, principal, school psychologist, speech and language therapist, motor therapist, special education teacher, counselor, reading specialist, ELL teacher, etc)

3

The Pre-Referral Process

- The goal of the interventions is to provide supports that enable the student to be successful in the general education environment
- The interventions should be tailored to the student's individual needs and be implemented with fidelity over a reasonable time
- Data should be collected before, during, and after the interventions to track their effectiveness
- It is recommended that schools attempt at least 3 interventions before reconvening the team to discuss how the student is doing

4

The Pre-Referral Process

- Most interventions take the form of **accommodations** (changes in the environment) or **modifications** (changes in the nature of the task).
- After implementing the interventions, the SST reconvenes to review the data to determine if the interventions enable the student to learn successfully in a general education environment
- If the data are inconclusive or show that the student is progressing, the SST may decide to continue with the existing interventions and may also decide to try additional interventions.

5

The Pre-Referral Process

- If the data show that the interventions are not resulting in greater success in the classroom, the team may refer the student for assessment to determine if the student qualifies for additional services as a student with a disability under
 - Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act
or
 - The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEiA, also known as IDEA)

6

504 Plan

- If the interventions have identified specific accommodations and modifications that help the student learn, the team may decide to consider whether the student qualifies for a 504 plan
- Section 504 of the ADA provides for written plans to address the learning needs of qualifying students who have **physical or mental impairments** that **substantially limit** one or more **major life activities**.
- A 504 plan identifies in writing the accommodations and modifications that enable the student to successfully learn in a general education setting

7

Special Education

- If the data indicate that the interventions are not enabling the student to be successful in the general education environment, the SST may refer the student for a special education assessment
- A special education assessment is a formal process using standardized test measures and additional information to determine if the student qualifies for services as a student with a disability according to the IDEA and the California Education Code (CEC).
- The District will *not* conduct a special education assessment without written parental consent

8

Special Education

- To meet eligibility requirements for special education in a learning domain (reading, social skills, etc) the team must establish that the student
 - Meets **eligibility** criteria for one of 13 categories
 - Experiences significant **adverse educational impact** in each qualifying domain attributable to the disability
 - Requires **specially designed instruction** in that qualifying domain in order to obtain meaningful educational benefit.

9

Special Education

	Accommodations changes in the environment or conditions of work	Modifications changes in the task or nature of the work	Specially Designed Instruction changes in content, delivery, or methodology
<i>Examples ▼</i>			
Hearing Impairment	Seat toward the front of the room, use an FM system or interpreter	Allow student to design diorama or photo portfolio rather than making oral presentation	Teach to discriminate between similar sounds
Learning Disability	Provide text in audiotape form, allow additional time to complete work	Provide shorter assignments or assignments at different level	Use specialized curriculum or methodology to instruct in reading skills
	<i>Not special education</i>	<i>Not special education</i>	Special education

10

Special Education

- If the student qualifies as a student with a disability under the IDEA and the CEC, the district will develop an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).
- The IEP identifies specific skills that will be taught using specially designed instruction (**goals and objectives**), the **services** needed to teach those skills, the **program** in which the services will be provided, and any **related services** necessary for the student to learn the skills identified in the goals.
- The IEP will not be implemented if the parent does not provide written consent for the services

11

Special Education

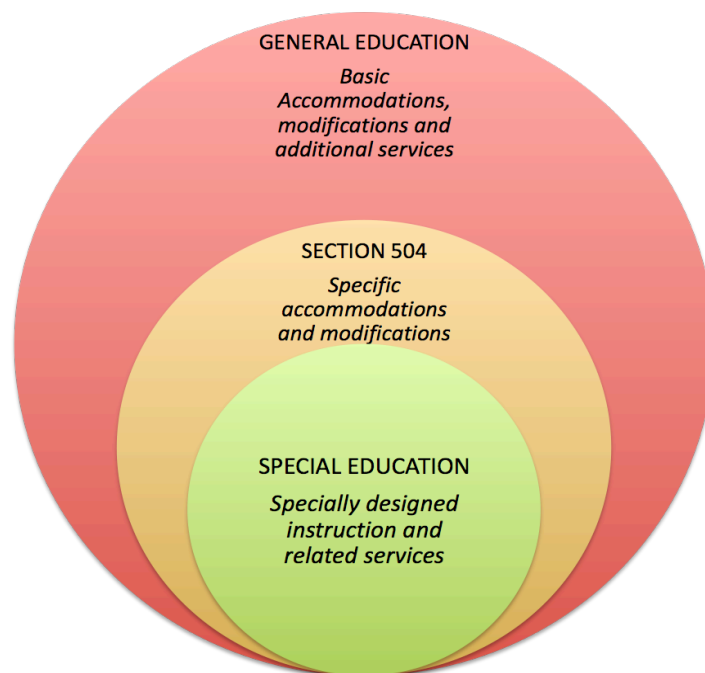
- Because there is often some stigma attached to special education eligibility, and because most special education services require the student to miss general education programming, the District strives to support students in general education settings whenever possible
- Schools have a variety of services (reading specialists, English Language Learner services, homework clubs, friendship groups etc) that are designed to provide support services to students with or without disabilities

12

Special Education

- 504 services provide accommodations and modifications to make general education possible for many students with disabilities
- The laws restricting IDEiA services to the lowest functioning students (generally lowest performing 7-13%) are intended to ensure that the social costs of special education are outweighed by the instructional benefits of more appropriate and highly individualized services

13



14