ROLE OF THE CHILD STUDY TEAM

What is a Child Study Team?

The Child Study Team (CST) is a multidisciplinary group of professionals employed by the Monroe Township Board of Education to provide parents and teachers with a variety of learning related services. Federal and state laws emphasize the importance of parents as key decision makers in the educational process. Child Study Team personnel share many common skills such as child advocacy, understanding of school functioning, knowledge and implementation of special education law, case management, transition planning, in-service training, research, and community collaboration. However, each discipline approaches the intervention and eligibility process from a different perspective based on the training and skills of each profession.

This model is a team approach in which separate professionals assess the educational impact of a child’s learning, behavioral, emotional, social, community, health, communication and language functioning. As such, the Child Study Team provides students and parents with the most comprehensive and reliable method of assessing children’s needs and recommending appropriate educational and related services.

Roles of the Team Members

Psychologist*

School Psychologists are specialists with training and expertise in psychology as it is applied to education. They use their training and skills to collaborate with parents, educators, and other professionals to ensure that every child learns in a safe and supportive environment. School Psychologists use their understanding of school organization and effective learning to help students realize their academic and social potentials. They tailor their services to the particular needs of each child and each situation. School Psychologists are trained to assess and counsel students with behavioral, emotional, and educational concerns through consultation, prevention,
intervention, crisis management, evaluation, and program development. A psychological assessment shall be the responsibility of a School Psychologist employed by the district Board of Education. The psychological assessment should include standardized and functional appraisals of a student's current cognitive, intellectual, adaptive, social, emotional and behavioral status in the context of his/her environments. The assessment should include consultation with parents, educators, and relevant professionals; a student interview; and observation of the student in other than a testing situation.

**Learning Disabilities Consultant**

The Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultant (LDT-C) functions in the school environment as an educational diagnostician, instructional programmer and Child Study Team member. The LDT-C is required to be dually certified as a teacher. The requirement of classroom teaching experience offers a multi-dimensional relevance to the assessment and implementation processes. Learning Disability Teacher-Consultants (LDT-C) use their understanding of classroom functioning, effective teaching and adaptive instruction to help students maximize their learning potential and provide practical assistance to their teachers. Services provided include teacher/student consultation, preventative pre-referral intervention, assessment, coordination of services, and program development. The LDT-C must also effectively communicate with parents, teachers and administrators. An educational assessment shall be the responsibility of a learning disabilities teacher-consultant employed by the district board of education. The assessment should include both standardized and functional assessments, review of the student's work samples and the student’s records, classroom observations, interviews of teacher and other relevant parties, evaluation and analysis of the student’s academic performance and learning characteristics.

**Social Worker**

School Social Workers provide unique services to students and their families, helping the students attain maximum benefits from their educational programs. The School Social Worker's knowledge of social, emotional, cultural and economic differences among children and families enable them to be the link between school, family and community. As a member of the educational team, School Social Workers promote and support students’ academic and social/emotional well-being. Through sound school social work practice, the School Social Worker is able to enhance the full educational and individual potential of all students and eliminate barriers to learning by being pro-active within the academic community and providing early intervention, prevention, consultation, counseling, crisis management, and support services. A social assessment shall be the responsibility of a School Social Worker employed by the district board of education. The social assessment shall include observation of the student and communication with the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s). It shall also include an evaluation of the student's adaptive social functioning and emotional development and
of the family, social, and cultural factors which influence the student's learning and behavior in the educational setting.

**Speech/Language Therapist***

Speech-Language Specialists are experts in all areas of communication who make assessments, analyses and classifications of students' communication competencies and characteristics. As a member of the educational team, the Speech Language Specialist participates in the planning of educational programs for children with communication disorders. Speech Language Specialists plan, prepare and deliver treatment programs for children with speech and language deficiencies. They also serve as resource persons in the area of speech and language development and disorders to classroom teachers, parents, administrators and the child study team. A speech and language assessment shall be the responsibility of a Speech/Language Pathologist employed by the Monroe Township Board of Education. The assessment shall include observations of the student in other than a testing session, consultation with the classroom teacher, communication with the parent(s)/guardian(s), and an evaluation and analysis of speech and language development.

*Approved by ALC, NJASP, NJASLS, and NJASSW in October, 2002

**Occupational Therapist**

School based Occupational Therapy (OT) is provided when a student needs services to function in an educational environment. The need for OT services is identified through the use of formal and informal assessments conducted by the therapist. Direct OT services consist of group and/or individual sessions provided in class or out of class where the child's specific goals are addressed through hands on, purposeful activity. Consultation is an ongoing communication between the therapist, parent, teacher and student where problem solving and trial of different adaptations are used to allow the student to functional optimally in his/her educational environment without the need for direct services.

**Physical Therapist**

School based Physical Therapy (PT) may be requested when there are those unique situations in which gross motor activity may significantly impact a student’s ability to access their education. The school therapist works on school related goals to help the student benefit from their educational program. Educational performance for young children also includes self-help skills, gross motor skills and participation in physical education classes. PT services can take place in a variety of school settings such as a classroom, hallway, gym, and playground or in separate therapy room. Collaborating
with educational staff to modify the child’s environment and daily school activities is also part of school therapy.

**What Other Professionals Might the Child Study Team Call Upon?**

**School Physician** – A medical examination may be conducted to determine if any physical factors can account for the student’s difficulty in school. This may include a vision and hearing screening, and a standard physical examination.

**Neurologist** – This examination may be conducted if there is concern about possible open or closed head injuries (traumatic brain injury), autism or a pervasive developmental disorder, which would impact your child’s education performance. This would be conducted by a medical doctor whose specialty is in neurology or neuro-developmental pediatrics.

**Psychiatrist** – This evaluation is conducted by a consulting psychiatrist to determine to what extent, if any additional emotional factors, beyond the scope of the psychological, influence your child’s educational performance.

**Audiologist** – This is an evaluation by a professional whose specialty is in hearing problems. The student will be examined and tested by the audiologist to determine whether some dysfunction of the ear and the associated hearing mechanisms contribute to possible academic delays.

**Behavior Analyst** – These professionals specialize in identifying, analyzing and the remediation of challenging behaviors. Behavior specialists conduct comprehensive assessments including interviews, and observations in order to identify the function and environmental contribution to the occurrence of problem behaviors (*Functional Behavioral Assessment* – FBA). These specialists will develop behavioral intervention plans and collaborate with and/or train additional team members (teachers, therapists, aides) that can implement the treatment. The behavior analyst will also analyze and evaluate data to determine if the treatment has been successful, or if modifications are needed.

*Updated October 2018*