School Based Pre-referral Process

- Parent, teacher, or staff member observes that a student has difficulty, different or delayed communication skills
- Teacher and parents attempt own modifications and/or consults with other staff members to assist the student
- If the student continues to struggle after modifications have been made, the teacher may:
  - Consult with the SLP
  - Refer the child to the Student Study Team (SST)

2 paths the teacher may take

- **SLP**
  - Recommend additional modifications
  - Provide consultation to teachers and parents
  - Observe the child
  - Review results of modifications
  - Recommend referral to SST
  - Recommend referral for an assessment

- **Student Study Team (SST)**
  - Gather information about the concerns and what has been attempted by the teacher
  - Recommend additional modifications
  - Recommend screening and/or consultation with SLP (who is often a member)
  - Recommend a referral to SLP for assessment

The Referral Process

- May come from many sources:
  - Parents, SST, school psychologists, physicians, and students themselves
- If parents make request, the school must address the request immediately
- Referral by a teacher requires general education interventions before formal assessment
- **Written permission from parents is necessary to begin formal assessment**

Assessment

SLPs roles in assessment (once written parent consent is received):

1. Gather information from parents, family, students, teachers, and other service provider professionals and paraprofessionals
2. Compile student history from interviews and thorough record review
3. Collect student-centered, contextualized, performance-based, descriptive, and functional information
4. Select and administer reliable and valid standardized assessment instruments that meet psychometric standards for test specificity and sensitivity
Evaluation

Responsibility of the SLP:
1. Identify strengths, needs, and emerging abilities
2. Establish the presence of a disorder, delay, or difference
3. Determine a severity rating
4. Define the relationship between the student’s level of speech, language, and communication abilities and adverse affects on educational performance
5. Determine if the communication disability is affected by additional factors influencing the results of the communication assessment
6. Summarize evaluation results and make recommendations

3 Methods of Assessment

- **Standardized Tests**
  - Norm-referenced tests
  - Examine each ability area
  - Static testing
- **Performance-based measures**
  - Conversations, language samples, Checklists, oral-motor exams, social emotional skills review, curriculum-based measures, etc.
  - Static testing
- **Dynamic assessment**
  - Cognitive tasks in nonstandardized format
  - Uses test-teach-retest approach
  - Examiners role is interactive not static
  - Emphasize the learning process the child is using not the products of past learning

Evaluation Report

- Student history
- Date(s) of assessment
- Relevant behaviors noted during observation
- Assessment info from all disciplines
- Observations/impressions
- Results of previous interventions
- Descriptive assessment results
- Standardized assessment results
- Discussion of strengths, needs, and emerging abilities
- Disorder/Delay/Difference determination
- Severity rating
- Educational relevance
- Interpretation/integration of all assessment data
- Evaluation results and recommendations

Disorder/Delay/Difference determination

**Disorder:** Impairment in the ability to send, receive, process, and comprehend verbal, nonverbal, and graphic symbol systems

**Delay:** Rate of acquisition of language or speech skills is slower than expected according to developmental norms; however, the sequence of development is following a predicted order

**Difference:** A regional, social, cultural, or ethnic variation of a symbol system is not considered a disorder of speech or language
Steps in the Multidisciplinary Team Formal Assessment Process

1. IEP (Individual Education Plan) initial review meeting date is set
2. Multidisciplinary team members receive consent to test, in writing, from the special education office
3. Each member conducts their assessment
4. Results are analyzed
5. Individual reports are prepared of findings and reviewed with team members/parents at the IEP initial review meeting
6. Recommendations are determined
7. IEP is created if appropriate and services, present levels of performance, goals, benchmarks, and appropriate service delivery model are determined by the team and parents

Evaluation Action Timeline

Request for an assessment is received: School has 10-15 days to present parent with an assessment plan

Signed assessment plan / consent is received from parents: Team has 30-60 days to complete the assessment

Meeting must be held 30 days after it has been determined the student may be in need of special education/related services

If recommended, services must begin within 60 days of the initial request

Individualized Education Programs

• Outline of a child’s special educational needs and the means to meet those needs
• Basic building block for the specially designed program
• A written planning tool for a child’s special education that is developed by school personnel and parents together

IEP Development

IEP Team:

• Parent/Guardian of the child
• Regular education teacher of the child
• Special education teacher
• Representative of the local education agency
• An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results
• Other individuals who have expertise regarding the child
• The child, when appropriate

Also in attendance: interpreter, parent advocate, administrative assistant
**Required components of the IEP**

1. Demographic Information
2. Assessment results
3. Current levels of development, function, and performance
4. Annual goals
5. Short term objectives
6. Specific special education and related services to be provided
7. Projected dates and places
8. Participation in regular education
9. Type of physical education program if applicable
10. Classroom
11. Testing modifications

**Federal Eligibility Categories for Special Education**

- Autism
- Deafness
- Deaf-Blindness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Learning Disability
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Other Health Impairment
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Speech/Language Impaired
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

**Special Education Placements**

1. Regular education classroom with consultant teacher services
2. Resource room
3. Special classroom
4. Special schools
5. Private schools
6. State schools
7. Home or hospital instruction
8. Community based services

There is no universal format for what the IEP looks like
Questions for the planning team:
1. Where is the individual now?
2. Where do we want him/her to go?
3. When do we want the person to get there?
4. Who do we want and need to take with us?
5. How do we want to go?
6. What resources will be necessary to implement the plan?
7. How will we know when we’ve arrived?

Questions to ask in reviewing the IEP:
1. Does the information concerning student’s present levels of performance clearly describe the impact of the disability on the student’s educational performance?
2. Does the IEP reflect the child’s needs?
3. Is there a clear relationship between the present level of performance, recommended program, annual goals, and short term objectives?
4. Do the goals and objectives focus on the special education needs of the student?

After the IEP is written
• Parent copy free of charge
• Copy to those professionals implementing the IEP
What if parents don’t agree with the IEP?
• Try to reach an agreement
• Ask for mediation
• Ask for due process
• File a complaint with the state education agency

Due Process
Reasons parent may request due process:
1. Failure to follow required timeline for the IEP
2. Failure to implement the IEP recommendations
3. Failure of the school district to consider an independent evaluation
4. Disagreement on the IEP recommendations
5. Failure of the school district to review on an annual basis
6. Failure of the school district to reevaluate in 3 years
7. Disagreement with eligibility decision

Reasons school district may initiate due process:
1. Parents do not consent to the initial evaluation
2. Parents do not consent to the initial recommendation in special education
3. Parents withdraw consent for a proposed placement
4. School district wants to establish that its evaluation is appropriate and avoid paying for an independent evaluation

List of rights for Due Process Hearing
• Counsel may be present
• Experts in the field may be present
• Evidence is presented by both parties
• Cross-examination is allowed for both parties
• Witnesses may be required to attend
• Written or taped recordings of the hearings must be available
• Parents – make the decision whether it will be a public hearing and whether the child may be present
• Interpreter
Protect yourself in case of Due Process:
• Administer tests according to the way they are standardized
• Note any modifications you made
• Be aware of the population used for standardization for tests
• Be aware that all testing must follow federal guidelines
• Try to have multiple tests for each area of disability
• Be sure annual goals and objectives clearly relate the identified needs
• Keep attendance
• Keep brief notes for each session
• Document any conversation or correspondence with parents
• Keep in close contact with the classroom teacher

Very important
• Progress and Status Reports
• Verification and Documentation

Summer Programming

Reasons for summer programming:
1. To provide more intensive therapy for children who need it
2. To offer a preventative program of therapy along with parental guidance program
3. **Primary: maintenance program** for students who may be at risk for regression