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Team Teaching for Interventions

As teachers work to meet the needs of the individual students in their classrooms, they become personally invested in each student's success. This is not a new situation nor is it one that most teachers or school officials would identify as needing attention or "fixing." However, in the current school climate where we must bring all students to a more proficient level of performance, we might need to modify the view that students belong to only one teacher.

Traditional education encouraged us, as teachers, to close our doors and work diligently with "our" students to get them to the level of learning expected. If students did not demonstrate that level of learning, we often felt we had failed them, because traditional instruction did not easily allow for extra assistance. Now, with more and more emphasis on **all** students meeting standards, there is a demand for instructional differentiation. And perhaps one way to provide differentiation is to look at a plan for sharing our students with other teachers.

Imagine you are a 5th grade teacher and you have completed whole class instruction on a particular math learning goal, and assessed the students to determine how well they've met the goal. As you review the results of the assessment, student by student, you find that you have five students with very definite deficiencies in their learning. Two students need to be able to break problems down into smaller pieces, two students need to revisit the multiplication facts, and the last student has difficulty communicating his problem-solving steps. You also have 21 other students ready to move on to new skills and concepts because they performed quite well on the assessment. It is not acceptable just to go on and not provide support for the five students with specific needs, and it's also not acceptable to leave 21 students sitting while you deal with the problems of those five.

Perhaps the solution is for all the teachers of the same grade level to share their students. For the math goal mentioned above, Teacher A might take all the students from all sections of 5th grade who need strategies to break problems apart so they can be solved. Teacher B might provide additional practice for all the students from all sections of 5th grade who need to revisit their

multiplication facts. And teacher C might take all the students from all sections of 5th grade who need help with communicating mathematically. This special assistance could occur during after-school time, special learning support time within the school day, before school starts, or at any other designated time for helping students. But now, instead of three teachers developing three different instructional strategies and having to work with three different populations of students, each teacher can concentrate on one effective intervention teaching plan, working with one set of students until all are successful at the skill assessed.

In addition to the time periods suggested above, if all sections of 5th grade had math class at the same time each day, this same "sharing of students" could become a regular part of math instruction time. During the first, say, 15 minutes of each math class (or 20 to 30 minutes only once or twice a week), students could rotate to the specific teachers who were assigned to provide the kinds of assistance identified. Students not needing extra help would meet with the remaining teachers to receive enrichment instruction.

By sharing students in the manner described here, differentiation becomes easier to manage. We often have teachers question how to handle the degree of differentiation necessary for all the student learning levels and styles within their classrooms. By capitalizing on the strengths of our colleagues and sharing our students, we can form flexible groupings of students, and meet more student learning styles and difficulties than we can when working as individuals in a closed system. The flexible groupings change as we change learning targets and identify new student deficiencies. Some student needs might be long term, while others require only a short intervention period to get the student back on track. In either case, having separate teachers address each type of problem is more efficient and effective.