

The Collaborative Model – Going Below the Surface

For Dr. Connie Sorice and her team in the Volusia County School District in Florida, targeting intervention for children is a collaborative effort. Connie, who is the Coordinator for School Psychological Services for the district, has facilitated and co-lead the supervised the implementation of a new strategy model which integrates many different areas to provide positive outcomes for students. “For the last three years our team has worked together on moving to a problem-solving approach, or what we call the collaborative model.”

This team approach also focuses on timely intervention and is designed to be more prevention oriented, intervention oriented, and diagnostic than the conventional method where a child is referred, receives testing is evaluated, and is placed accordingly. “We’re working together to provide an integrated approach to assure the most effective interventions for students in need. It is a much more reciprocal, comprehensive, and early intervention focused approach that uses the data obtained from assessment and applies that data to target appropriate intervention.”

The Collaborative Model that Volusia County developed includes aspects of is similar to the Response to Intervention model within the Problem-Solving Approach. The model brings together various departments and functional groups within the district, such as Elementary Services, Exceptional Student Education Department, the Language Arts Department, ESOL department, and the Speech and Language Department.

“We wanted a truly integrated approach because we discovered that both general education teachers and special education teachers were working with the same child but their paths never crossed, so their approaches with the same child often ran parallel. We realized that together we could be much more effective by developing one integrated plan, which required collaboration from the many functional areas that provide services for that child.”

This more holistic view also allows the possibility of including assessment information earlier in the process. “Rather than just reporting scores via subtests, we look at the issues that the effects the child’s overall performance in school, as well as data and regular progress monitoring to assess the effectiveness of interventions.”

The program, which began last summer, is inclusive of a variety of participants, including general education teachers, school psychologists, reading coaches, intervention teachers, special education teachers, school social workers, and speech/language pathologists. “We’ve received great support from superintendent staff, school administrators and district personnel which has helped the program grow and become even more effective.” The model was piloted in 15 schools during the 2004-2005 school year, and will be expanded to include 5 more schools during 2005-2006.

The program continues to evolve. Quick reference guides and brochures about the program help introduce and explain this model to school teams and school faculties. There have been other spin-offs such as extensive professional development opportunities programs for teaching good reading instructional strategies and the development of developing functional behavior assessments and positive behavior support plans, as well as parent brochures for helping their child with reading, just to name a few.