

setting based on their skills (Idol, 1990). All participants are responsible for defining and analyzing problems, for establishing and maintaining the collaborative partnership, and for follow-up. Since the referring teacher is responsible for the student and for implementing the interventions, he or she is the best judge of what strategies are suitable and makes the final decision.

Preventative Function

Problem solving has a dual focus. It provides a mechanism to deal with immediate problems, and it has the potential to help teachers control the factors that cause and maintain the problem. It can both ease existing problems and prevent existing difficulties from becoming more severe.

The first objective is met by developing specific interventions to deal with the current problem. The second is accomplished in a less direct manner. Teachers can share their experience and expertise with each other when they interact frequently. Problem-solving sessions create the opportunities for interaction. Teachers can share knowledge and improve their skills so similar problems can be dealt with more effectively in the future. In most cases, it is necessary for teachers to address several problem situations successfully before they can handle problems independently. Training teachers to deal with a single problem situation has been ineffective in teaching them general skills for coping with a variety of circumstances (Pryzwansky, 1989).

Participants

The team should have five to seven members. At minimum, a facilitator and three other teachers are needed to make the problem-solving process work effectively. As noted earlier, the facilitator is often a methods and resource teacher or guidance counsellor, but can also be an administrator or teacher. On occasion the student who is the central figure in the situation may be requested to participate since he or she has the most