

at stake in the process (Thousands and Villa, in press, b).

The facilitator must ensure that the atmosphere remains supportive and non-judgemental. The facilitator must identify possible participants, schedule the meeting and ensure that teachers share their expertise and knowledge so creative solutions emerge. He or she must also assist the teacher in selecting strategies for possible use, in developing an evaluation plan, and in follow-up and implementation.

Addressing the System

Regular use of problem solving leads educators to look beyond the immediate situation to prevention and, ultimately, to issues related to the organization of the school. School organization can bring about many day-to-day problems faced by students and teachers (Skrtic, 1991). The connection between a student's problem and system variables that may be contributing to the problem or preventing solutions must be identified and dealt with. Educators cannot assume that problems are only internal to the child. This perspective shifts the focus and broadens the goals of the consultation or problem-solving process (Gutkin and Hickman, 1990).

Empowerment

The empowerment of regular classroom teachers is central to the use of problem-solving teams. The emphasis on collaboration with peers rather than referral to "experts" is an important factor in this empowerment. Colleagues help fellow teachers clarify needs and locate resources; at the same time they ensure that opportunities are available to constructively resolve their own problems (West, 1990).

Enhancement of Student Well-Being and Performance

Although problem solving focuses on improving teacher's skills and performance, the ultimate beneficiary is always intended to be the student. While the focus is usually on one student, it is possible to see the entire school benefit.