Guidelines

Pre-referral Intervention as Assessment

Pre-referral is a screening and intervention process that involves identifying problems experienced by students in the regular classroom, identifying the source of the problems (student, teacher, curriculum, environment, etc.), and taking steps to resolve the problems within the regular classroom. These interventions are meant to improve response to the problem by the regular classroom teacher and are seen as a good way to reduce the number of students tested, diagnosed, and referred to special programs. Optimally, pre-referral consultation can result in a student's staying in the regular classroom because the teacher has learned new ways to work with the problem. Minimally, such activity can add assessment data that lead to increased validity of diagnoses and referrals. The Resource Aid section of this Packet contains some guidelines for the Pre-referral Process.

(1) **Formulate an initial description of the problem.**

(2) **Get the youngster’s view of what’s wrong and, as feasible, explore the problem with the family.**

As every teacher, the causes of learning, behavior, and emotional problems are hard to analyze. What looks like a learning disability or an attentional problem may be emotionally-based difficulties. What appears as a school problem may be the result of problems at home. The following are some things to consider in seeking more information about what may be causing a youngster’s problem.

(a) Through enhanced personal contacts, build a positive working relationship with the youngster and family.

(b) Focus first on assets (e.g., positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the youngster likes at school and in class.)

(c) Ask about what the youngster doesn’t like at school.

(d) Explore the reasons for “dislikes” (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? As interesting? Is the youngster embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Is the youngster picked on? Rejected? Alienated?

(e) Explore other possible casual factors.

(f) Explore what the youngster and those in the home think can be done to make things better (including extra support from a volunteer, a peer, friend, etc.)

(g) Discuss some new things that youngster and those in the home would be willing to try to make the situation better.

(3) **Try new strategies in the classroom** – based on the best information about what is causing the problem.

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Pre-referral Interventions Some Things to Try

- Make changes to (a) improve the match between a youngster’s program and his/her interests and capabilities and (b) try to find ways for the student to have a special, positive status in the class, at the school, and in the community. Talk and work with other staff in developing ideas along these lines.

- Add resources for extra support (aide, volunteers, peer tutors) to help student's efforts to learn and perform. This includes having others cover your duties long enough for you to interact and relate with student as an individual.

- Discuss with student (and those in the home) why the problems are occurring

- Specifically focus on exploring matters with the youngster that will suggest ways to enhance positive motivation.

- Change aspects of the program (e.g., materials, environment) to provide a better match with his/her interests and skills.

- Provide enrichment options (in and out of class).

- Use resources such as volunteers, aides, peers to enhance the youngster’s social support network

- Specifically focus on exploring ways those in the home can enhance their problem-solving efforts.

- If necessary, include other staff (e.g., counselor, principal) in a special discussion with the youngster exploring reasons for the problem and ways to enhance positive involvement at school and in class.

(4) **If the new strategies don’t work,** talk to others at school to learn about approaches they find helpful (e.g., reach out for support/mentoring/coaching, participate with others in clusters and teams, observe how others teach in ways that effectively address differences in motivation and capability, request additional staff development on working with such youngsters).

(5) **If necessary, use the school’s referral processes** to ask for additional support services.

(6) **Work with referral resources** to coordinate your efforts with theirs for classroom success.