Before Requesting More Staff…

Factors that Impact the Efficient Use of Staff

Use of Paraprofessionals

Most studies indicate that paraprofessionals are generally not trained or assigned in ways that positively impact personnel needs.

√ Indicates Practice in Place.	
	Recruit paras who meet criteria to serve in instruction support roles.
	Provide training for paras to enable them to assume their instructional support roles with competence.
	Provide collaborative planning time for teachers (both general education and special populations) to meet the paras with whom they work.
	Periodically review the success of the para/teacher partnerships and adjust as appropriate.
	Assure that a minimum of 90% of their time is devoted to instructional support versus administrative support/office/clerical tasks.
	Annually assess the training and information needs of paras to assure that their skills and competencies are continuously updated.

Use of Peer Tutors

Peers are the most under-utilized resource yet they represent the most "natural" supports for students. The assignment of at-risk students as peers in one of the most effective strategies for reducing dropout and increasing a sense of belonging among these students.

√ Indicates Practice in Place.	
	An organized, systematic program for assigning peer assistant and tutors is in place on the campus.
	The faculty recognizes that "natural" supports are preferable to adult supports when this level of assistance is sufficient to the needs of special populations students (i.e., this level of support is considered first before adult supports are considered).
	Peer tutors/assistants receive training specifically designed for the roles they assume in the classroom and on the campus.
	Peer tutors have clear roles and responsibilities.
	Peer tutors derive personal benefit form these roles and responsibilities.
	The success of the peer tutor/assistant program is evaluated on an annual basis and necessary adjustments are made.

Non-Categorical Staffing Models

Traditional models, in which special education "departments" were maintained as separately as the students they served, result in reduced collaboration and trust and thus the separate systems typically required more support personnel.

√ Indicates Practice in Place.	
	Special education teachers are assigned as members of grade level or department level teams.
	Teachers have common planning periods and smaller numbers of general education teachers with whom to coordinate schedules and services.
	All special education teachers serve special education students regardless of disability category at their assigned grade level or department level.

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Instructional Strategies

If teachers are not comfortable differentiating instruction for the increasing number of diverse learners, these students will not be successful in the general education classroom and the need for additional personnel will increase significantly.

√ Indicates Practice in Place.	
	All teachers use a variety of effective instructional strategies that assure that the needs of all students are met.
	Lecture-based instruction is not the predominate instructional strategy since this method equates to a higher support need for many students.
	Teachers on the campus are masters of differentiated instruction for mixed-ability classrooms.
	Teachers recognize and accept that learning outcomes will vary for the students served and that all students will not be functioning on the same level (or exactly on grade level).
	All teachers use the appropriate accommodations or modifications for the students who require them.

Instructional Settings

When students with disabilities are distributed equally across classroom and teachers, their needs for additional support and the support needs of their general education teachers are typically reduced.

√ Indicates Practice in Place.	
	Students are served on their neighborhood campuses whenever possible to assure that a disproportionate number of special education students are not served on a single campus (thus overloading that campus in such a way that integrated classes resemble special education classes).
	All teachers on a campus accept their responsibility to serve diverse student populations (thus assuring that one or two teachers per grade level or subject area are not overloaded with special needs students).
	Teachers understand that often services provided to students with disabilities in resource or self-contained classes results in *less instructional learning time* for these students who need *more instructional time.*
	Regularly scheduled (at least annually) meetings are conducted to acquaint sending and receiving campuses with information necessary to smooth transitions for students thus avoiding radical shifts in the use of personnel created by the sending campus.

Scheduling Strategies

Often the strategies for scheduling student supports results in a very poor use of existing staff.

√ Indicates Practice in Place.	
	Individual student needs (by type and level of support needed) are established prior to scheduling.
	Hand scheduling versus computerized scheduling is preferred in order to accommodate the specific support needs of individual students.
	Other special needs teachers and staff are incorporated into the scheduling lineup to assure that services are not duplicated for diverse learners and that the pool of in-class support providers is enlarged.
	The times when high-need subjects are scheduled (such as reading/language arts) are varied throughout the day to minimize the strain on available special education and other specialized personnel.

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