

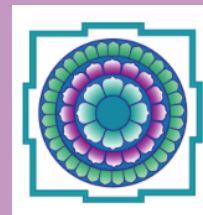
Widening the Circle

Celebrating Neurodiversity in Faith-based Schools

FOCUS

STRATEGY:

Teacher Problem-Solving Teams in the Classroom



The cornerstone of a thriving faith-based classroom is a nurturing environment that fosters academic success and spiritual growth for all students. However, every teacher encounters students who face academic challenges or exhibit disruptive behaviors. While our faith compels us to offer compassion and understanding, addressing these concerns effectively requires more than just good intentions.

This is where Teacher Problem-Solving Teams (TPSTs) come into play. These collaborative groups bring together educators from various backgrounds to brainstorm strategies for supporting students with diverse needs. By harnessing the collective wisdom of experienced teachers, specialists, and support staff, TPSTs provide a powerful framework for crafting impactful interventions that align with school values.

The Power of Collaboration

Imagine a student struggling with reading comprehension. Their classroom teacher might initially focus on targeted reading strategies. However, a TPST could reveal additional factors at play. The school counselor might share observations hinting at emotional anxieties affecting focus, while the special education teacher suggests an undiagnosed learning disability. Through this collaborative exchange, a nuanced understanding of the student's needs emerges, allowing the team to develop a comprehensive intervention plan.

Building a Strong TPST

The success of a TPST hinges on its composition and structure. Here are some key considerations:



- **Team Members:** Aim for a diverse group to reflect the needs of your student population.

Ideally, a TPST should include:

- **Classroom teachers:** Representatives from various grade levels and subject areas can offer diverse perspectives.
- **Support teachers (if available):** Their expertise in learning disabilities proves invaluable.
- **School counselor:** Provides insights into the student's social-emotional well-being.
- **Reading specialist:** Offers targeted skill development support.
- **Administrator:** Ensures alignment with school-wide initiatives.

Meeting Structure:

- o **Referral Process:** Establish a clear process for teachers to refer students for TPST consideration. This should include data on specific academic or behavioral concerns.
- o **Team Meetings:** Schedule regular meetings to discuss referred students. Allocate time for sharing data, brainstorming interventions, and assigning action items.
- o **Communication:** Maintain clear communication with parents throughout the process, ensuring they are informed and actively involved in their child's support plan.

The TPST Process in Action

Let's consider a hypothetical scenario:

Student: Sarah, a 4th grader struggling with math anxiety and low self-esteem.

Referral Reasons: Frequently avoids participation in math class, exhibits tearfulness during tests, and shows low performance on math assessments.

TPST Discussion Points:

- **Classroom Teacher:** Shares specific behavioral observations and academic performance data.
- **Support Teacher:** Investigates potential interference with learning.
- **School Counselor:** Explores potential emotional factors contributing to math anxiety.

The Faith-based School Advantage

Faith-based schools have a unique advantage in fostering collaborative teams: a shared faith. Faith-based TPSTs can go beyond academic and behavioral strategies, incorporating elements such as:

- *Prayer:* Offer prayers for the student and the team seeking solutions.
- *Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) with a Faith Lens:* Integrate character development and virtues into the interventions.
- *Family Collaboration:* Encourage open communication with parents, fostering a partnership built on shared values and a concern for the student's well-being.

