

Creative Strategies for Special Education

We partner with schools to design and implement systemic changes in special education and related services programs to achieve measurable, cost effective results.

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The Problem

Schools invest a great amount of money, time, and staff resources providing education and therapy services to students with learning challenges and disabilities. Yet reports of the return on their investment are not good. Students in special education continue to lag behind in core curricular areas and perform poorly on district and state assessments. Challenges such as competing priorities, high costs, scarcity of qualified teachers and therapists, and antiquated, inefficient processes pose barriers to achieving positive outcomes.

The CSSE Solution

Creative Strategies for Special Education (CSSE), an educational consulting firm, brings a fresh perspective by helping school administrators evaluate their special education and therapy programs, drive systemic change, and launch initiatives that result in quality instruction, greater efficiency, and reduced costs.

Our unique approach leads to measurable improvement in three integrated areas critical to effective programs:

1. Student outcomes

- Improved academic and functional performance in school, home, community, and work

2. Education team outcomes

- Improved communication systems, collaboration, and service coordination

3. Program and system outcomes

- Increased efficiency, options for service delivery, and accountability

Case Study

Changing Paradigms – Improving Outcomes

The reading and functional communication skills of 97 urban middle school students with disabilities were improved by introducing an innovative reading and speech-language intervention model. One speech-language pathologist coached 4 reading instructors to modify their instructional communication during daily reading instruction. She did not directly work with the students. After only 20 hours of reading instruction complemented by the indirect therapy services model, over 60% of the students made gains in their reading as well as functional communication skills. The model illustrates how more students can be reached, staff time can be used effectively, collaborative efforts can be focused, and costs can be reduced.

(Blosser, J (2013). Outcomes Matter in School Service Delivery. In Golper & Frattali. Thieme Medical Publishers, Inc.)

Achieving Positive Outcomes

Through our school partnerships and research, we have identified 4 key elements that must be in place for special education and related services programs to be successful. Our process first invites school leaders to rate their school's quality and cost performance for each of the key elements. We then jointly determine the specific elements that should be strengthened to obtain greater effectiveness and efficiency. We share our unique measurement tools and practical strategies.

The 4 Key Elements

1. Ensure effectiveness

- Use a systematic, research-based outcomes measurement system that is aligned with the curriculum to measure students' performance as a result of instruction and intervention
- Match the *right* student to the *right* service, the *right* provider, and the *right* instruction and intervention
- Provide appropriate dosage of intervention (amount, duration, frequency)

2. Provide evidence-based, educationally relevant instruction and intervention

- Align academic goals with the core curriculum
- Offer differentiated instruction and integrate therapy intervention in the classroom
- Utilize technology

3. Optimize teams

- Leverage expertise and qualifications
- Coordinate teams and services to achieve goals and efficiency
- Engage families
- Evaluate therapist performance using appropriate instruments
- Offer professional development and leadership training

4. Manage quality and costs by systematizing operational procedures

- Adhere to eligibility and exit standards
- Use efficient, creative staffing and scheduling models
- Expand the range of education and therapy delivery (including telepractice and integrating services)
- Oversee and manage outsourced staff and services
- Require data-based decisions and accountability

Our Consultation Services

Our services include comprehensive program review, planning, program design, and professional development/leadership training. We guide teams through implementation of our customized, cost-effective solutions to ensure scalability and sustainability.

Contact us at:

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