

What can we expect to get from this module? This module helps participants and school teams to do deep reflection about extra help, advisement, engaging instructions and student/family relationships, all with the goal of improving the participants' ability to work in ways that motivate students and make learning meaningful for them. Participants examine the research, apply it via self assessment, examine case examples of various practices, and create plans for improvement.

What shouldn't we expect to get from this module? This module does not provide detailed information on differentiation strategies, forming small learning communities, or specific instructional strategies.

Who is the training for? This module is designed to be taught to school leaders and potential school leaders. This may include school teams of principals, aspiring leaders, teacher leaders, and others who are members or potential members of the school's professional development team. **NOTE:** In order for this training to have significant impact, the principal **MUST** be part of the school team being trained. In addition, it is beneficial to also include district staff involved in curriculum, standards, and instruction.

Other SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules that support this module. There are no formal prerequisites for this SREB module; however, the skills that are taught in the following SREB modules are considered foundational: *Using Data to Lead Change*; *Leading Assessment and Instruction*; *Prioritizing, Mapping and Monitoring the Curriculum*; and *Meeting the Standards, Looking at Teacher Assignments and Student Work*. It is recommended that school teams complete those training programs first (or acquire those skills in some other way) before turning their attention to *Creating a Personalized Learning Environment*.

What will we have to do to get the most from this module? Participants must commit to attending as a team, completing the prework, attending two initial days, completing a homework assignment, attending one follow-up day, and then completing a portfolio assignment. The following SREB texts are required for all participants:

- *Personalized Learning: Preparing High School Students to Create Their Futures*. Joseph DiMartino, John Clarke, Denise Wolk. The Scarecrow Press, 2003.
- *Star Principals: Serving Children in Poverty*. Martin Haberman. Kappa Delta Pi, 1999.

Big Ideas in This Module

Introduction: The Opportunity to Make a Difference

- *Realigning the curriculum and setting higher expectations is all well and good, but it will only lead to frustration unless we find ways to help students meet these expectations. This means identifying strategies to help students with a wide range of styles, difficulties, interests, and strengths. Personalization is structuring experiences and building relationships that make learning meaningful to a given student.*

Engaging Students

- *We can keep students engaged with instruction that has the following qualities: relevance, clarity, big ideas, active involvement, caring, and working on the work.*

Extra Help

- *In order to be effective, extra help must be offered early, frequently and regularly. It must be easy to access. The system must be closely planned and monitored, or it will not be as effective as it could be and students will not reach their goals. Effective tutoring relationships are extended and consistent.*

Advisement

- *Teacher advisement can provide students with timely one-on-one advice on goals and strategies, helping them before they fall behind. However, it also can be poorly conceived, inconsistent, and unorganized. It takes planning, time, effort, training, and dedication to make sure that it is effective.*

Small Learning Communities (SLCs)

- *Small learning communities can contribute to a personalized learning environment, but they are not right for every school. Converting to SLCs is a comprehensive, whole-school reform.*
- *Most educators feel that they are doing all they can to involve parents and families in the school lives of their children. However, creative thinking and effort can lead to partnerships that enrich all involved. The same can be said for relevant instruction.*

Module Design. This is a three-day workshop (2+1). It also includes prework and homework assignments. Each section is described below.

Prework (about two hours). The prework includes readings from three different authors who have different ideas about what it means to personalize the learning environment. Participants reflect and work on a graphic organizer that identifies strengths and weaknesses on an individual and organizational basis.

Introduction: The Opportunity to Make a Difference (about four hours, 30 minutes). In this section, participants have a chance to explore the importance of creating a personalized learning environment and the various strategies that make a difference. The icebreaker consists of participants recalling an event, person, or other aspect of school life which inspired them. Then they are read a story about how children become disengaged with school life. They recall their own stories about children that were saved from “falling through the cracks,” and then organize all this information into a set of goals and strategies for maintaining student engagement and achievement by creating a personalized learning environment. Participants should come to the conclusion that by understanding themselves and others, and building relationships among school, home, and community, students will be able to meet higher expectations.

Engaging Students (one hour, 30 minutes). In this section, participants explore various strategies, at the classroom, school and district level, for engaging students (relevance, clarity, big ideas, active involvement, caring, working on the work). They listen to a presentation and then create their own examples. They also complete a school self assessment on current practices.

Extra Help (about two hours). Participants reflect on the increased importance of extra help in an era of higher expectations. They learn about some of the key points related to providing extra help and what the research says about what works, and then they look at a variety of different practices at different schools. For each scenario, they work in small groups to determine whether the practice is based on sound principles and how the strategy might work in their own schools. The section concludes with a review of key concepts that the participants have been recording throughout the session.

Advisement (about two hours). This is a *teacher advisement system*, not a system for the counseling department. Although the counseling department plays a role in setting up and monitoring the system and providing support through the advisement curriculum, the idea here is to establish a personal relationship with a teacher adviser. Participants learn why so many attempts to do this fail and what the research says about keys to success. Participants help the trainer flesh out a description of the process involved in setting up an advisory system, and then they work in small groups to present a hypothetical case study of an advisement system based on facts at their schools. The section ends with a self assessment and summary.

Connecting (about two hours). This section deals with two separate topics with a common theme. The topics are connecting to families and communities and providing relevant instruction. The common theme is “connections.” Most educators feel that they are doing all they can to involve parents and families in the school lives of their children. In this section, we will challenge that

assumption and demonstrate the importance of partnership. The same thing can be said about providing *relevant instruction*. Most educators feel that they do this, but have they really explored all the ways to make instruction more relevant to students? At the beginning of this section, participants write down practices they are already using to involve families and communities and to provide relevant instruction. Then participants will be divided into two groups: one for families and communities, and one for relevance. Each group will be given a set of readings related to their topic. From this set of readings, they will glean ideas for practice. They will also construct an "argument" for changing practices. Participants will then return to their school teams, where they will discuss both topics and choose top priority items to work on.

Bridge From Day Two to Day Three (about three hours; takes place several weeks after Days One and Two). Participants review the content from Days One and Two, and then reflect on some general learning points. Participants share key learning points from the action plans that they completed related to organizing time, organizing people, and organizing financial resources. Each school team chooses an action plan to describe to the others. After sharing, participants work on revising/renewing their action plans for continued effort in the future.

Small Learning Communities (SLCs) (about one hour, 15 minutes). In this brief section, participants discuss how small learning communities can contribute to a personalized learning environment. They discuss whether or not this is something that their school should pursue, and are referred to the series of in-depth SREB workshops called *Structuring for Success: How to Use Small Learning Communities to More Deeply Implement High Schools That Work Key Practices*. This workshop series can be used for more detailed

training on complete planning for SLCs, how to involve the community and faculty, creating programs of study, etc.

Summary and Portfolio Assignments (about 30 minutes). Participants working as a team must plan and implement at least one effort to personalize the learning environment. Participants submit a portfolio that contains team products as well as individual reflections and narrative.