EST: Q and A

What is an Educator Support Team (EST)?

Any group of staff members who support the teaching and learning process in the school.

What is the purpose of EST?

To assist teachers, special needs assistants (SNAs) and parents/carers **to support** learners/students who experience barriers to learning and development OR who are at risk of developing such barriers.

It is a system that acts as a 'think tank' and helps to solve the puzzle of what is going on for a student and determine what he/she might need to succeed in their environment. The EST reviews, revises, and monitors the effectiveness of interventions.

The *FOCUS* = what can educators do to *change strategies*, *adjust the environment*, and *alter expectations* so a learner can be successful within his or her educational environment?

Who should be on an EST?

The EST membership should include individuals appropriate to the child's education and environment. Membership should include classroom teacher, resource teacher, principal, SNA, special area teachers *i.e. art, P.E.* , parent and student (when applicable)

What knowledge and training should EST members have?

Training might include consultations amongst schools to exchange knowledge, share successes, discuss challenges and find solutions to mutual problems.

EST members should be open to problem solving, willing to make suggestions for curricular modifications and open to research when unclear or in doubt.

Who can make a referral to an EST?

Any school employee, parent or student may make a referral to an EST.

Who leads the EST and facilitates meetings?

The school identifies a staff member to coordinate the functioning of the EST and to facilitate meetings.

How do ESTs handle referrals?

The coordinator or facilitator receives and reviews the referral, schedules the meeting and notifies all individuals involved.

How do ESTs make decisions?

Most ESTs use consensus since it has the advantage of ensuring all participants agree and are willing to actively support decisions. The support from the school management is essential in this process.

What records does an EST need to keep?

The EST should maintain a written copy of its actions, including records of referrals, plans that specify what will be done, how effectiveness will be determined and a timeline for review. This also helps team members review previous meetings and progress to help identify strategies that have worked or have not worked in the past.

Who coordinates and assures follow up on a student's EST plan?

As part of a plan, a specific person should be designated to ensure that all steps in the EST process occur in a coordinated fashion and that the plan is effective.

How long should a plan remain in effect?

An EST plan should remain in effect as long as the child is benefiting from the plan. EST plans should identify review dates and be reviewed on a regular basis. Regular reviews of EST plans assure they are effective and provide opportunities to revise them or determine whether they continue to be necessary. A gradual phase out can help ease the transition.

Who should have access to a student's EST plan?

Families and everyone involved in the implementation of the plan should have access to or a copy of the plan.

How should parents/guardians be involved in the EST?

Parents should be informed when the initial referral is made (to the EST) and reasons why. Informing parents provides an opportunity to discuss concerns and obtain their input and support. If parents are not able to attend an EST meeting, it is important that their input is shared during the meeting. After the meeting has taken place, follow up with parents is essential.

If students already have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), can they be referred to the EST?

Yes, students with IEPs can be referred to the EST. A child may require additional supports or services that may not have been included in the IEP. An EST plan may be developed to include these supports or services.

Keep in mind…a student can be referred to the EST at any stage of an academic school year.