

Lee County, VA tackled a Corrective Action Plan by working with The Centers for Quality Teaching and Learning to help teachers interpret student data to identify and focus on the areas of greatest need. The initiative helped Lee County Schools go from “Low Performing” to “High Achieving” in two years.

QTL and Lee County Schools **THE IMPACT**

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After beginning the QTL Process in 2004, Lee County schools quickly began sharing best practices and working on specific student needs identified through student data. Differentiated Instruction became the primary focus to improve student learning.

Schools began to recognize the kinds of activities that succeeded engaging students to become active participants in their own learning. The following is a true story of how groups of teachers who completed the QTL program went back to their schools and began using the information and strategies to address student needs.

CLOSING THE GAP

One of the primary areas of concern for Lee County was in Special Education student performance. Lee County decided to create one of its collaborative projects around inclusion, but at the same time, it created new avenues for all students to learn.

A TRUE STORY OF INCLUSION

Thomas Walker High School is one of two high schools in the Lee County District. The school’s improvement plan stresses the need for teachers to focus on providing opportunities across the curriculum to develop oral and written skills. Each teacher worked on implementing this portion of the school improvement plan using QTL strategies and software. Students worked in groups for the overall goal of administering oral presentations using technology.

As a part of the QTL Process, teams of teachers are required to identify student needs and create a collaborative project to meet those student needs. The Thomas Walker Groups went a step further and created collaboration among many teachers and their students.



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Thomas Walker High School created an interdisciplinary unit that included seven different teachers, including the Special Education class. This passage is excerpted from the teachers’ journal writings.

The greatest success story for learning involves the two subgroups of students involved in the study, one group a special education class and one group from a ninth grade World Geography class. Both classes assessed prior knowledge by answering questions concerning World Religions (brain-based learning and diversity education).

The students were assigned to cooperative groups to research World Religions, using the Internet and library resources. The technology instructor worked with the World Geography students on the math portion of the project while the special education math instructor worked with the Special Education group. Students constructed graphs on computers to compare population groups among world religions found during research.

Both cooperative groups completed research papers in their English classes with the special education students. This technique, known as ‘jigsawing’ allows students to become experts on one particular topic and share important elements with the class. The project also involved other QTL strategies including differentiating instruction and diversity education in all of the groups’ classes where the topic was studied.

The groups performed well on end of unit tests, with both scoring more than 80%.

As an offshoot of this collaborative project, another uninvolved teacher used the materials produced by this project as study aids for this US Government class. The Virginia SOLs for government express the need for students to compare and contrast the U.S. government with other world governments. The teacher chose to have his students to compare the U.S. government with the countries mentioned in the World Religion project.

All teachers involved in the project noticed a radical difference in their students’ enthusiasm for learning a new topic versus teaching the topic using traditional teaching methods. Also, as a result of the project, all the teachers involved expressed a desire and the need for team teaching to accommodate the learning needs of their students.