

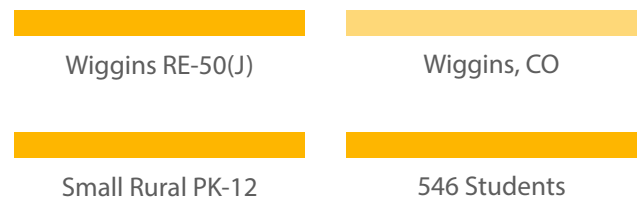
The Evolution of Team Teaching - Strategies for Individualizing Learning



Executive Summary

Wiggins is a small rural district that has made team teaching a strategic priority, with the goal of individualizing learning for each and every student. With the state's support through the Colorado Empowered Learning program and the services of [iLearn Collaborative](#), Wiggins was able to enhance and evolve its team teaching strategy to further meet the needs of students. Teachers received professional development on blended learning techniques and have begun integrating digital components into their team teaching and day-to-day instructional strategies. As teachers have gained comfort with these techniques, the district is also taking advantage of Colorado's Digital Content Warehouse, customizing not just their teaching approach, but also the content taught, to better reflect student needs and interests.

Stats



The Idea

Team teaching strategies combined with blended learning instructional strategies make it possible to truly individualize learning to each and every student's needs and interests.

How it Works

Start with Team Teaching: At the start of the program, Wiggins had its social studies teacher and its English teacher working together, aligning materials and splitting students into small groups. For example, if students were working on Uncle Tom's Cabin in English class, they would also work on the reconstruction in the social studies classroom. A similar approach was taken pairing a math and a science teacher together.

Visit and Watch a Peer District: Wiggins teachers went to Sand Creek in Colorado Springs. They observed not just the classroom instruction and team teaching methods, but also how the classrooms were set up. They used this information to inform the design of the new school building, with optimal partitions that support team teaching.

Provide Educator Professional Development:

Wiggins teachers participated in the professional development programs funded by Colorado Empowered Learning and delivered by iLearn Collaborative. These introduced them to a variety of additional techniques for individualizing learning, and in particular, strategies for blending team teaching with digital components.

Explore Digital Integration Once team teaching had been established and teachers had been trained, Wiggins started exploring the use of small group instruction, opportunities for one-on-one support, and then various digital modalities such as Khan Academy, blogs, and stations that include digital options.

Identify Technology Point Solutions for Specific Needs:

Wiggins needed support for its new science teachers in adopting the next generation science standards. It found that using Discovery Education provided this support, and the program proved to be decent for one-on-one instruction as well. Some students are really thriving with this resource, rapidly moving through all available content.

Take Over Professional Development: Wiggins had one of its teachers certified in Blended Learning through Colorado Empowered Learning by participating in a six-course series delivered by iLearn Collaborative. That teacher now trains the rest of Wiggins staff, ensuring the context of Wiggins team teaching strategic vision is fully embedded in the training on where digital components fit in.

Engage More Deeply with Digital Curricular Content: Wiggins is now exploring opportunities to use digital curricular content available under the Colorado Empowered Learning program through iLearn Collaborative's Digital Content Warehouse. They are particularly interested in enabling students who arrive mid-year, or those who are behind, to be able to catch up by reviewing materials from earlier in the year.

Purpose & Impact

Improved Student Outcomes

At the most basic level, Wiggins anticipates seeing growth on its NWEA MAP assessment - growth that will show that each and every student in the district is learning in a manner that is aligned to their interests and needs. Wiggins believes that student growth can be tied directly back to the shifting of teacher instructional practice, and in particular, its strategic focus on individualized learning

Increased Student and Teacher Engagement

Wiggins also believes that this individualized approach to learning will make the learning experience more rewarding for both teachers and students, as reflected in teacher and student survey data.

Continuous Improvement

Wiggins is confident that it is heading in the right direction for its students and will only continue to improve. The district is excited to see teachers working with the Digital Content Warehouse and creating their own curricular content. It believes that once that starts happening, it will know that teachers have grown fully comfortable with blended learning techniques, and the result will be fewer students left behind. Wiggins is excited to be on a path to make the jobs of staff easier and propel education for all students into the future.

Lessons Learned

Technology Is A Great Support for Individualizing Learning. When Wiggins first embarked on its plan to individualize learning, it envisioned team teaching: the pairing of two teachers working together, breaking students into small groups. It did not consider approaches for using technology to further individualize learning, and has found that since it began utilizing blended learning techniques, it has been able to individualize instruction much more than expected. If the district could do this work over, it would consider the wide array of strategies for individualizing learning more holistically from the beginning.

Training is Essential for Educators. In the beginning, Wiggins found that individualizing learning was somewhat foreign to a lot of its teachers, both those new, entering the district straight out of college, and older staff. Staff very much wanted to know what to expect, and going through the training courses provided by Colorado Empowered Learning helped to provide the concrete, practical details they needed for comfort. With the training, educators felt like they understood the district's vision and intention and became willing to try new techniques to individualize learning. In retrospect, it would have made sense to provide this training earlier in the process.

Planning Helps Bring the Pieces Together. If Wiggins could do it over again, it would devote more time to up front planning, clearly articulating the vision of where it wanted to go with individualized learning. Key questions to consider are: where can digital content support team teaching strategies? What does this look like for Career and Technical Education courses? Gifted and Talented students? Rather than figure the plan out as the district went, it would have liked to have taken a more targeted approach. Trent Kerr, Wiggins Superintendent, of course notes that when you embark on any bold strategic vision, learning more and more is of course an expected part of the process that "will happen to everybody." After all, education is the pursuit of learning.

About Colorado Empowered Learning

Colorado Empowered Learning is the implementation support program that aims to help educators statewide combine the use of technology with great instructional practices. Program services are delivered by non-profit providers Colorado Digital Learning Solutions and iLearn Collaborative.