

Study workshop – example of how to organize help for struggling readers (and other students with special needs) (Norway)

The “Study Workshop” model is used by many Norwegian schools, and in Rogaland it is the dominating model. Even if students have longer periods of their education organized in the Study Workshop, attendance in the Study Workshop is not an alternative to being a student in a regular class. The Study Workshop supplements education in class and the help the students receive in the Study Workshop should increase the students’ chance to profit from ordinary classroom education.

The principles underlying the Study Workshop are:

- Student based approach where attendance will be based on needs expressed by the student.
- The individualised learning plan will identify subjects, problems and methods of evaluation (e.g. written or oral), and the goal is “learning to learn”.
- The students are taught individually or in small groups.

Characteristic features of the Study Workshop are:

- The Study Workshop is open to all students with special needs, but also to other students who want to improve their results (this makes it a non-stigmatizing offer).
- Starting to work in the Study Workshop is voluntary, but as soon as agreement has been reached on an educational plan, the student will be held accountable for attendance and progress.
- The Study Workshop offers support based on a formal individual learning plan agreed upon by the student, class teacher, the Study Workshop teacher and sometimes parents.
- In order to be able to offer individualised education, the Study Workshop can organize different educational programmes such as giving two years for a one year course, extended time for difficult subjects and focusing on one subject only. (Working with only one subject can be very important when trying to motivate school drop-outs to take up their education again.)

The teachers’ role in the Study Workshop differs from the that of ordinary teachers in some aspects such as the following:

- The teacher is available on request and the motto is: “What can I help you with?”
- The teacher holds the student accountable for working according to plan (agreed on mutually by student and teacher).
- Teachers in the Study Workshop co-ordinate activities once a week (with other teachers in Study Workshop and with classroom teachers).
- Development of an educational programme and evaluation of progress is done together with the classroom teacher (and sometimes involving the educational-psychological service and/or the service for school drop-outs).
- Teachers often develop materials specially adapted to the needs of the students.

An example of how a Study workshop can be organised

The school visited by the ADORE-Project is primarily a vocational school with 1,100–1,200 students. Vocational education is costly since classes there have a maximum of 15 students. The total budget of the visited school is 11,500,000 €, of which 287,000 € is used for special-needs education. This sum covers salaries, and there is additional money for materials. The school library is an important part of the special-needs education, but the library has separate funding. The example school has chosen the model of the Study Workshop when organizing special-needs education, and 4.5 full-time teacher positions are associated with the Study Workshop. The 4.5 positions are shared by 7.5 teachers. In addition to serving about 10 % of the students attending the school, the Study Workshop also offers education to students who have dropped out of school, but who are currently in contact with the special service responsible for following up drop-outs.