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Hey everyone, this is Katie Novak and you're listening to the Education Table, a micro podcast where I answer your questions about inclusive education in 10 minutes or less. In today's episode, we're diving into the power of station rotation, a blended learning model that balances teacher direct instruction, student collaboration, and digital learning to meet every student's needs. I'll share a story from my track and field days, some research on targeted instruction, and three practical strategies to help you implement station rotation in your own learning environment. So let's dive in. When I was in high school, track practice was all about balance. Everyone rotated through certain stations like the weight room and plyometric drills. But the workouts on the track were tailored to the events that we would be running that week.

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As a 400 meter runner, my sessions mostly focused on sprints and pacing, while my teammates who ran distance events worked on endurance laps. Even though were all part of the same team and shared many of the same experiences, our training was really targeted and personalized that helped us reach our individual goals. Now this same principle applies in the classroom. The station rotation model combines consistency with flexibility, ensuring that all students move through core activities while also receiving really targeted personalized instruction that meets their needs based on what the evidence says they need. So it's a super powerful way to build skills, foster engagement and help every learner grow. And there's a pretty good research base behind this. Research consistently shows the value of targeted instruction, but finding time to pull small groups to provide this instruction can be really challenging in a traditional classroom.

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John Hattie, the author of Visible Learning and a leading education researcher, highlights that explicit instruction is one of the most effective teaching strategies with an effect size of 0.57, which is above the hinge point of 0.4, which represents a year's worth of growth. So explicit instruction, when done well, provides really clear, structured guidance for students. But again, it's really difficult when you have students in very different places and whole group instruction doesn't often meet the needs of all kids. So this is where station rotation comes in. By rotating students through stations, teachers can focus on providing explicit targeted instruction to small groups, which creates way more opportunities for interaction with students, immediate in time feedback and scaffolding that's tailored to students needs. And all of this is really important in Hattie's findings.

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Now while you're working with a small group, the question is what are other groups doing? So when you're providing instruction, other groups are collaborating with peers or they're working independently using digital tools. So this Maximizes instruction time, but it also keeps learners actively engaged. So what are the strategies that you want to leverage to do this efficiently? Let's dive into those. The first strategy is to embrace flexible grouping and regrouping. One of the most effective ways to meet the needs of diverse learners is by using targeted instruction in a station rotation model. Formative assessments can help you group students based on their needs in relationship to a specific standard. And then you can rotate all students through three stations during a single class period. So one station is going to be the teacher led station.

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And that's where you can provide direct targeted teaching tailored to the students who maybe have already mastered the standard, those who are working towards the standard, and those who have some pretty significant lagging skills that need to be addressed through instruction. So this allows you to offer focus, support, and help students make progress while you're working with a small group. There's two other stations. The online learning station allows students to leverage digital technology and work at their own pace, practicing different skills or concepts. So they might use adaptive tools like Khan Academy or engage with instructional videos. And maybe there's some quick activities that they need to complete online. While one group is doing that, another group is doing offline collaborative work. And this station can focus on peer collaboration.

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So you could have students solve problems together or access a complex text or data and then discuss what they're learning. Or maybe they're using manipulatives to build something together to increase their understanding. The key to this is starting small. Maybe you start with once a week, and then as students build independence, you can increase the frequency and make this a more regular part of instruction. But remember, grouping needs to evolve with data. What works one week might have to change the next week. So flexibility is key. The second strategy is to leverage the collective. It may seem very overwhelming to create all three stations, but you don't have to do this yourself. Collaborate with your plc, gather ideas from a coach, or use the AI robots for inspiration.

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So if you get into the habit of saying that at an online station, students are always going to be watching a video, you can then leverage your colleagues in AI to say, like, what are some really good instructional videos focused on this standard that students could interact with? Or maybe they could do a formative assessment using some sort of online tool, or maybe even do some research using reputable sources. At the collaboration station, they may just go through the process of having a discussion. Or maybe you can have them jigsaw an activity. So that group has to learn something together to be prepared to Share it with the rest of class, but don't feel like adults are the only people who can help you with this because your students can be a really great resource.

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Invite them to suggest ideas for what happens at that online and that offline station. It lightens your load and it increases engagement and ownership, which is the key to shifting to student led. Now the third strategy is to plan for seamless transitions. Transitions can really make or break a station rotation because you don't want everything to just fall apart every 15 or 20 minutes. So some careful planning and practice are really essential here. While it might seem a little clunky at first, go through the process of rehearsing these transitions with students to help them internalize the format. And if you keep the same format, they will pick it up pretty quickly. So use timers and visual clues that helps them to know when to rotate.

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Make sure that there's a checklist at every single station so they know exactly what they have to do and what they have to hand in. At the end of the station or at the very end of the station, you can have them answer an exit ticket or do a reflection to kind of tie it all together. Whatever your process is, make it consistent and have students practice it because they will become more independent and they will become more accountable if they know what is expected of them and it becomes just a part of the routine. So to end station rotation is like a really well balanced track and

field workout. It combines the right activities to build strength, endurance and confidence. Not only running laps, but we can do that in the classroom as we're learning.

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And when we design these station rotations with udl, we really can allow students to get the best of what is available while creating some variety and also having those consistent routines. Thank you so much for joining me at the education table. Be sure to check out show notes for more resources on implementing station rotation in your learning environment. Until next time onward.