

Instructional Strategies That Support Differentiation

A Summary of Instructional Strategies from Carol Ann Tomlinson The Differentiated Classroom

Carol Ann Tomlinson presents the following strategies in Chapter 7 and 8. She suggests that these strategies may be used as frequent or occasional part of instruction in a differentiated classroom.

Complex Instruction

Students work in small instructional groups that

- **draw upon individual's intellectual strengths**
- **allow for a variety of solutions and solution routes**
- **interest students**
- **use real world connection**
- **integrate reading and writing**
- **use multi-media**
- **require different talents to complete whole task**

Orbital Studies

Students select a topic from a larger theme in the curriculum and

- **investigate independently**
- **have guidance and coaching from the teacher**
- **develop more expertise on topic**
- **learn how to become an independent investigator**

Stations

Students go to different spots in the classroom to work on various tasks simultaneously. This strategy

- **allows students to work on different task simultaneously**
- **invites flexible grouping and timing**
- **includes a variety of assignments, materials, and product options based on rotation**
- **allows choice of station as a result of teacher, student, or shared decision**
- **may include the following examples: Teaching Station, Practice Station, Project Place, Thinking Place, Proof Place (peer conferencing, peer editing, etc).**

Centers

Students go to different areas that contain collections of materials or activities designed to teach, reinforce, or extend a skill or concept. Teachers

- **use materials and activities addressing a wide range of reading levels, learning profiles, and interest**
- **plan activities that vary from simple to complex, abstract to concrete, structured to open-ended**

- include instruction about what a student should do if help is needed or the assignment is complete
- use a record keeping system to monitor quality and completion level
- include a plan for ongoing assessment to allow for adjustment in center tasks
- focus on mastery or extension of specific skills

Agendas

Students complete a personalized list of tasks in a specified time. The teacher

- creates the agenda that will last the student two to three weeks
- includes special instructions for each task
- allows the student to determine the order of the tasks
- sets aside a particular time (daily, weekly, etc) to work on agenda activities
- moves to individual students to monitor progress and to coach
- may instruct small group of students having difficulty with like tasks or skill

Entry Points

Teacher uses students' learner profiles (Multiple Intelligences) to plan instruction. Teacher presents topic or concept. Student is given the choice of avenues to begin studying the topic or concept, either individually or in small groups

- (Narrational Entry Point)- presents a story or narrative
- (Logical-Quantitative Entry Point)- uses numbers or deductive scientific approach
- (Foundational Entry Point)- examines the philosophy and vocabulary of the topic
- (Aesthetic Entry Point)- focuses on the sensory features
- (Experimental Entry Point)- uses a hand-on approach

Tiered Activities

Teacher plans tiered activities that focus on different levels of complexity, abstractness, and open-endedness. The teacher

- selects the concept or skill to be learned
- assesses the students' readiness level
- creates an activity that is interesting, high level, and develops or teaches the skill
- charts the complexity of the activity (high complexity to low complexity)
- clones the activity to ensure success and assess in terms of materials (basic to advanced), form of expression (familiar to unfamiliar), and experience (from personal to removed from personal)

Learning Contracts

Teacher negotiates a contract with student to give freedom to decide what is to be learned, working conditions, and how information will be applied or expressed. The contract

- specifies working conditions which may include behavior, time constraints, homework, class work involvement
- sets positive and negative consequences
- establishes criteria for successful completion of work
- includes signatures of agreement by both teacher and student

Other Strategies

Compacting

Teacher pre-assesses what the students know or do not know about the topic or skill. Teacher provides a meaningful and challenging use of time for the students who have already mastered the topic or skill.

Problem-Based Learning

Teacher presents the students with a complex, unclear problem. Students then seek additional information. Define the problem, locate and use valid resources, make decisions about solutions, pose a solution, communicate that solution to others, and assess the solution's effectiveness.

Group Investigation

Teacher guides students through the investigation of a topic related to something else being studied in the class. Groups are divided by learner interest. Teacher assists in planning and carrying out the investigation, presenting the findings, and evaluating outcomes.

Independent Study

Teacher guides students in pursuing topics that interest them, identifying intriguing questions, setting goals and criteria for work, and assessing progress according to those goals.

Choice Boards

Students choose assignments from Choice Board with pockets containing varied tasks and instructions based on the core concept being taught. Students choose from a row and topic suited to their multiple intelligences or learning styles and readiness level.

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Teachers plan instruction based on the four preferences (mastery, understanding, personal involvement, and synthesis) during the course of several days on a given topic.