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DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION ASSIGNMENT
"Differentiating instruction is a form of instruction that seeks to "maximize each student's growth by recognizing that students have different ways of learning, different interests, and different ways of responding to instruction. In practice, it involves offering several different learning experiences in response to students' varied needs. Educators may vary learning activities and materials by difficulty, so as to challenge students at different readiness levels; by topic, in response to students' interests; and by students' preferred ways of learning or expressing themselves." (http://www.ascd.org/research-a-topic/differentiated-instruction-resources.aspx)
Diane Ravitch, ASCD

ASSIGNMENT
As student teachers, you are required to include differentiation in all of your plans throughout your placement. For this assignment, I am asking you to describe two differentiation methods you will use based on the specific individual needs of two students in your current classroom.

Describe the student
Explanation of your activities / methods of differentiation
Name the research/evidence-based differentiation strategies with sources.
Submit in the dropbox.

How do I differentiate instruction in the classroom?

Differentiating instruction, at first, can be challenging for a student teacher, especially if one is not familiar with the students. Differentiating instruction does not mean watering down instruction or making the assignments easier for students, it simply means making the information accessible to all learners.

An evidence-based practice I use to differentiate instruction is presenting the content in several formats. I especially make sure I take the time to create Google slides or other type of material that can be "seen", "read" and "heard" at the same time. I also take into account the physical space. I recently realized that not all learners can see from their desks, especially since 'social distance' is still observed. I allow students to come closer to the board and sit on the floor, while still observing 'social distancing' practices.

According to the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines (2021), information and activities need to be relevant and valuable to the learner's interests and goals. From my perspective, and in accordance with the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines (2021), it is important to personalize and contextualize content. This includes a teaching practice that is culturally and linguistically responsive. In my classroom, there are eight students classified as ELLs. My classroom presents great diversity. The diversity in my classroom is not just from a cultural and linguistic perspective, but also ability-based. My classroom also enjoys a great variety of learning styles. Some students, due to interrupted learning during the pandemic, are performing at a lower grade-level while other students are performing at a higher grade-level. Some of my ELL students have great comprehension skills but I can see they struggle with language, especially when they have to express themselves in writing.

One way I differentiate instruction for my students is by providing the text in audiovisual form. I record myself reading the book or I find a pre-recorded read-aloud of the text in Youtube and I post it in Google Classroom. This way I provide text materials on video and students can have access to the text during their written assignment or they can choose to revisit the text at home. Two of my students receive AIS services for reading. These two students reading level is low. The fact the text is on "tape" or in this case video recorded, allows these two students that are not able to read texts independently at this level, to provide reading comprehension answers. It is a way to make the text accessible to the students.

According to Tomlinson (2000), providing "books on tape" is an evidence-based practice for differentiating instruction.

Culturally and linguistically responsive practices: this week, I chose a reading comprehension text that was written by an Indian author and is from the Indian collection of interrelated animal fables. It served two purposes. On the one hand it helped me incorporate a variety of genres into the classroom (informational, science, fiction, etc.). On the other hand is a text that represents one of the cultures in the classroom. I told the class we were reading this text in honor of our American-Indian (Sikh) student. This week, one of our anchor texts for interactive read-aloud was "La Mariposa" by Francisco Jiménez, illustrated by Simón Silva. I observed how students were highly engaged with the text.

Another evidence-based practice I use to differentiate instruction is take into account the time it takes for learners to complete an assignment and I also provide choice or options. I know some of my students are good readers and writers while others are at a lower reading level and struggle with writing. I have observed some of my students that are at a higher level thrive if they are challenged, especially when choice is provided. Other students are functioning at a lower level in reading comprehension and are struggling to provide written answers. I recently learned to create assessments that include several sections. I include a multiple-choice section and a section that includes a written assignment. I tell my students that there is a required part and an optional part. In the written section, I provided choice by creating three questions. Students could choose to answer one out of the three questions. Each question was distinctively different. In addition I provided additional assignments and told the class they were optional. This challenged the students performing at a higher grade level and also provided the more advanced learners to go deeper. However, I made the assignments available to the whole class. I tell the students that they have to give me the minimum requirement but if they finish early or they want to do more, they can choose to answer additional questions. I have observed the more

advanced students love the challenge and they are learning to ask me for more. Usher (2019) explains that a good practice for differentiating instruction is giving students a choice in how they show their learning.

Tomlinson (2000) writes that teachers can differentiate instruction in four classroom elements according to student readiness, interest, or learning. One of the elements is during the learning process.

Tomlinson (2000) goes on to say that a way to differentiate instruction during the process is to vary the length of time a student may take to compete the task , as well as encouraging the more advanced students to go deeper in a topic.

Providing students with choice is an evidence-based practice. Tomlinson (2000) gives an example of choice: allow students to work alone or in small group. From my point of view, choice also recognizes students' various learning styles.

Alber (2010) stated: "…Equal education is not all students getting the same, but all students getting what they need" (Para. 3). I believe Alber's statement is the heart of differentiated instruction.

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