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IMPLEMENTING DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN TODAY'S CLASSROOM

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION: WHAT IS IT?

- ✘ Teaching differently!
- ✘ Alternative matching instruction to meet the different needs of learners in a given classroom...that includes small groups & increased practice opportunities in the form of Reading Centers.
(Torgesen, FCRR, 2006)

GATHERING AND MANAGING DATA



- ✘ Need an efficient system for keeping track of data
 - *checklists
 - *binders
 - *mailing labels

HOW DO I GET EVERYTHING DONE?

- ✘ Need research-based methodologies for instruction management to create opportunities for effective teaching and positive learning outcomes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DATA COLLECTION

- ✘ Observe student performance to determine what students know and need
- ✘ Observe student responses to different activities and determine what works best: whole class or small group, or working independently
- ✘ Analyze patterns of error based on multiple samples and observations
- ✘ Observe student performance on assignments directly linked to classroom instruction to ensure students understand expectations and have necessary skills for performance
- ✘ Observe often and collect data from multiple sources to make summative decisions

FOCUS ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- ✘ Determine the purpose by identifying specific skills to be observed
- ✘ Determine which students will be observed
- ✘ Identify a baseline for acceptable performance or what defines mastery for that skill at that specific time of introduction, practice or development.
- ✘ Model and review the concept or skill to clarify your expectations to the students.
- ✘ Provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate skills independently

WHAT ARE THE OTHER STUDENTS DOING WHILE I ASSESS?

- ✘ Establish routines and expectations in the classroom
- ✘ Routines need to be explicitly taught, practiced and coached
- ✘ Assign jobs to other students, so the teacher is not disturbed during teaching or assessment

MODEL AND TEACH PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATION INCLUDING:

- ✘ How to request help from the teacher or other students
- ✘ When to request help or interrupt the teacher
- ✘ How to respectfully interrupt someone and accept help
- ✘ How to use proper words for requesting help, and providing help
- ✘ How to accept and respond to the authority of other students
- ✘ How to refocus and accept second choices when a first choice is not an option

ORGANIZING THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

- ✘ Effective classroom management involves creating rules and procedures that develop predictable order and safety so student are comfortable taking risks and learning (Marzano, 2003).

DESIGNATING AN AREA FOR A TEACHING TABLE

- ✘ A designated table sufficient to seat small group members and a teacher
- ✘ A designated area located on the floor or a rug
- ✘ Several desks pushed together to create a workspace
- ✘ Individual chairs arranged in a circle with clipboards for writing surfaces



- ✘ The teacher table should be located near materials used for instruction: student books, supplies needed.



- ✘ Instruction at the teaching table is reserved for teacher-led activities with immediate constructive feedback from a peer or teacher.

WORKTABLES

- ✘ The purpose is to allow students to study and work collaboratively on assignments in small groups (centers for younger students)
- ✘ Allowing students to begin and possibly complete homework at a worktable with the help of their peers keeps students from practicing errors and increases their likelihood of completion

ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION AT WORKTABLES

- ✘ Stretches former paradigms of some teachers to allow copying
- ✘ People learn by copying a good model. Sharing work helps students solve problems and requires them to verbalize their learning
- ✘ Some students need the help available from peers to complete homework, because help is not available at home
- ✘ Copying and sharing should be allowed on ungraded assignments before independent work is required or assessed

- ✘ Improving instruction by differentiating first requires reorganizing typical classroom activities, arrangement and procedures
- ✘ Teachers can use time wisely by assigning jobs to students. Both the students and the teacher benefit from shared responsibility.

GROUPING FOR INSTRUCTION

- ✘ Factors to consider when deciding group practice (whole or small group)
 - *Purpose of instruction
 - *Importance of content
 - *Available time
 - *Method or activity selected

DECIDING WHICH GROUPING PATTERNS WILL BE USED DEPENDS ON THESE FACTORS:

- ✘ Data regarding what students know, can do, and need
- ✘ Observations of student compatibility
- ✘ Purpose of instruction
- ✘ Activity selected (level of difficulty and need of support)

VARYING GROUPING PATTERNS USING SIMILAR OR MIXED SKILL GROUPS

- ✘ Homogenous skill groups are useful for intensive intervention and for introducing, practicing, and assessing new or difficult content or skills.
- ✘ Heterogeneous, or mixed skill groupings are useful for guided practice or reinforcement activities that incorporate collaboration, shared learning and peer tutoring when the teacher is unavailable.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE WHOLE GROUP SETTING

- ✘ Students respond in unison (use hand signals)
- ✘ Students respond by signaling (thumbs up/down)
- ✘ Students turn to an assigned partner or person sitting nearby
- ✘ Students discuss a concept or solve a problem collaboratively in small groups for a prescribed length of time, then 1 member shared with the group

METHODS FOR IMPLEMENTING FLEXIBLE GROUPING

- ✘ Change group memberships as data indicates student needs have changed
- ✘ Select different procedures that regulate how students participate in workstations (flowcharts)
- ✘ Allow students to choose the order they attend workstations using a student contract to ensure all work is completed within a set time limit.

SELECTING GROUP SIZES

- ✘ Group students according to
 - 1) the level of difficulty or importance of the content, skill or activity
 - 2) the instructional purpose
 - 3) individual student's needs

- ✘ Students working on or above grade level can work in larger groups, depending on the skill being taught and type of activity.
- ✘ Struggling students or lower performers need closer supervision and their groups should be smaller.

CHANGING INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY AND CONTENT



ORGANIZING YOUR INSTRUCTIONAL DAY

- ✘ Teach high-level, more challenging academic content at the teaching table.
- ✘ Ensure all students meet and work in small group for teacher-directed, data-informed instruction every day if possible.
- ✘ Plan for assessment – formal and informal

SELECTING INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT

- ✘ Teachers should use state or district standards and develop the guide, or road map for delivering content
- ✘ Until teachers begin working with their students, they will not be absolutely able to determine their curricular pace. It is best to use benchmarks as “guidelines”, not fixed expectations, since student variance and level of content difficulty will alter timing and pacing for learning outcomes and achievement
- ✘ Too much, too fast – won’t last!

- ✘ Differentiated instruction assumes that all students can learn effectively, if instruction is adjusted carefully and continuously to align to students’ developing skill sets

DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION

- ✘ Provide students with specific feedback to guide practice toward mastery
- ✘ Adjust instruction, practice and materials so that everything aligns with and accomplishes goals for student learning

IN CONCLUSION

- ✘ Implementing differentiated instruction is no small task
- ✘ All implementation needs to be supported by ongoing progress monitoring and evaluation
- ✘ Student achievement is by far the priority indicator of whether a new methodology is working

