Teacher Workload and Differentiation

The work that goes in to planning and implementing Differentiated Instruction is complex, time consuming, and sometimes overwhelming. While differentiated lessons are intricate in their practice, their success relies on exhaustive preparation outside of the classroom. There are many different elements for a teacher to consider, including but not limited to the following:

**The Needs of Students**
- Even if a teacher has a full class of mainstream students, he or she must still consider the strengths of each student’s natural abilities and strengths in learning.
- Learning Styles / Multiple Intelligences - Knowledge and ability to identify different learning strengths in students aids the teacher in tailoring differentiation for the lesson.
- Exceptionalities / Special Needs - Students dealing with extraordinary physical, medical, or cognitive circumstances require the teacher to gain awareness of them in order to understand how to differentiate lessons for meaningful experiences suitable to a student’s altered abilities.
- Personal / Medical - Circumstances that can affect attendance in class can sometimes alter the learning needs and abilities of students, and can require special consideration and planning on the part of the teacher to accommodate.

**A Teacher’s Approach**
- Purposeful Planning – You need to understand your own educational philosophy, be aware of the provincial program of studies for your group, and engage in the work required for differentiated lessons with a sense of willingness and enthusiasm in order to make them possible. Always ask, “What do I need to make these learning outcomes accessible for every student?” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 14).
- Know Every Student in the Classroom – Preparing Learner Profiles for each student that document Learning Preference, Learning Style, Thinking Style, Type of Intelligence, Gender, Interests, Culture and Personality Differences allow for important insight on students that then makes it easy to share with others who work with your students.
- Leveraging Technology – Technology, used appropriately, enhances the flexibility and personalization of a teacher’s instruction, increases students’ ability to demonstrate their understanding through assignments and projects, and allows for online collaboration both for teachers and students as needed and appropriate.
- A School and Career-Wide Approach – Developing professional learning communities and networks to collaborate with others while working at ongoing differentiated instruction, in addition to taking time for professional development to devote to research and increasing awareness, combined with a school-wide plan, provides great ways for teachers to connect and work through the challenges of differentiation.
Enacting Differentiated Instruction

The final steps in the preparation of a differentiated lesson require a great deal of flexibility built into the plan to allow the occurrence of the unpredictable to occur, but not overwhelm the lesson. When writing out plans, teachers must remember to:

- Structure meaningful, developmentally appropriate activities that authentically engage students and are respectful and fair to all while they account for students’ current understanding and prior experience
- Provide variety in group work and choice in activity to allow for different learning experiences that suit their strengths and allow them to develop their weaknesses
- Work with the goal of guiding student learning by targeting learning preference & style and designing activities that engage every individual in the class.

References:


Recommended Reading:


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### Multiple Intelligences

From *A Whirlwind Tour of the Major Considerations for Developing Differentiation in the Classroom* by Johanna Raffan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Intelligence</th>
<th>Learning Style</th>
<th>Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal / Linguistic</td>
<td>Listens, reads, writes, spells easily, works systematically, is orderly has a good memory</td>
<td>Writing in a wide variety of styles, verbal debate, vocabulary extension, processor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logical / Mathematical</td>
<td>Abstract thinking, logical construction, problem solving. Likes being precise, prefers note form</td>
<td>Reasoning, problem solving, experimenting, analyzing &amp; interpreting data, deductive thinking, spreadsheets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual / Spatial</td>
<td>Thinks in pictures. Likes art, painting, maps &amp; charts, has good colour sense</td>
<td>Picture &amp; visualization activities, maps, diagrams, mime, mind mapping, computer graphics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bodily / Kinesthetic</td>
<td>Good motor control, &amp; timing, learns best on the move &amp; by touch &amp; feel, often fidgety, mechanically minded,</td>
<td>Dance, drama, sport of all kinds, hands on learning, regular changes in surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical</td>
<td>Sensitive to the power of music, aware of rhythm &amp; pitch, enjoys raps and jingles</td>
<td>Integration of music, writing and composing music, learning / memorization through songs, poems, rhythms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Relates well to others, has many friends, good negotiator, likes group activities, reads social situations, mediates</td>
<td>Cooperative learning activities, working in teams / groups, communication activities, use of cause and effect, frequent social breaks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
<td>Well-developed sense of self, self-motivated, aware of weaknesses and strengths, sensitive to life’s purpose, very private person</td>
<td>Pair and share learning, independent study, control of own learning, time for reflection, lots of acknowledgement that it’s okay to be different</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naturalistic</td>
<td>Likes to distinguish among, classify &amp; use features of their personal environment</td>
<td>Imagine environment when note taking, incorporate elements of environment into things being learned</td>
</tr>
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