

Tip of the Week #14

Differentiation – Part 1

Knowing Your Students' Strengths (Smarts)

It is never too late to get to know our students better. The tips for the next few weeks will focus on using what we know about our students to differentiate for them based on their needs. Take a few minutes to review the topic of *Differentiation* and check out the attached survey. It is written in kid friendly language and just takes a few minutes to administer. Note: Scroll down to page 4 to see a copy of the survey.

Suggestion: Post chart paper and write the kinds of Smarts going down the page. Give each student a post it note. Once the students have completed the survey, have each student write his or her name on the post it and place it on the chart. In the case that a student scores the same in 2 areas, he/she will need to place his/her name in both areas. The results will look like a bar graph with your class results. This will give you and your students a visual of how the class learns best.

What if the student has already done this in another class? That is fine!!! Just skip the survey and give them the post it note to post the results. The point is to gather information about that class – each class is different and the results might surprise you.

How to use the information?

Sample Results: Class of 32 with 3 students scoring the same in 2 areas

Nature (naturalist) 2 students

Number/Logic (logical/mathematical) 3 students

Word (linguistic) 3 students

Music (musical) 8 students

Picture (visual-spatial) 5 students

Body (bodily-kinesthetic) 2 students

People (interpersonal) 10 students

Self (intrapersonal) 2 students

A few ideas to think about:

With 10 of the 32 students scoring high in People Smart (Interpersonal), you will need to consider to planning activities that involve students discussing the learning at various times during the class. Idea: Summarize key points on a post it note and then use the strategy 3 Minute Pause to discuss and share their thinking with others. Call on a few students randomly to share out what they discussed.

With 8 students scoring high in the Music Smart, you might allow them to create a song with the information as an alternative to a homework assignment.

With the 2 students that scored high in Body Smart just remember if you don't allow them to move, they will move anyway! These are the students that need that physical break so get the movement going at least once or twice during the class period.

This is just a start. These are just a few ideas to meet the needs of my sample class and to increase motivation and success!!!! Remember in order to really differentiate, we must know our learners and how they learn best!

Definition: Differentiation is a **philosophy** that enables teachers to **plan strategically** in order to reach the needs of diverse learners in classrooms today.

What is a Differentiated Classroom?

- Teachers begin where students are, not from the curriculum guide
- Teachers provide specific ways for each individual to learn
- Teachers use time flexibly
- Everything is shaped around the needs of the learner

What does it LOOK like?

- Students working with others
- Students moving around
- Students feel comfortable
- Students sometimes doing different things
- Teacher moving around
- Students engaged and excited

What does it SOUND like?

- Teachers talking to different groups
- Students talking with other students
- Hear students excited about learning

Possible Current Practices

Ex: *What am I currently doing to meet the needs of all learners in my classroom?*

Offer students choice in assignments

Vary instructional strategies

Create a safe environment for students to take risks

Allow students to move at various times during the lesson

Offer projects

Use informal assessments daily to help adjust instruction

Use daily graphic organizers

6 Elements for Planning: How the 6 elements for planning will help make a differentiated classroom (Gayle Gregory and Carolyn Chapman)

- **Climate:** safe, nurturing, encourages risk-taking, multi-sensory, stimulating, challenging, collaborative

What are practices that create a positive climate in the classroom?

- **Knowing the Learner:** learning styles, multiple intelligences, observing students, inventories, journals

How do you connect with your students?

- **Assessment:** formal and informal, pre-assessment, assessment during, assessment after

How do you assess student knowledge throughout your instruction?

- **Adjustable Assignments:** total group, alone, paired, small groups, flexible grouping designs(knowledge-based groups, interest groups, cooperative learning groups, project groups, ability groups, peer-to-peer groups, random groups)

What are some different ways of grouping your students? How often do you change your groups?

- **Instructional Strategies:** brain/research based – focus activities, graphic organizers, metaphors, role play

What are some of your most successful strategies that work with your students?

- **Curriculum Approaches:** centers, projects, problem-based, inquiry, contracts/agendas

Do your units reflect a variety of curriculum approaches? What approaches work best with your students?

What are some ways we can differentiate?

- Student interest
- Readiness/ Content
- Products

How Many Ways Are You Smart?

Directions:

Fold the paper vertically on the dark line so that the columns with the eight "multiple intelligences" are hidden. Read each statement below. Place a checkmark next to each item that is true about you. Then unfold the paper and circle the X in each row that you checked. Write the total number in each column at the bottom of the paper. How many ways are you smart?

Which of the following are true about you?

	Nature Smart	Number/Logic Smart	Word Smart	Music Smart	Picture Smart	Body Smart	People Smart	Self Smart
I enjoy singing and I sing fairly well.				X				
I enjoy crossword puzzles and word games.			X					
I'm good at solving jigsaw puzzles.					X			
I can read maps easily.					X			
I learn best when I can talk over a new idea.							X	
Picture, line, and bar graphs are easy to understand.					X			
I like to listen to music in my free time.				X				
I get along well with different types of people.							X	
I like writing about my thoughts and feelings.								X
Protecting the environment is very important to me.	X							
I enjoy caring for pets and other animals.	X							
I like drama and acting things out.						X		
I'm good at writing stories.			X					
I can understand difficult math ideas easily.		X						
I play a musical instrument (or would like to).				X				
People tell me I'm good at sports or dancing.						X		
I'm good at figuring out patterns.		X						
My best way to learn is by doing hands-on activities.						X		
I like spending time by myself.								X
I find that I'm often helping other people.							X	
I'm naturally good at taking care of plants.	X							
I enjoy solving problems and "brainteasers."		X						
Having quiet time to think over ideas is important to								X
I enjoy reading for pleasure.			X					
Totals								

Developed by Laura Candler (Teaching Resources at <http://home.att.net/~teaching>)