



Kansas Effective Practices

Instructional Toolkit

Implementing Research and Resources Into Action

Research Lesson 5: Differentiated Instruction

Inclusion in the General Education Classroom

Greater emphasis is being placed on facilitating differentiation in the general education classroom for gifted (Tomlinson, 1999). Differentiation acknowledges the need gifted students have to be offered challenge in their learning curriculum each day and every class period. Another important factor recognizes that through differentiation the general classroom teacher shares in the responsibility of meeting the educational needs of gifted students.

How Teachers Can Provide Differentiation for Gifted Students

Instructional practices for gifted students indicate that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on involvement with the general education curriculum, while using an increased emphasis on collaborative teaching models. Services for students with giftedness should not be segregated and separate from the general education curriculum. Services should rely on the use of approaches that can motivate gifted students to become enthusiastic learners. The following strategies may assist in bringing about this change:

Compacting the Curriculum: The most important needs of gifted students are to have regular opportunities to demonstrate what they already know, to receive full credit for content they have already mastered, and to spend their own learning time on challenging activities that accelerate and enrich the regular curriculum (Reis, Burns & Renzulli, 1992). Compacting the curriculum can answer these needs.

Designing alternative learning experiences: The teacher would need to provide alternative learning opportunities through differentiation of the content, process, products, learning environment, and assessment.

Allowing for differentiated pacing: For a curriculum that cannot be assessed beforehand, gifted students should be allowed to work at their own pace to learn the required concepts and spend more time on developing an expertise on a related topic of their choice.

Agreeing on expectations: Teachers and students work together to set up standards for evaluating productivity, behavior, and differentiated products. Then they agree on the standards in writing.

How Administrators Can Help Facilitate Differentiation for Gifted

Acknowledge the needs of gifted students: Because gifted learners are just as far removed from average as students with mental retardation, instructional differentiation is highly defensible and equitable.

Facilitate gifted education training for staff: Strategies that teachers learn for the benefit of their advanced students are applicable to other students and tend to raise the learning curve for all.

Investigate cluster grouping: Cluster grouping is the practice of purposely placing five to ten gifted students together in an otherwise heterogeneous class. Their teacher needs to have training in how to differentiate the curriculum for students who demonstrate mastery or who can learn at a quicker rate.

Communicate expectations: Make clear that all students should be able to learn something new and challenging every day. Gifted students need to demonstrate that they are making continuous progress in their own learning.

References:

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Tomlinson, C. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners.* Alexandria, VA: Association for the Supervision of Curriculum and Development (ASCD).