Differentiating content, process, product, learning environment

Differentiating access to content

Content:

- includes curriculum topics, concepts, or themes

- reflects state or national standards

- presents essential facts and skills.

Differentiating content involves:

- providing students with choices in order to add depth to learning

- providing students with additional resources that match their levels of understanding.

To differentiate content:

- use pre-assessment to determine where students need to begin, then match students with appropriate activities. Try these -

    – Student/Teacher Conference - as short as a 5 minute talk

    – K-N-W Chart - What do I Know, Need to know & Want to know

    – Journal - Write what you know about...

    – List - If I say ... What does it make you think of?

    – Concept map...

    – pre-test

    – Student reflection

- use 'hands on' activities for some learners to help them understand a new idea

- use texts or novels at more than one reading level

- present information through both whole-to-part and part-to-whole

- use a variety of reading-buddy arrangements to support and challenge students when working with different texts

- re-teach students who need further demonstration or exempt students who already demonstrate mastery from reading a chapter or sitting through a re-teaching lesson

- use texts, computer programs, tape recordings and videos as a way of conveying key concepts to varied learners

- use Bloom's Taxonomy to encourage thinking about content at several levels.

References

(Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)

Differentiating process

Process:

- refers to how students make sense or understand the information, ideas and skills being studied
- reflects student learning styles and preferences.

Differentiating process involves:

- providing varied options at different levels of difficulty or based on differing student interests
- offering different amounts of teacher and student support for a task
- giving choices about how students express their understanding
- varying the learning process depending upon how students learn**.**

To differentiate process:

- use tiered activities through which all learners work on building the same important understandings and skills but proceed with different levels of support, challenge or complexity
- provide interest centres that encourage students to explore subsets of class topics that are of particular interest to them
- develop personal agendas (task lists written by the teacher and containing both 'common' work for the whole class and work that addresses the individual needs of learners) to be completed either during specified 'agenda time' or if students complete core work ahead of time
- offer 'hands-on' supports for students who need them
- vary the length of time a student may take to complete a task in order to provide additional support for a struggling learner or to encourage an advanced learner to pursue a topic in greater depth
- provide access to a variety of materials that target different learning preferences and readiness
- develop activities that target auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learners
- establish areas/stations for inquiry-based, independent activities
- use flexible grouping to group and regroup students, for example according to content, ability, interests.

References

(Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)

Differentiating product

Product
- Tends to be tangible, for example reports, tests, brochures, speeches or performances.
- Reflects student understanding.

Differentiating product involves:

- providing challenge, variety and choice
- giving students options about how to express required learning (for example, create a puppet show, write a letter, or develop an annotated diagram).

To differentiate product:

- allow students to help design products around learning intentions/goals
- encourage students to express what they have learned in varied ways
- allow for varied working arrangements – alone, with a group
- provide or encourage the use of varied types of resources in preparing products
- provide product assignments at varying degrees of difficulty to match student readiness
- use a wide variety of assessments
- work with students to develop rubrics that match and extend students' varied skill levels
- use a continuum -
    – simple to complex
    – less independent to more independent
    – clearly defined to 'fuzzy' problems.

Differentiating the learning environment

The learning environment:

- is the 'climate' of a classroom

- includes the operation and tone of the classroom - class rules, furniture arrangement, lighting, procedures and processes.

Differentiating the learning environment involves:

- considering the look and feel of the classroom

- providing a safe and positive environment for learning

- allowing for individual work preferences

- managing the learning space.

To differentiate the learning environment:

- make sure there are places in the room to work quietly and without distraction as well as places that invite student collaboration

- provide materials that reflect a variety of cultures and home settings

- set out clear guidelines for independent work that matches individual needs

- develop routines that allow students to get help when teachers are busy with other students and cannot help them immediately

- help students understand that some learners need to move around to learn while others do better sitting quietly

- vary the places where learning occurs – for example the lab or outside.

- use alternative seating

- identify classroom management procedures that would make the learning environment safe or more supportive.