Classroom tested tips every new teacher needs for thriving in the classroom.

Tips and Tricks for Surviving and Thriving in the Classroom: Practical Activities Made EAsy

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TIPS & TRICKS TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE IN THE CLASSROOM

Practical Activities and Tips for Teachers Made Easy

DORIT SASSON

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Special Report

What the Heck is Differentiated Instruction and Why the Heck Should You Care?

What is Differentiated Instruction?

Differentiated instruction is an approach teachers can use to appeal to all learners.

Teachers vary their lessons and curriculum in order to cater to students who have a variety of learning levels and abilities. Differentiated instruction provides learners with a variety of experiences, activities and assessments so that each child can reach his/her potential. Some students are better readers while others don't have a lot of background knowledge. So, teachers need to help children learn who are not at the same starting place.

How to Start Differentiating Instruction

Differentiated instruction needs to cater to a wide range of student ability and interest. It should include a variety of motivating learning tasks and motivating topics.

http://www.newteacherresourcecenter.com

To get started, first determine the levels of your students. This is called "learning the ranges." Then, figure out how you can appeal to a wide variety of learning styles as possible and address this in your lesson plans.

Offer a wide variety of choices for every new lesson. Don't try to accommodate for every learning style and ability. Instead, appeal to a wide variety of levels and abilities by offering a variety of learning tasks.

Before you offer choices and alternatives, think of specific topics and activities which appeal to your learners. If you vary these topics and activities in your lesson plans, it will be easier to engage your learners and duplicate their learning success.

Decide on a structure or format that will include a variety of learning tasks around a particular topic. A good differentiated technique is to begin by providing main input to the entire class for the first ten to fifteen minutes of the lesson and then have students work separately either in groups or in pairs on different learning tasks according to level and ability. For example, students can research about an endangered animal of their choice and then

complete a chart on different areas based on their interest. Then, they can prepare a special report or presentation using the information explaining the information they found either through a power point presentation or a traditional talk.

Follow these six easy steps to start catering to a variety of learning styles and abilities:

Six Easy Steps to Creating Appealing Lessons to a Mixed Ability Class

1. Begin by pre-assessing your students using *get to know you activities.* Get to know you activities help with the process of assessing what your students actually know, which in turn determines your instruction. One type of pre-assessment activity includes ten or five minute oral, reading and writing questionnaires that show you who can speak, read and write well and who is still experiencing difficulties. Consider also distributing a questionnaire on learning styles and preferences to help acquire a more well-rounded class profile. Your own observations play an important role in pre-assessment.
2. Use the results of the pre-assessments to help you decide which skills are top-priority for your students' success.
3. Decide how you want to reinforce this success by deciding on a variety of appealing learning tasks that motivate, challenge and engage your students. Expand on some of the textbook activities. Again, use the results from your pre-assessment to help you.
4. Always ask yourself: will this activity be too challenging or too easy for my lower-middle-higher level students?
5. Make sure you also decide what background information is needed so your students can accomplish the tasks successfully. If your teaching goal for example, is to have your students research information on endangered animals, then make sure you spend some quality time showing them how to effectively summarize research articles.
6. Decide how you want to engage your lower-middle-higher performing groups using one or more of the differentiated teaching techniques such as group work, pair work, individualization for each of the skills that is applicable to your curriculum and for meeting the needs of your students.

Why you should include a variety of instructional methods

As a teacher, you'll want to ensure you are appealing to as many learning styles and ability levels in the classroom on a consistent basis. Here are some advantages of using differentiated instruction:

- There is no stigma
- They help reduce discipline problems
- They engage students much more effectively than in a traditionally run classroom.
- They can be highly motivating
- They are challenging
- They cater to classes with diverse backgrounds

Additional Teaching Tips

Here is some additional information to help you create differentiated instruction and engage your learners more effectively.

- Don't try aiming at differentiating the curriculum all at once. Instead, choose a few areas where you feel comfortable offering choices and alternatives to students, or where you can evaluate student work using individual criteria.
- If an activity or topic doesn't speak to your students, don't be disheartened. Instead, ask your students for feedback. Find out what topics and activities motivate them. If group work doesn't appeal to them, then opt for pair work.
- Take note of what works well and aim to duplicate the success.
- Find a mentor or a collaborative team to help you with some of the preparation. Read my article on setting up a collaborative teaching plan for further ideas: http://tinyurl.com/63nare
- Remember that the emphasis is on effort. If a task is too difficult, little or no learning will take place.
- Aim for open ended activities that generate more student responses. Good types of open-ended activities are brainstorming and prediction.
- Set learning tasks where there is a basic component which is obligatory and everyone must do it. Such learning tasks are also deliberately set at a level which everyone can succeed.

- As a discipline prevention tip, teach important procedures your students will need in order to complete certain tasks such as group work related tasks if you are using group work as part of your differentiated instruction.

You can create engaging lessons that speak to your students simply by being open to a variety of learning styles and preferences and building on success. The best part is that students will already be self-directed in their learning when they are already engaged. All it takes is a bit of ground work and getting to know your students in a less-structured way. It takes time and effort to do a little research to find out which learning tasks and topics truly motivate your students.

So start appealing to your students today!

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