

In the Middle

Five Steps to Differentiation Instruction

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“That students differ may be inconvenient but is inescapable. Adapting to that diversity is the inevitable price of productivity, high standards, and fairness to students.”

-TheodoreSizer

Are You Read? Preparing Yourself for Differentiated Instruction

If nothing else, *No Child Left Behind* has required teachers, parents, and administrators to confront the ugly fact that not all children have been well served in our schools. For far too long, well-intentioned teachers have used a “shotgun” approach in classrooms—tossing out the latest program or innovation and hoping something would stick. As our classrooms have become more diverse with increasing numbers of struggling learners, we now know we must be much more strategic in our planning and instruction.

It is clear that we can no longer rely on what we have done in the past. In order to “grow” all learners, we must be willing to acknowledge, even celebrate, these differences. To do this, as teachers, it is essential that we approach lesson planning and instruction differently. We must get over the fear that differentiation is impossible to do... that it takes too much time... that it requires too much “stuff.” Hopefully, whether this is your first year in education or your forty-first (as it is for me), these recommendations will point you in a new direction that will capture

your imagination, energize your work, focus your efforts, and maximize learning for your students.

Have a broad repertoire of researched-based teaching strategies that you are comfortable implementing:

- Inquiry-based learning
- Cooperative learning
- Highly effective questioning skills
- Information Processing Strategies
- Direct Instruction
- Non Linguistic representations
- Learning Contracts
- Scaffolding
- Imagery-based elaboration

Make sure you know your students; it is one of the benefits of the 4th “R” which is “relationship-building”:

- Learning Styles/Preferences (kinesthetic, visual, auditory, spatial)
- Personal Interests
- Multiple Intelligences
- Analysis of student formative and summative assessment data
- Cultural and ethnic influences
- Gender influences
- Physical, emotional, social, and cognitive characteristics
- Family characteristics/ socioeconomic status
- Readiness to learn/Prior knowledge

Changing Your Thinking

Differentiation is a philosophy—a *belief* system. Come to terms with what is fair and equitable for each indi-

vidual student rather than the class as a whole, understanding that equal doesn’t always mean equitable.

Allowing students to choose ways to learn and demonstrate learning with support from the teacher is a good thing. It is not okay to “teach to the middle”

Just as students are smart in different ways, they also learn differently.

Students can and should think for themselves.

Teacher should be encouraged to provide multiple assignments for students within the same classroom.

Class activities should be structured so that each and every child is challenged to reach his or her greatest potential.

Implementation of flexible grouping around different interests, learning styles, and levels of thinking can and should be done.

When students are allowed to use resources, whether human, print, technological, or visual it is not “cheating.”

Every child deserves second chances.

Anxiety and fear do not contribute to meaningful learning; emotional safety is a prerequisite for learning.

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Northwest Arkansas Middle School Quiz Bowl Tournament



The Jones Center for Families in Springdale was the site for the NWAESC sponsored Middle School Quiz Bowl Tournament on November 17, 2010. The morning rounds featured 17 teams competing for as many wins and points as possible in order to be one of the eight teams moving to the afternoon rounds in a single elimination tournament. At the end of the morning, the eight teams left standing included Elmwood of Rogers, Pea Ridge Middle School, Holt Middle School of Fayetteville, Kirksey of Rogers, Elkins Middle School, Lynch Middle School of Farmington, Gravette Middle School, and West Fork Middle School. Receiving the Fourth Place Tournament at the end of the single elimination rounds at the end of the day was Elkins Middle School. The Third Place trophy went to Kirksey Middle School of Rogers. After a hard fought battle between West Fork and Elmwood of Rogers, the First Place trophy was awarded to Elmwood with West Fork receiving the Second Place Trophy. Congratulations to all teams who represented their districts well.

- Bev Davenport

"...if we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow."

~ John Dewey

Northwest Upcoming Events

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS SCIENCE OLYMPIAD TOURNAMENT

MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADES 7-8 APRIL 26, 2011
JONES CENTER FOR FAMILIES IN SPRINGDALE

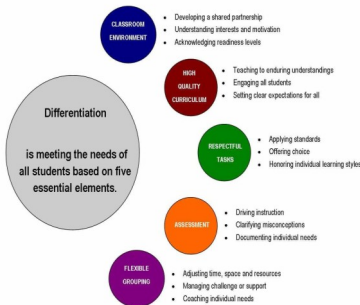
FUTURE PROBLEM SOLVING

PRACTICE PROBLEM #2 DUE DECEMBER 10
STATE BOWL REGIONAL QUALIFYING PROBLEM - FEB. 11, 2011
STATE BOWL - APRIL 28-29, 2011

TOPICS

Practice Problem # 2
Qualifying Problem
Affiliate Competition
IC 2010

Air Transport
Genetic Testing
Water Quality
Emergency Planning



Differentiated Instruction
<http://utaah.washk12.org/differentiation/>

Just Do IT! - Top 5 Ways Differentiation Instruction

1. Learning Environment (Aesthetically Pleasing)

- A. Consider lighting options: use of lamps, back to the window, light near the desk, full spectrum lighting
- B. Adding pieces of furniture to your room (small sofa, rocking chair, bean bags, reading rug, etc.)
- C. Use of living plants, aquariums, and terrariums
- D. Personal space needs
- E. Availability of adaptation devices
 1. Highlighters
 2. Pencil Grippers
 3. Erasable pens
 4. Headphones
 5. Laptops
 6. Stress balls
 7. Photo copied notes
 8. Foot Support
 9. Tilt top desk
 10. Color coded materials
- F. Student's position in the classroom
 1. Consider preferential seating, which doesn't always mean at the front of the room
 2. Consider the students' senses (vision, hearing, smell, touch)

2. Content (The *What* of Teaching: Essential Curriculum/State or District Standards)

- A. The level of complexity (analyzing the information from a different perspective, extending the concept, examination from an interdisciplinary approach, introducing ethical considerations)
- B. Acceleration (individual pacing, time adjustments)
- C. Novelty (real problems, research, use of primary sources)
- D. Depth (language of the discipline, understanding the rules that govern it, understanding the theory behind it)
- E. Compacting (adapting the regular curriculum through elimination of work, condensing or streamlining the essential curriculum)
- F. Use of abstractions (going beyond factual information to the hidden meanings, underlying ideas, or symbolism)
- G. Reorganization (selecting new arrangements for the content other than chronological order)

3. Process (The *How* of Teaching: Methods and Strategies Implemented)

- A. Inquiry and discovery
- B. Inductive and deductive reasoning
- C. Independent studies and self-directed projects
- D. Higher order questioning/essential questions
- E. Action research
- F. Service learning activities
- G. Problem-based learning
- H. Tiering assignments
- I. Cooperative learning opportunities
- J. Individualizing instruction/one-on-one mentoring
- K. Socratic Seminar
- L. Cues and advanced organizers
- M. Setting objectives and providing effective feedback
- N. Revising for logic, transitions, and word choice
- O. Summarizing/note taking
- P. Generating and testing hypotheses
- Q. Comparing and Contrasting

4. Participation (Authentic Student Engagement)

- A. Adapting how the student participates

- B. Adapting how much the student participates
- C. Adapting the rules or goals for the student's participation
- D. Adapting assessments to include grading on individual growth.

5. Product (The End Result of the Learning Sequence)

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. Role play | P. Brochure |
| B. Lab report | Q. Portfolio |
| C. Debate/panel discussion | R. Choral reading |
| D. Mural | S. Research/Case study |
| E. Interview | T. Position paper |
| F. Simulation | U. Glossary |
| G. Oral report | V. Scrapbook |
| H. Diary | W. Mini-teach (example: Public Service Announcement) |
| I. Video | X. Skit |
| J. PowerPoint | Y. Script for a play |
| K. Photo essay | Z. Illustration/poster/flip books |
| L. Illustrated story/political or editorial cartoon | |
| M. Essay/critical review | |
| N. Lab report/experiment | |
| O. Models | |

-Mona Briggs

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Agate Conference - February 16-18, 2011

The annual Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education Conference will be held at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock in February. Wednesday, February 16 will be Pre-Conference sessions with February 17 and 18 being the Break-Out session days. There will be many exciting workshops for middle level educators, so it is hoped that all will take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about the gifted educational opportunities and services available to our students in Arkansas. Conference chair is Sandra Johnson, a G/T Specialist from the O. U. R. Service Cooperative.

[PATHWISE TRAINER RECALIBRATION FOR TRAINERS OF MENTORS WILL BE MARCH 8 and MARCH 15 IN LITTLE ROCK.](#)

If any Middle School teachers or administrators are trainers and need to be recalibrated as mentor [trainers](#), they must go to one of these sessions. This is not a recalibration for mentors, only for those who do the training of mentors.

The AALME is dedicated to promoting successful educational experiences for middle level students.

www.aamle.org



1817 Magnolia Lane
Paragould, AR 72450

The Active and Engaged Learner

During a 1977 interview, John H. Lounsbury, one of the founding fathers of middle level education reiterates, "There is more support for change in education now than at any other time in my memory...A number of trends will indeed bring about the kind of fundamental change that has long been needed. If we do not assume the initiative, however, the gains we have made and the supportive climate are likely to fade, and several more decades would pass before another time as ripe for reform would come along" (Manning & Bucher, 2009, p. v). Since this statement was made, numerous changes have been constituted specifically in the area of middle level education. State departments of education, higher education's middle level programs, and national organizations, such as the National Middle School Association, have all played a huge role in sustaining the movement begun years ago. Yet, educational changes continue to challenge those involved with young adolescents.

According to the National Middle School Association's *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents*, the belief that educational offerings geared for middle school students must reflect current research, as well as utilize the experience of educators, administrators, and parents. Sixteen characteristics, otherwise known as strands, were established and have continued to be the focal points of establishing and maintaining successful schools for young adolescents. One focus strand examines the qualities that are involved in active, engaged, and purpose-

ful learning. We often think only of the student being the one engaged and active; however, the characteristics must involve both the teacher and the student if the experience is to be authentic and powerful. "Through planned opportunities for students to express their needs and preferences, middle grades educators open new pathways to facilitate...enhance and accelerate learning. When students routinely assume the role of teacher, and teachers demonstrate that they are still learners, the conditions of a genuine learning community are present" (NMSA, 2010, pp. 16-17). Because of the importance and relevance of this particular strand, the Collegiate Middle Level Association of the University of Central Arkansas determined to make this the focus of this year's "In the Middle" School Conference.

In years past, the conference has catered to pre-service middle level educators; however, 2011 brought about a change in direction with the organization's hosting of the conference. "It was determined to open the opportunity up to area middle school teachers and administrators, in addition to the universities' middle level programs scattered across Arkansas. The reason: to provide an opportunity for all to network and build valuable relationships, while continuing to learn more about the craft of teaching" states Dr. Terri Hebert, UCA's CMLA Organization Faculty Advisor. In addition to break-out sessions provided by middle level faculty and area middle level teachers, there will be two guest speakers. During

the opening session, Dr. Greg Murry, Superintendent of Conway Public Schools, Conway, Arkansas, will offer up-to-date information on issues related to Arkansas middle schools. The keynote speaker, Dr. Debbie Silver, is an award-winning educator with thirty years experience as a classroom teacher, staff development instructor, and university professor. Her numerous recognitions include being named the *Louisiana State Teacher of the Year*. During her career she has taught almost every grade level and most every kind of student. Dr. Silver has been an invited author for several educational journals and has given keynotes at state, national, and international conferences in forty-nine states, Canada, Europe, and Asia. She has been a featured teacher for the *PBS On-Line Teacher Chat* and for KDS Knowledge Delivery Systems.

If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the March 2nd "In the Middle" Conference, please contact Dr. Terri Hebert at terrih@uca.edu or call at (501) 412-5841. The cost, including lunch, is \$45.00 for teachers and administrators and \$25.00 for students. Deadline for registration is February 10th.

- Dr. Terri Hebert