

Challenge, Activate, Engage

In order to activate your prior knowledge, keep the following three questions in mind as you work through the module:

1. What is differentiated instruction?
2. How do teachers differentiate instruction?
3. What will it look like in the classroom?

As educators, we face challenges every day. One of the most difficult challenges we face is meeting the needs of our students by dealing with emerging education, economic and social trends.

Read the scenarios below and choose one that most relevant to your own situation.

Scenarios

Scenario 1:

Mrs. Baker has taught 3rd grade for the last 15 years. She normally uses whole-group instruction to introduce new concepts and to model each concept. She uses the math textbook provided to her and she requires all students to work in the workbooks that pair with these textbooks. Her students have generally done well over the years. The attention spans of her students start to wane after working in their textbooks for 20 minutes.

Scenario 2:

Ms. Greene is in her first year of teaching 7th grade Science. She enjoys using experiments and labs to teach the content. She has students who struggle with reading comprehension and often do not understand content vocabulary. While, some students quickly grasp vocabulary during her 15 minute lectures others struggle to make the connections during these lectures.

Scenario 3:

Mr. Jones is a lateral entry History teacher in a rural high school. Mr. Jones is engaging and spends a great deal of time planning effective lessons. The students in his classroom come with limited prior knowledge of current and historical events due their socio-economic status. This often impedes their ability to make connections to the content.

The Teachers Wonder...

During a PLC meeting, a discussion ensued around how students were responding to the individual teacher's lessons. Colleagues state they use differentiated instruction which makes teacher wonder what that is and how that might look in his/her classroom. He/she wonders if changes in teaching practices and own thinking will need to occur.

The Problem...

Common Core standards were recently implemented and you are a teacher who has used differentiation to meet the needs of your students. Some teachers are not utilizing differentiated instructional strategies in their lessons and students in these classes are not being successful.

Your Challenge:

You are a teacher responding to one of the scenarios above. What advice would you give this teacher? What does this teacher need to know about meeting the needs of her/his students? What could he/she do to meet the needs of her students?