Differentiating Instruction For Students With Learning Disabilities

WebQuest Description: This presentation will provide an overview of learning disabilities and identify curriculum-based strategies, accommodations, and modifications to differentiate instruction for general and special education.

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Conclusion

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Introduction

Timeline of Learning Disabilities

'Learning disabilities' hasn't always been a household term. We only began to discover the reasons for learning problems a little over a century ago, and many people still have to fight for rights to equal opportunities and appropriate education. This timeline tracks the history of learning disabilities, from their discovery in 1877 to our most recent laws and scientific findings.

1877 – The term "word blindness" is coined by German neurologist Adolf Kussmaul to describe "a complete text blindness…although the power of sight, the intellect and the powers of speech are intact.

1887 – German physician Rudolf Berlin refines our definition of reading problems, using the term "dyslexia" to describe a "very great difficulty in interpreting written or printed symbols.

1895 – Ophthalmologist James Hinshelwood describes in medical journal, The Lancet, the case of acquired word blindness, where a 58 year old man awoke one morning to discover that he could no longer read. Hinshelwood continued to study word blindness in children, and recognized the need for early identification of these children by teachers.

1896 – After reading Dr. Hinshelwood's report, Dr. W. Pringle Morgan writes in the British Medical Journal of a 14 year old who seemed to have word blindness from birth. He was described as bright, intelligent and quick, but had great difficulty reading and spelling despite the efforts of his teachers. Morgan wrote: "The schoolmaster who has taught him for some years says that he would be the smartest lad in the school if the instruction were entirely oral.

1905 – The first U.S. report of childhood reading difficulties is published by Cleveland ophthalmologist Dr. W.E. Bruner.

1963 – Samuel A. Kirk is the first person to use the term "learning disability" at a conference in Chicago.

1969 – Congress passes the Children with Specific Learning Disabilities Act, which is included in the Education of the Handicapped Act of 1970 (PL 91-230). This is the first time federal law mandates support services for students with learning disabilities.

1975 – The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142), which mandates a free, appropriate public education for all students. (This law is renamed IDEA in 1990.)

1987 – A report released by the Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities calls for the establishment of Centers for the Study of Learning and Attention, whose sole purpose is to expand research and understanding of this issue.

1990 – The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) renames and changes PL 94-142. The term 'disability' replaces 'handicap,' and the new law requires transition services for students. Autism and traumatic brain injury are added to the eligibility list.

1996 – Dr. Guinevere Eden and her research team at the National Institute of Mental Health used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) – a process that allows us to look at the activity in living brains – to identify the regions of the brain that behave differently in dyslexics.

1997 – IDEA is reauthorized. Regular education teachers are included in the IEP process, students have more access to the general curriculum and are included in state-wide assessments, and ADHD is added to the list of conditions that could make a child eligible for services under the category "other health impairment.

2004 – IDEA is reauthorized again. School personnel now have more authority in special education placement decisions and the new law is better aligned with the No Child Left Behind Act.

2005 – Dr. Jeffrey Gruen and his research team at Yale University identified a gene that had patterns and variations that were strongly associated with dyslexia.

Process

The process of differentiating instruction for students with learning disabilities involves: Instructional Grouping, Self-monitoring, scaffolding of instruction, specific learning strategies, Peer-tutoring. Historically, the learning disabled student has been placed in either an intensive(smaller class size)setting, or pull-outs with a special education/resource teachers or in a co teaching/classroom environment. The students with with a learning disability can have problems (including, but not limited to) math calculation, math problem solving, reading comprehension and written language mechanics. The learning disabled student may read far below grade level and has difficulty writing in complete sentences. Subsequently, the academic deficiencies may manifest itself into significant behavior problems. Truly individualized IEP goals, frequent
observation of IEP students in the inclusion classroom, and effective learning strategies should address the needs or concerns of the IEP student.&nbsp;&nbsp;At a minimum, the strategies that should be used daily are: Breaking down assignments into smaller steps; giving out prompts and probes; giving regular feedback; using graphic organizers; visuals; addressing needs of IEPs; model instructional practices; engaging students in the process of the learning strategy. The Learning Disabilities Association of America states that “whether the student is learning in a general education classroom or pulled out into a special education resource setting, be sure that activities are focused on assessed individual student’s ability to monitor their progress through the curriculum. Concerns for the individual must take precedence over concerns for the group, and over concerns about the organization and management of the general education classroom. Success for the student with learning disabilities requires a focus on individual achievement, individual progress, and individual learning. This requires specific, directed, individualized, intensive remedial instruction of students who are struggling.”

Tomlinson and Strickland (2005), teachers usually differentiate instruction by adjusting one or more of the following: the content (what students learn); the process (how students learn); or the product (how students demonstrate their mastery of the knowledge or skills).

However, there is no one-size-fits-all model for differentiated instruction; it looks different depending on the prior knowledge, interests, and abilities students bring to a learning situation. Across the literature, experts (Anderson, 2007; Rock, Gregg, Ellis, & Gable, 2008; Tomlinson, 2000) suggest these guiding principles to support differentiated classroom practices: Focus on the essential ideas and skills of the content area, eliminating ancillary tasks and activities. Respond to individual student differences (such as learning style, prior knowledge, interests, and level of engagement). Group students flexibly by shared interest, topic, or ability. Integrate ongoing formative assessments with instruction, continually assess, reflect, and adjust content, process, and product to meet student needs. Organization outlines and copies of overheads—Provide bins, and designated areas for homework, late work, or absent work. Technology—&nbsp;Optical Character Recognition with Voice Output—Voice Activation—E-text and Electronic Access—Digital Tape Recorders—Allow for note taking on laptop, desktop or tablet—Provide all accommodations—Extended time for testing—Exams in Assessment Center, or small groupings—Use of E-text for textbooks and exams—notes, copy of overheads, tape recorder—Technology for reading or writing—&nbsp;Use of Calculator, Color coding—Except when these are the skills that you are evaluating and they are essential to the curriculum. Instructional Grouping is instruction based on the standards and organization of instruction around important concepts, principles or skills. These should be the goals for all learners.&nbsp;Groupings should be planned in regular shifts between whole-class, group and individual instruction and structure groups so that students are allowed to demonstrate their strengths and pursue their own interests in a variety of ways. At the start of a new unit or lesson, assess students to establish an entry point for each one. Assess students and review and adjust groups frequently to ensure appropriate placement. Use whole-group instruction when introducing new concepts and skills. Group students according to achievement for short-term learning activities. “Clone” activities, creating multiple versions that will be effective for different groups. Use small groups for instruction and practice of higher-order or specific skills. Use need-based grouping to allow students to skip practice with previously mastered skills and understanding while providing opportunity for additional practice to those students who need it (such as peer tutoring).

Provide opportunities for enrichment for all students. Enlist help from other teachers, aides and parents to work with small groups in order to meet the needs of all learners. Incorporate learning activities that use heterogeneous cooperative learning groups as well as building in goals, rewards and accountability for both the group and individuals. Ensure that learning groups exhibit gender, cultural, ability-disability and socioeconomic balance. Student Self Monitoring allows the student to play a role in receiving his/her education. &nbsp;Educators now realize that the success of education is, in large measure, dependent on the responsibility of students take for their own learning and behavior.” (Bender, 2002). During self monitoring, the student is trained to remind his/her self to pay attention and recognize when he or she is off task. Self instructions and monitoring increases appropriate behavior. A student exercising self monitoring should ask him/herself several questions through out the day and have a chart to document the answers. &nbsp;The student should ask: “Did I... work with out disturbing others—participate in class—listen and pay attention when the teacher talking—Ask for help when I needed it—follow teachers directions—complete class assignments—turn in completed assignments—&nbsp;Scaffolding is the framework or model of instruction in which you involve the student in his/her own learning process. It may best be understood as a sequence of prompted content, materials, and teacher or peer support to facilitate learning.&nbsp;1. Identify what the students know—what is their background or prior knowledge. &nbsp;What are their misconceptions.&nbsp;2. &nbsp;What can the students already do—what is the students abilities and limitations. &nbsp;3. Accomplish successes quickly—provide accommodations that the enable the students to not worry about their weaknesses or deficiencies.&nbsp;4. Help students to be like everyone else—&nbsp;give examples of others successes and triumphs over or in spite of their disabilities. Peer Tutoring—Peer-to-Peer Tutoring is a method of instruction that involves students teaching other students. Students learn more and demonstrate mastery when they are able to comprehensively teach a subject. Vice versa, when a student is struggling, having someone on the same age level as them helps to create bridges in the learning gaps. A peer tutor can form examples and relate to a student on an entirely different level than an adult. &nbsp;A struggling student can benefit greatly from having to prepare and teach the topic that they are studying to a tutor from the same age group as them. The formal lines that exist between a teacher and a student aren’t as defined with someone who is the same age as the person learning, and are therefore easier to cross and find common ground with that said student. The most important aspect of Peer-to-Peer Tutoring is a ready monitor to ensure that the correct information is being taught. Graphic Organizer—Graphic organizers (GOs) help students to gather, sift through, organize, and share information. &nbsp;These types of activities help students retain information they’ve learned for a longer period of time.&nbsp;Students with low literacy skills, limited English fluency, and diverse learning styles can often process information in a GO more easily than from traditional text.&nbsp;Graphic Organizers help students to focus their thoughts for planning, decision making and writing. They allow them to see connections, patterns, and relationships (the big picture). The amount of information or detail to be included in the graphic organizer can be varied. You can incorporate higher-level thinking skills, prior knowledge, and real world applications for students who are ready to accept the challenge. Students can be grouped (similar ability or mixed ability) to work collaboratively on graphic organizers. They will be discussing, doing, and teaching!&nbsp;Provide examples of graphic organizers for some (filled-out or blank). Some students can create their own graphic organizers.&nbsp;Optimize creativity for others by minimizing the amount of direction given. &nbsp;Some students can be given a graphic organizer to help them complete a specific task, while others complete the task more independently.&nbsp;Additional accommodations: Presentation—Provide on audio tape—Provide in large print—Reduce number of items per page or line—Provide a designated reader—Present instructions orally—Response—Allow for verbal responses—Provide answers to allow the use of a tape recorder to capture responses—Permit responses to be given via computer—Provide answers to be recorded directly into test booklet—Timing—Allow frequent breaks—Extend allotted time for a test—Scheduling—Provide preferential seating—Provide special lighting or acoustics—Provide a space with minimal distractions.&nbsp;Administer a test in a small group setting—Administer a test in a private room or alternative test site—Test—Scheduling—Administer a test in a series of timed sessions or over several days—Provide subtests to be taken in a different order—Administer a test at a specific time of day—Other—Provide special test preparation—Provide on-task/ focusing prompts—Provide any reasonable accommodation that a student needs that does not fit under the existing categories.
The following is a sample lesson plan to show how you can differentiate in the classroom to accommodate your students with learning disabilities. &nbsp;This is a plan from a 5th grade Reading/Language Arts/Social Studies classroom.&nbsp;Objective: Students will identify and describe how text features help them to better understand the text. Engagement: Teacher will pass out social studies text books to students.&nbsp;Students will go on a book scavenger hunt to see how many text features they can find.&nbsp;Teacher charts responses on the board. &nbsp;Teacher will have a student share what a text feature is. &nbsp;A text feature is like a road map for the reader. &nbsp;Authors include text features to help the reader better understand what they read. &nbsp;Text features can be found in magazine articles, text books, reports, web pages, and other nonfiction text. &nbsp;Exploration: Discuss how each text feature has a purpose.&nbsp;&nbsp;Create anchor chart with students. Text Feature Purpose Title Tells what we will be reading about Photographs Shows us what something looks like Captions Gives us more information about a picture Headings Gives us advance notice of what the next section will be about Map Shows us where places are located Bold print, italics, highlighting Tells us which words or phrases are most important Explanation: Teacher will read aloud a short time for kids article titled “A Marvelous Monkey.” Teacher will model and add a new column to the anchor chart that explains how specific text features help the reader. &nbsp;Text Feature Purpose How the text feature helps me to better understand the text Title Tells what we will be reading about Helps me know this is about a monkey that does exceptional things Photographs Shows us what something looks like Shows me what the monkeys look like, they don’t look like any kind of monkey I’ve seen before, so maybe that’s why they are marvelous Captions Gives us more information about a picture &nbsp;Headings Gives us advance notice of what the next section will be about Gives me advance notice of what I’ll be reading: one section will be basic info about the Lesula, another will be about saving their lives Map Shows us where places are located &nbsp;Bold print, italics, highlighting Tells us which words or phrases are most important &nbsp;Elaboration: Teacher will offer three choices of articles for students to read.&nbsp;Students will pair up and complete the graphic organizer on their own, finding and listing at least 4 text features that help them to better understand the text. Evaluation: Students will share one text feature from their graphic organizer and the article that helped them to better understand the text. Accommodations: Learning Disability Lesson Activity Lesson Accommodations Dyslexia &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbp...
the above mentioned IEP team members uphold the same attitude and beliefs about the educational plan that they've developed for a student then the IEP is likely to be more effective. 2. After the IEP team establishes goals, accommodations and services, the document must be implemented, otherwise it simply becomes legal paperwork. The implementation and monitoring of the IEP is carried out by all of the members. Thus the effectiveness of the IEP can only be based on the extent to which all goals, accommodations and services are carried out. 3. Finally, effective IEP team promotes a cooperative learning environment. As students witness a team working together to ensure they receive a proper education, this teaming can be modeled with students and their peers in the classroom.

Standards

Credits
Contribution:
Davina Hurt- Introduction, Differentiation, Learning Disabilities
Shelley Jones- Lesson Plan
Tracey Williams- Strategies, Collaboration

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