

Reflection Paper

Subject: Special Education

Grade: 6

Module 3: Instruction for Active Learning : Teacher implements instruction in order to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning and to promote their curiosity about the world at large by:

Selected Indicator: Using differentiated instruction and supplemental interventions to support students with learning difficulties, disabilities and/or particular gifts and talents. Note: differentiated instruction applies to all students (tier one) and supplemental instruction applies to students in tiers two and three.

Goal:

My goal is to use differentiated instruction and supplemental interventions to support students with learning disabilities.

Initial Summary:

Recently, I have changed the type of special education students I work with. I have now become a case manager for students with learning disabilities who are included into mainstream classes. I have managed to review the student's goals and objectives and provide them with support. However, after reviewing the student's first marking period grades, it is apparent that three students on my case load need more instruction. All three students need significant and efficient specialized instruction in order to succeed in their general education classes. These students have not been successful in the mainstream classes and have required many accommodations and modifications to their academics. By researching and implementing differentiated instruction, as well as providing supplemental interventions, I want to be able to effectively support these students with learning disabilities so that they can become more successful and independent in their mainstream classes.

Reflection:

Through this module I wanted to use differentiated instruction and supplemental interventions to support students with learning disabilities. I expected that by implementing differentiated instruction and interventions I would be able to provide students, who are unable to fully understand instruction, a way to maintain, or be exposed to, academic rigor like their peers.

In order to develop new learning I read through the articles Making a Difference: Interview with Carol Tomlinson by [Anthony Rebor](#) and Differentiating Instruction and Practice: Practical Steps for Implementation by Vicki Gibson. After reading the Interview with Carol Tomlinson I learned that differentiated instruction is defined as a teacher really trying to address students' preferred ways of learning. Carol stressed the

importance of differentiated instruction because students vary in so many ways and the student body population is becoming more and more diverse. Carol stated that when you have different learners there are many ways to deal with them, but unfortunately the less common method is where the students are kept “together in the context of high-quality curriculum” and are attended to based on their readiness needs, interests and preferred ways of learning. One of the key elements of differentiated instruction is that students need to be working on respectful task where everybody’s work is “equally engaging, equally appealing, and equally important.” The second article I read by Vicki Gibson has very similar beliefs on differentiated instruction as Carol Tomlinson. She also believes that “providing high quality instruction differentiated to students’ needs is essential for improving instructional effectiveness for student populations with increasing diversity.” Gibson believes that differentiated instruction can be effectively implemented with five basic steps. First, establishing a positive and equal environment, second, use data to improve performance, third, manage the student’s resources and work, fourth create and consistently follow routines and procedures, and lastly, provide high-quality teaching and practice. One of Gibson’s strongest recommendations is to differentiate instruction with group lessons. This way you are able to adapt your lessons to the student’s needs. Along with reading the above materials I also consulted with regular education teachers to get their input on what they think certain students need for an intervention. I then consulted with my mentor teacher to help develop ideas of how to provide specialized instruction based on what the regular education teachers were stating.

The indicator I chose to use was to use differentiated instruction and supplemental interventions to support students with learning difficulties, disabilities and/or particular gifts and talents. This indicator directly related to my new learning because the students who this indicator effects are students who do not respond to how a regular education teacher is presenting material. Therefore, by reading through the articles [Making a Difference: Interview with Carol Tomlinson](#) by [Anthony Rebor](#) and [Differentiating Instruction and Practice: Practical Steps for Implementation](#) by Vicki Gibson, I will implement differentiated instructional strategies and supplemental interventions to provide academic instruction to special education students.

Prior to teaching, I had to start by communicating with the regular education teachers to obtain student’s benchmark scores. According to Tomlinson, collecting data, such as assessment scores, is the place to start so that I will be able to identify skills that the students are capable of doing already. The three students whom I focused my planning on did not score well on their benchmarks, which demonstrate that they need more intensive intervention. So I decided to complete file reviews to look for triennial testing scores, as well as complete my own assessments. I then decided I would focus on Math for three specific students. One student was academically at the end of third grade, another was at a first grade level for Language Arts and the end of third grade level for Math, and the final student, who is on the CMT checklist, is performing at a beginning first grade level in both Math and Language Arts. All of the grade levels were determined using benchmarks, triennial evaluations, and reading assessments, such as the Developmental Reading Assessment and the Basic Reading Inventory. Next I had to communicate with the regular education teachers to discover what their learning objectives were for their upcoming lessons. I would always try to get as much information from the teachers, such as learning objectives, activities, and assessments. I figured the more I knew the more I could prepare my students for when they entered mainstream classes.

Once I had all of my data, lesson objectives, activities, and assessments, my next step was to implement ways that the students could still access the general education curriculum, but in a different way. The math teacher explained that he was going to teach the students how to add and

subtract numbers with decimals. I focused on math, which was focusing on adding and subtracting decimals, because I wanted these students in particular to master this skill because they will need it for everyday life when they are working with money.

The math teacher started the unit with the objective that 'students will read numbers up to the thousandths place'. The students who I was focusing on were struggling to do this because they did not know place value to the right of the decimal. As part of differentiation, I focused on teaching the students what they really needed to know. I made a chart that identified place value up to the hundredths after the decimal point. I also added on the chart that a decimal point says and. The students would then copy the number into their chart, while lining up the decimal to read the number. I found that two of the students I was working with grasped this concept quickly and by the second class were able to read a number with a decimal point up to the hundredths without the chart. I continued to practice this strategy with the other student. She needed the chart every time in order to be successful with the objective.

The next part of the unit was adding decimals. The objective was 'students will add numbers with decimal points'. This was an objective that I really wanted the students to understand because this is a skill that they will need for the rest of their life. I let the teacher provide the direct instruction to the students. He then provided all of the students with an independent practice sheet. The numbers were too large for the students to understand right away so I decided to differentiate the numbers used. I first started by giving the students numbers in the ones and tenths place. We practiced adding just these two numbers and then we added a third. I kept a number in the ones place and added a number in the tenths and hundredths place. It was when we started to get to these larger numbers that I realized that one of the students didn't know how to regroup and another was unable to keep the numbers lined up correctly. I first addressed the student who struggled to line up the numbers. I decided to use larger sized graph paper and have the student write each number in its own block. I put the decimal point on the line to show that all he needs to do is bring down the decimal point straight down. This accommodation, of larger graphing paper, was a quick fix to the student's need for organization. The student who struggled with regrouping was going to be a different issue that I would need to provide supplemental strategies for. The student was able to add numbers, but when it came to carrying the number in the tens place over to the next column she wouldn't do it. She would put both numbers below, when there was only supposed to be one. What I decided to do was to put a little box to the right side of the top number where she could put the number from the tens place. I did this for all the problems, so that she would get into the routine of putting a number in the little box, even if it was zero. We practice using this strategy an entire class period. The student was starting to understand, but I could tell that she needed more reinforcement. My goal was for her to be able to do the differentiated work independently by the second class. This student also received a pull-out math class so I decided to reinforce this same thing later in the day. By the end of the second math class the student was able to work on the problems with minimum support. She only needed a few cues on putting the number in the box. The second mainstream math class was again adding numbers with decimals. I worked with the student again practicing putting the tens number in the box. I reviewed the strategy a few times and then the student was able to do the rest of the math problems independently.

The next part of the unit was subtracting decimals. The objective was 'students will be able to subtract numbers with decimal points.' I differentiated the type of problem for these three students so they were subtracting numbers up to the hundredths place. One student again quickly understood how to do this and was able to complete the problems independently. On the second day of independent practice he was completing the same sheet as the other students. The student who used the graphing paper as organization was also able to complete the same sheet as the other

students, as long as he lined up his numbers correctly in the boxes on the graph paper. The student, who struggled with carrying didn't understand the concept of borrowing. She was able to bring the decimal point straight down, but when the number was smaller on the top the student would just subtract from the bottom number. For example, if the problem was $5.3 - 2.9$ the student would answer 3.6 instead of borrowing from the five. First, I started with putting each math problem into graph paper so each number was in a box. Second, I needed the student to be able to determine when she is supposed to regroup or not. We worked on comparing the top number to the bottom number and reinforced that we only borrow when the number on top is smaller than the number on the bottom. This didn't take long for the student to understand seeing as she quickly was able to determine which number was larger. To teach the student to borrow I decided to use a similar box method like I used when teaching the student how to regroup during addition. With this young lady we really took it step by step. I would set up the problem with 2 digit numbers. We would then start with the ones place and I would ask, "Is the number on top bigger or smaller than the number on the bottom?" The student would answer smaller. Then I would say, "Now we need to go to our neighbor and borrow a one from them." She would put the one in the box and then make the number she borrowed from one less. At that point she was able to independently subtract. We practiced borrowing together for the remainder of the class period. The teacher did not plan on having another day to practice subtraction independently so I decided that I would have to continue reinforcing this skill during her pull-out math class. The students were moving onto multiplying and dividing decimals. I continued to provide different strategies for the other two boys so that they could be successful with multiplication and division. I decided that this student would participate when the class was working on problem solving and real world application. I allowed her to use a calculator for the computations during these parts of the lesson. During independent multiplication and division skill practice I continued to have her work on addition and subtraction practice. This would allow her to be exposed to the regular education curriculum. Although this student didn't master multiplication and division of decimals she was able to understand the real world application of all four operations.

Implementing these differentiated instruction strategies during math had a positive outcome for students. According to Tomlinson's work, by using this graphic organizer I provided intervention for the process and product elements of the student's lessons. The student's process was slowed down and taught step by step. The student's products were different than other students because they used the graphic organizers that I created. After the students were taught how to use the graphic organizer and by breaking their instruction down step-by-step the students were able to access the same general education content as their peers in a main stream class. I believe that through implementing differentiated instruction the students have more confidence when it comes to math. I actually had one student ask to sit with a group of his non-disabled peers because he felt comfortable enough to work independently using the tools I gave him. I also believe that by implementing differentiated instruction it gave the students more independence in the math class rather than relying on the teacher or paraprofessional for help. By providing differentiated instruction through this module, I assumed a more positive mindset and expected that all of my students can do good work; it just might not be the same work.