Reflection Paper

Subject: Planning: Differentiated Instruction **Grade:** 6

Module 2: Planning 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: 3. Selecting appropriate assessment strategies to monitor ongoing student progress.

Goal:

My goal is to design appropriate academic and behavioral interventions through specialized instruction for students on my case load who do not respond to primary instruction.

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. One of these three students also needs behavioral management strategies to help him be successful with the type of work that he is being asked to do. I have decided that I would plan academic and behavioral interventions to help these students become more successful in their mainstream classes.

Reflection:

Through this module I wanted to learn how to design appropriate academic interventions through specialized instruction for students who do not respond to primary instruction. I expected that by designing different learning and behavioral interventions that 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 sections of the books titled Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum (Tomlinson & Edison, 2003) the article Understanding Differentiated instruction: Building Foundation for Leadership, which uses information from the book Leadership for Differentiating Schools & Classrooms (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). In the first book, Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum, I discovered that there were five elements that teachers could differentiate to increase student learning. The first element a teacher can modify is content. Content is "what we teach and how we give students access to the information and ideas that matter"

(Tomlinson & Edison, 2003, p.3). The second element a teacher can differentiate is the process. Process is "how students come to understand and 'own' the knowledge, understanding, and skills essential to a topic" (Tomlinson & Edison, 2003, p.3). The third element a teacher can adjust is the product. Product is "how a student demonstrates what he or she has come to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of a segment of study" (Tomlinson & Edison, 2003, p.3) The fourth element a teacher can modify is the affect. Affect is "how students link thought and feeling in the classroom" (Tomlinson & Edison, 2003, p.3). The final element a teacher can differentiate is the student's learning environment. The learning environment refers to "the way the classroom feels and functions" (Tomlinson & Edison, 2003, p.3). On top of the 5 different classroom elements that a teacher can differentiate there are also student characteristics that teachers can respond to as they create their lessons. The first is characteristic is readiness which "reflects what a student knows, understands and can do today in light of what the teacher is planning to teach today" (Tomlinson & Edison, 2003, p.3). The second characteristic is interest which refers to what the students enjoys, whether it be learning, think about, or doing. The final characteristic that a teacher can respond to as they create their lesson is the student's learning profile. The student's learning profile is their preferred mode of learning, which is influence by the students learning style, gender, or culture (Tomlinson & Edison, 2003, p.3). In the article Understanding Differentiated instruction: Building Foundation for Leadership, I discovered that there are principles which support differentiation. One being that a differentiated classroom is flexible. The teacher and the students understand that time, material, ways of learning, and ways of expressing learning are crucial for individual and whole-class success. Another principle which supports differentiation is that differentiation starts with effective and on-going assessments. Not only are differences with-in a differentiated classroom expected and appreciated, but they are also studied and monitored closely to insure that instruction is effective. Along with reading the above materials I also consulted with regular education teachers to get their input on what they certain students needed 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 where saying.

The indicator I chose to use was to design academic/ behavioral interventions through specialized instruction for students who do not respond to primary instruction alone. 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 the material. Therefore, by reading through the article and parts of the book, as well as talking to other teachers, I will design differentiated instruction by using the different elements and characteristics above to provide academic interventions.

Prior to teaching I had to start by communicating with the regular education teachers to obtain student's benchmark scores. According to Tomlinson, starting with collecting data, such as assessment scores, is the place to start so that I will be able to identify skills that the students were capable of doing already. This is also known as the characteristic called readiness. 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 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 develop ways that the students could still access the general education curriculum, but in a different way. I first started with the math, which was focusing on fractions. The math teacher explained that he was going to teach the students how to add and subtract fractions with unlike denominators. He stated that he was going to start with finding the Least Common Multiple, and then teach the students how to convert the fractions into equivalent fractions with the Least Common Multiple as the new denominator. Finally he was going to have the students add or subtract the new fractions. After listening to all of the steps for adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators I became overwhelmed. I thought, "How am I going to break this down enough for the students to understand." I knew that two of the three didn't know their multiplication facts. So, the first thing I did was create a multiplication chart on Microsoft Excel that was 25 x 25. I knew that I was going to have to teach the students what a multiple was. Multiples are pretty much the same thing as skip counting is so I planned on referring to finding multiples as skip counting, but emphasizing that it was finding multiples. The next step in adding fractions was to find the Lowest Common multiple. I decided that I would create a product, like a graphic organizer, for the students to use every time they needed to add or subtract fractions with unlike denominators. I wanted this graphic organizer to be more like a flow chart so that the students could complete the math problem step by step. On this graphic organizer I decided to include the fraction with the unlike denominator in the top left corner. Next to the fraction I decided to put arrows from the denominators pointing toward an empty box where the student would list the denominator's multiples and circle the lowest common multiple. I then put an arrow from the lowest common multiple to denominator empty boxes organized like fractions. If the students were able to finish this process then they would have the old fraction with unlike denominators and the like denominator in front of them. The next thing they would have to do is using their multiplication chart figure out what number multiplied by the old denominator makes the new denominator. They could then have to take the number that they multiplied the old denominator by and use it to multiple the old numerators by to create a new numerator. Once this one done they would have two fractions in front of them with like denominators to add.

My planning for this time during math will have a positive outcome for students. According to Tomlinson's work, by using this graphic organizer I will provide intervention for the process and product elements of the student's lessons. The student's process will slowed down and taught step by step. The student's products will different then other students because they would be using the graphic organizer that I created. After the students are taught how to use the graphic organizer and by breaking their instruction down step-by-step the students will be able to access the same general education content as their peers in a main stream class. I believe that through planning this intervention that the students will have more confidence when it comes to math. I also believe that by planning this intervention it will give the students more independence in the math class rather than relying on the teacher for help.