

Differentiated Instruction, March 2006 Webcast

Differentiated Instruction, Further Information

Every child has the right to be literate and to have opportunities to reach their full potential. The government of Ontario has made improvement in publicly funded education the cornerstone of its mandate. This commitment begins with improved student learning and achievement in literacy and numeracy. The first step in realizing this goal requires that every student in Ontario develop reading, writing, mathematics and comprehension skills at a higher level by the age of 12. Progress will be measured by ensuring that by 2008, 75 percent of 12 year old students will have met or surpassed the provincial standard.

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat has identified nine strategies for facilitating student success. Our focus in this webcast is on strategy number six namely:

Mobilize the system to provide equity in student outcome.

Students in Ontario classrooms have diverse needs. It is therefore imperative that the teaching and learning in Ontario schools be differentiated as well as relevant, inclusive and directly responsive to student readiness, interests and learning profiles.

Differentiated instruction means that students receive qualitatively different instruction based on their needs, not simply more or less of the same thing. It may require teachers to adapt all aspects of their literacy programming, including teaching strategies, content, resources, assessment methods, and student groupings.

(Literacy for Learning Report of the Expert Panel, 2004 p. 41)

All students have the right to effective instruction based on a guaranteed and viable curriculum, within an inclusive learning environment that honours the right of every child to become literate.

Environment will support or deter the student's quest for affirmation, contribution, power, purpose and challenge in the classroom. Environment will also speak to the presence or absence of invitation and opportunity to each child individually and, ultimately, to the class as a whole. It will often be the first messenger of how learning will be in this place.

(Fulfilling the Promise of a Differentiated Classroom. Carol Ann Tomlinson, 2003)

Research and experience indicates that effective differentiated instruction based on on-going assessment results in improved student achievement.

Effective differentiation in assessment does not dilute academic standards or rigorous expectations. Rather differentiated assessment acknowledges that students must be able to show what they know in a variety of different ways.

(On Common Ground, Rick Stiggins, 2006)

This webcast will consider the key messages related to differentiating instruction, as well as specific strategies proven to be successful with struggling students, black students and ELL students. This webcast offers viewers a starting point for reflection, professional dialogue and action.

This webcast will begin to consider the following questions:

- What is differentiated instruction?
- Why is it imperative that differentiated instruction occur in every Ontario classroom?
- What are high yield strategies that result in improved student achievement for all students?
- What obstacles exist and what has been shown as successful practice in raising the bar and closing the gap?
- How does an inclusive, supportive and respectful learning environment improve student achievement?