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EDU 539

Article Review of Differentiated Instruction

***Different Routes to the Same Destination:
Drawing Conclusions With Tiered Graphic Organizers***

The article, *Different Routes to the Same Destination: Drawing Conclusions With Tiered Graphic Organizers*, expresses a concern regarding a teacher's ability to meet the needs of all students. I was first drawn to this article because the title reminded me of one of my favorite poems by Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken." My interpretation of this poem is that a person could choose to look back at their path in life with either feelings of regret or feelings of satisfaction for knowledge gained. The article demonstrates a summarizing strategy which uses tiered graphic organizers as a method of helping students draw conclusions from what they have read. The strategy mentioned in this article intrigued me because it taught me how I could incorporate graphic organizers along with the summary frame strategy. The summary frame strategy utilizes a variety of questions designed by the teacher. These questions "highlight the critical elements for specific types of information" (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 35) found in the text you are summarizing. When the learning process is compared to the poem by Robert Frost, it is the learning path students take which may differ, however, the destination is the same. The ability to comprehend and draw conclusions from what they have read is the ultimate learning goal.

In order to meet the needs of all students, this article attempts to "demystify the process of drawing conclusions" through the introduction of "tiered (leveled) graphic organizers." (McMakin, & Witherell, (2005), p. 242). The article further explored and supported the concept of drawing conclusions while reading, and how this relates to the importance of reinforcing comprehension skills as students learn. The tiered graphic organizer strategy shown in the article could be used in reading for all content areas. Graphic organizers can be designed to meet the needs and abilities of various students. The use of these organizers would differentiate the

instruction needed by various students. Differentiation would be accomplished by designing graphic organizers which address areas of content, process and product. (McMakin, & Witherell, (2005), p. 243).

The use of books on the same subject/content, however of various reading levels, differentiates the lesson. Students would work independently on a graphic organizer specifically designed for their specific reading level. Modifying the process to meet the needs of students at various learning levels could be accomplished by teaching all students the important concepts which need to be grasped, however allow for small group instruction of the students who still may not have yet grasped the important concept. Corresponding graphic organizers may be designed based on various levels of complexity. This allows the students who understand the concept to begin working independently on a graphic organizer aimed at their level of comprehension, while also providing instruction time for the struggling students who may need assistance completing a less complex graphic organizer. This example incorporates the product or end result, which is “enabling students to complete assignments that are at their “just right” level.” (McMakin, & Witherell, (2005), p. 243). Therefore, the route may be different; however, the destination is the same. Students are taught to comprehend and draw conclusions from what they have read.

When designing the tiered graphic organizers you may wish to consider using some of the ideas mentioned in the article. The use of different colors of paper for various level groups or subject/content, this will make it easier for students to recognize and determine which organizer they are to be assigned. Incorporate levels of complexity such as: introductory, intermediate and

challenging. Format the organizer so that there is a logical sequence to help them draw a conclusion to what is being read or studied. The use of “think-alouds to teach and reinforce drawing conclusions” (McMakin, & Witherell, (2005), pp. 244- 246). is mentioned as a before, during and after strategy to compliment the use of these tiered graphic organizers.

Last week, as part Justin’s instructional strategy presentation for our classroom practice; I observed how he utilized tiered graphic organizers for his students as a note taking strategy. I was extremely impressed with how he utilized a tier system to motivate the students in his class to actually take note on what they were studying. He mentioned that simply asking students to, “Pull out a piece of paper and take note did not seem to work and motivate all of his students.” He had the foresight to take into consideration the learning styles and preferences of his students when creating these note taking organizers. He mentioned that some students preferred the use of numbered lines for writing as opposed to the use of a web design. By adapting the use of graphic organizers to meet the needs and desires of his students, and his expectations as a teacher, Justin was able motivate his students to actually pick up a pencil and take notes!

I intent to follow the example of educators who instruct me, as well as those I have the privilege of observing. I find that reciprocal teaching in our classroom helps me understand how instruction strategies relate to actual classroom practice. When I read articles such as, *Different Routes to the Same Destination: Drawing Conclusions With Tiered Graphic Organizers*, I am reminded of the fact that teachers have different styles and methods of engagement. The ability to take what I have learned or observed, and develop my own style, will be exciting once I am actually teaching on a full-time basis.

In conclusion, *Different Routes to the Same Destination: Drawing Conclusions With Tiered Graphic Organizers* presented a very useful strategy. The task of creating these tiered graphic organizers may seem like a lot of work for the teacher; however, the end results will make your time and effort worthwhile. The result of your efforts can be measured against the increasing level of your student's reading comprehension skills. The time you put into creating something that increases your student's learning is truly time well spent. I am a firm believer in using graphic organizers as a tool for understanding and summarizing the main theme or concept of text. I also like Justin's example of using tiered organizers as a note-taking strategy. When I begin work as a fulltime teacher, I will use tiered graphic organizers as part of my classroom practice. If the initial tiered graphic organizers I design do not seem to meet the needs of my students, I will simply try to revise my designs to meet these needs. I will maintain the same philosophy I derive from reading Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken." I will look back at what I have done and attempt to gain knowledge from my experience; I simply choose to move forward without regret!

Reference:

Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2004). *Classroom instruction that works*.

United States: ASCD.

McMakin, M. C., & Witherell, N. L. (2005). Different routes to the same destination: Drawing conclusions with tiered graphic organizers. *The Reading Teacher*, 242-252.

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