

Promoting Academic and Social-Emotional Growth of Students with Learning Differences Through Differentiated Instruction

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Abstract : Traditional classrooms are challenging for many students, but especially for students that learn differently due to cognitive makeup, learning preferences, or disability. These students often require different teaching approaches and learning opportunities to benefit from learning. Teachers frequently divert to using one teaching approach, the one that matches their own learning style. For instance, teachers that are auditory learners, likely default to providing auditory learning opportunities. However, if a student is a visual learner, he/she may not fully benefit from that teaching style. Based on research, students and their parents' feedback, large numbers of students are not provided the type of education and types of supports they need in order to be successful in an academic environment. This eventually leads to not learning at an appropriate rate and ultimately leading to skill deficiencies and deficits. Providing varied learning approaches promote high academic and social-emotional growth of all students and it will prevent inaccurate Special Education referrals. Varied learning opportunities can be delivered for all students by providing Differentiated Instruction (DI). This type of instruction allows each student to learn in the most optimal way regardless of learning preferences and cognitive learning profiles. Using Differentiated Instruction will lead to a high level of student engagement and learning. In addition, experiencing success in the classroom, will contribute to increased social emotional wellbeing. Being cognizant of how teaching approaches impact student's learning, school staff can avoid inaccurate perceptions about the students' learning abilities, unnecessary referrals for special education evaluations, and inaccurate decisions about the presence of a disability. This presentation will illustrate learning differences due to various factors, how to recognize them, and how to address them through Differentiated Instruction.

Keywords : special education, disability, differences, differentiated instruction, social emotional wellbeing

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