

Student-Centered methods of teaching.



Differentiated Instruction (Low Tech)

Differentiated instruction is the teaching practice of tailoring instruction to meet individual student needs. It initially grew popular with the [1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#)

[External link](#)

(IDEA), which ensured all children had equal access to public education. The [Individualized Education Programs](#)

[External link](#)

(IEPs) that started under IDEA helped classroom teachers differentiate for students with special needs. Today, differentiated instruction is used to meet the needs of all types of learners.

Teachers can differentiate in a number of ways: how students access content, the types of activities students do to master a concept, what the end product of learning looks like, and how the classroom is set up. Some examples of differentiation include: having students read books at their own reading levels, offering different spelling lists to students, or meeting in small groups to reteach topics.

Though differentiation is focused on individual student needs, it is mostly planned and implemented by the teacher. And technology, though a potential aid, is not a hallmark of the differentiated teaching style, making it a fairly traditional, low-barrier method to adopt.

How to Engage a Classroom of Diverse Learners

March 02, 2017 by [Thomas Broderick](#)

For some people, the term 'diverse learners' conjures the image of students who are learning disabled. Yet for a teacher, this image is an outmoded mindset. Every student has strengths and weaknesses. Every student has her own way of learning. Most importantly, every student has her own way of best expressing what she has learned.

At first, [differentiating instruction](#)

[External link](#)

To engage every student seems like an impossible task. Yet there are small changes every teacher can make to help students become successful learners. In this article are advice and examples teachers of all subjects and grade levels can use.

Engage All Learning Styles in Every Lesson

Before discussing an example, let us review the three main learning styles.

- Auditory: Auditory learners learn best through listening and/or conversation.
- Visual: Auditory learners learn best through reading, writing, and/or visual aids.
- Kinesthetic: Kinesthetic learners learn best while moving and/or touching a stimulus related to the lesson.

Now let us explore a sample lesson that engages all three learning styles. The goal of this lesson is to teach students about what immigrants experienced arriving at Ellis Island.

1. The teacher provides a brief oral introduction to the day's lesson: students will learn about immigrants' Ellis Island experience by going through a simulation of Ellis Island. (The oral introduction engages auditory learners.)

2. Students receive an immigrant card and have a few minutes to learn their name, age, where they are from, if they are traveling alone or with a 'family member' in the class, and if they have any diseases. (Holding the card engages kinesthetic learners, while reading engages visual learners.)
3. The class goes into the hall where stations are set up. Other teachers (or parent volunteers) act as the customs agent and medical doctor. The agent asks the immigrants questions while the doctor checks the eyes, mouth, and hair for signs of disease. (The conversation engages auditory learners. The physical set up of the activity engages visual learners. Finally, the movement engages kinesthetic learners.)
4. Based on their replies and/or diseases, students are sent to medical quarantine or a waiting room for the boat ride to New York City. While sitting, they compose a brief essay/reflection on their experience. (Writing engages visual learners.)
5. Finally, the class returns to the classroom where there is a discussion about the activity. (Students sharing their reflections aloud reinforces the learning for auditory learners, while standing up to speak does the same for kinesthetic learners.)

In summary, as long as a lesson has a visual component, and auditory component, and a kinesthetic component, a teacher is likely to engage a greater percentage of her students than just by lecturing.

Scaffolding Instruction & Activities

All students, even high-achieving ones, have roadblocks between them and academic success. Sometimes these roadblocks are things which a teacher can do little about. (Ex: A student has a poor home life.) Yet when it comes to most students' roadblocks, a teacher has many tools to help convince students that academic success is possible.

One tool is [scaffolding](#)

[External link](#)

Instructions & activities for the whole class. In a nutshell, scaffolding is giving students just a little bit of hidden help to teach them both the material and academic skills. To go in-depth with scaffolding, let us discuss note taking.

Imagine a motivated student who knows nothing about taking good notes. She will likely write down everything the teacher says, but will not be able to determine the importance of what she has written down. Also, the notes will have no organization to help her study later.

One scaffolding solution is [guided notes](#)

[External link](#)

Guided notes are printouts provided by the teacher with cues as to how students should take notes. Here is an example the author used while teaching high school government.

This example does a number of things at once:

- Teaches students a new graphic organizer.
- Provides a small amount of information to show students how the graphic organizer works.
- Makes it easier for students to follow along with the lecture/presentation.

Guided notes are much more than graphic organizers. They can also include the following components:

- A warm-up that students complete once they sit at their desks.
- Space to complete in-class activities after the lecture has finished.
- An [‘exit slip](#)
- [External link](#)
- Activity on the last page that students can tear off and hand the teacher on their way out the door.

For any teacher who uses scaffolding, the end goal is to **take the scaffolding away**. Depending on students’ age and abilities, scaffolding can last anywhere from a few

weeks to a few months. No matter what, if a teacher commits herself to scaffolding, she will see engagement increase among the majority of her students.

Final Thoughts

The advice in this article is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to raising student engagement. Never forget that **more experienced teachers are a great resource, too!**

Thomas Broderick lives in Northern California. After teaching at an alternative high school for four years, he now works full-time as a freelance writer in the educational field.

Read More:

- [Diversity Through Literature](#)
- [Changing Classrooms with Flipped Learning](#)
- [Interactive Learning for Student Engagement and Success](#)
- [SPED Talks: 5 Strategies to Make Your Classroom More Inclusive from Nicole Eredics of The Inclusive Class](#)