

Focused Learning Topic:

Using Differentiated Instruction to Support Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Differentiated instruction and assessment are teaching strategies that I feel most passionate about. In my sixteenth year of teaching, I find that the process of differentiating instruction remains an effective and engaging way to present information to students while building student autonomy. Allison Gulamhussein states that most teaching is weak when we refer to strategies that enhance critical thinking skills and problem solving for students (Gulamhussein, 2013). Creating an authentic learning environment with maximum student autonomy aligns with differentiated instruction and assessment by creating multiple modalities of representation, expression, action and engagement. As educators create learning activities focused on essential standards, the application of differentiated instruction and assessment ensures that students remain engaged and go beyond the practice of rote memorization to apply their learning using critical thinking skills and inquiry based investigation to deepen understanding. As an educator, the obstacles to implementing differentiation in all parts of instruction and assessment can feel daunting, even with the acknowledgement that the practice provides numerous benefits to student learning and achievement. Differentiation can aid students in participating in meaning making and reasoning using inquiry based approaches, questioning strategies, and student generation of ideas or questions that enhance critical thinking skills (Gulamhussein, 2013).

References:

Gulamhussein, Allison. (2013, September). *Teaching for Teachers: Effective Professional Development in an Era of High Stakes*. The Center for Public Education. Retrieved from https://acuonline.instructure.com/courses/17530/pages/week-one-readings-and-resources?module_item_id=704179