

## **D-Diversity Artifact 2**

### **The importance of understanding learning styles and inclusion**

Ability grouping is generally divided into two camps: between-class and within-class ability grouping. Between-class grouping is a school's practice of placing students of similar academic ability together. An example of this is clearly seen in high schools; accelerated classes for the more studious and remedial for the low achiever. Within-class grouping refers to a teacher's practice of forming high, medium, and low groups within an individual class. Within-class regrouping for reading and mathematics at the elementary level is common practice.

At the elementary level within-class grouping does appear to have advantages in mathematics and reading. The high achievers level of instruction and pace can be increased, which will keep their attention and contribute to better classroom management. For low achievers, a slower pace, opportunity for review and more individual attention will better meet their needs. The greatest disadvantage at the elementary level is missed opportunities for lower achieving students to be exposed to a higher level of thinking and functioning of the more advanced student. A student's example of academic excellence can be a great motivator if used wisely. Here one must stop and realize that every student has something that they excel at.

Perhaps a student's academics are low, but their creativity or athletic ability is high. Opportunities must be created to acknowledge each student's strengths and give encouragement for their weaknesses. At a young age the maturity of students can greatly vary; mentally, emotionally, and physically. Due to this, it is very important not to label or pigeon hole a student at a particular level. It is the teacher's responsibility to always have high expectations, and not allow the student to have self-fulfilling low expectations. Beyond reading and mathematics it is

wise to have heterogeneous groups. Students are more positive about one another when they learn to work cooperatively, regardless of ability, ethnic background, or disabilities. Students who have cooperation skills are more able to appreciate the viewpoint of others. They have better social skills, asking and giving help. Have more positive expectations about working with others than students from competitive settings. Will learn to criticize ideas, not people, and looking for evidence before changing their mind.

Creating a win –win situation for every student involved is beneficial to the entire group. What a teacher wants for every student is a cheering section helping and urging each student to work to maximum capacity. When you have high, medium and low students in the same group with the high student cheering the low student (or vice versa) on to boost the group score so that all can get a better grade. A heterogeneous cooperative group encourages everyone, regardless of ability, background or disability to work at top capacity. It is only from working with a diversity of people that students will learn the skills needed in a world of diversity. These skills are learned when students are grouped heterogeneously. I believe there is a time and place for between-class grouping, particularly in high school. Within-class grouping at the elementary age in mathematics and reading is beneficial, as long as the teacher does not label and has high expectations. Outside of that, students benefit from the diversity of cooperative learning in a heterogonous group.

### **Gifted and Talented**

Students, who display characteristics such as superior memory, observational powers, curiosity, and the ability to learn school related subjects rather rapidly and accurately with minimal drill and repetition, need an education that is differentiated according to their needs.

These children's needs become apparent early to their teacher, and it is his or her responsibility to collaborate with other professionals and meet those needs. A gifted child will easily drift into passive learning and produce sloppy work once they have lost that spark of curiosity.

Students who are gifted must also cope with a number of problems that are unique to them. One problem is the expectation they have of themselves, and also the expectation implicitly or explicitly imposed by teachers, parents or peers. Gifted students frequently feel an inordinate amount of pressure to excel in achieve high grades; often in every area, a syndrome called perfectionism. This can have a stifling effect on a child's creativity and development.

The textbook identifies several social-emotional needs the differentiate students who are gifted from their peers that teachers need to be aware of:

- Understanding how they are different from and how they are similar to their peers
- Appreciate and valuing their own uniqueness as well as that of others
- Developing and valuing their high level of sensitivity
- Understanding and developing relationship skills
- Gaining a realistic understanding of their own abilities and talents
- Identifying ways of nurturing and developing their own abilities and talents
- Adequately distinguishing between the pursuit of excellence verse perfection
- Developing behaviors associated with negotiation and compromise

Students who are gifted need ongoing and access to many adult role models, their teacher needs to be one of these role models. Mentors who have the same interest and abilities are a real necessity for a gifted child, this cannot be overstated. Good adult role models will give a gifted child not only social interaction but a venue in which to explore and develop in ways that they

are not yet aware.

### **Inclusion & Multidisciplinary Collaboration in the Early Childhood and Elementary Years**

Inclusive education is the opportunity for students with disabilities to attend the same school they would attend if they were not disabled. Multidisciplinary collaboration is defined as professional from different disciplines, parents, and students working together to meet the needs of the student. Students with disabilities have very diverse needs, ranging from academic, communication, motor development, behavioral to life skills development. The earlier a student's special needs are met the better chance they have of reaching their highest potential.

National Association for the Education of Young Children states, "high quality early childhood programs do much more than help children learn numbers, shapes, and colors. Good programs help children learn how to learn: to question why and discover alternative answers; to get along with others; and to use their developing language, thinking, and motor skills." These professionals indicate that early childhood programs for students with disabilities must also take into account age-appropriate placements and functional skill learning.

Age-appropriate placement s emphasizes the child's chronological age over developmental level. A two year old child with developmental delays, is first and foremost a two year old and should be exposed to the same instructional opportunities and environment and a nondisabled peer at the same age. Functional and behavioral skills are more important for successful transitions from preschool to elementary programs than academic skills.

Early childhood programs focus on teaching skills that will improve a child's opportunity for living a more abundant life. Preparing the child to function successfully in family, school, and neighborhood environments benefits the entire community. Early childhood programs lessen the

impact of conditions that may deteriorate or become more severe without timely intervention, which may prevent children from developing other secondary disabling conditions as well. This requires a team effort of consistent family participation and professional collaboration.

Group settings that a young child may participate in are preschool, nursery school, child care, places of worship, community play grounds and community events, and home. Their active participation should be guided by developmentally and individualized appropriate curricula. Good curricula will be activity-based teaching rather than seat-based teaching. A child with disabilities most important advocate ideally is the parent. I heartily agree with the statement, “An informed and vigilant parent is a child’s best defense.”