Differentiation

TEACHING TO LEARNING STYLE DIFFERENCES

It is widely recognized that learners differ in the ways in which they engage in thinking and problem solving, as well as in processing and reacting to information. These individual learning styles require teachers to diversify instructional delivery and expand the ways in which learners can perform tasks. This Bulletin suggests four basic ways in which teachers can frame delivery of instruction to address different learning styles.

MASTERY LEARNERS
These learners like to remember facts and detailed information. In particular, they enjoy performing the following types of tasks:
- recalling
- listing
- sequencing
- naming
- observing
- categorizing
- following directions

PROBLEM SOLVERS
These learners like to reason and are adept at problem solving. Specifically,
- these learners enjoy performing the following types of tasks:
  - analyzing
  - deducing
  - evaluating
  - comparing and contrasting

INTER-INTRAPERSONAL LEARNERS
These learners like to interact with others or to reflect on what they are learning. In particular, they enjoy the following tasks:
- sharing
- relating interpersonally
- collaborating
- achieving self-awareness

CREATIVE LEARNERS
These learners like to make and invent in their learning. Specifically, they enjoy the following tasks:
- creating
- applying
- synthesizing
- imagining
SAMPLE CONTENT LESSONS
ADDRESSING LEARNING STYLES

Science: Volcanoes
Mastery: After watching a film about volcanoes, students list the parts of a volcano on a picture worksheet.
Problem Solving: Using a graphic organizer, students analyze the conditions necessary for a volcanic eruption to take place.
Intra-interpersonal: In groups, students share how they would react to a nearby imaginary volcanic eruption.
Creative: With a variety of materials, students create a replica of a volcano.

Social Studies: Bill of Rights
Mastery: After reading and discussing the Bill of Rights, students are given cards, each with an amendment listed on it, to read aloud. A scribe writes them out sequentially on a graphic organizer.
Problem Solving: In journals, students keep a log of the ten amendments, each with a brief summary.
Intra-interpersonal: In small groups, students collaborate in writing a paragraph explaining the characteristics of the Bill of Rights.
Creative: Students design a poster synthesizing their understanding of the Bill of Rights.

Mathematics: Geometric Figures
Mastery: After observing a picture of geometric figures, students recall the names of figures shown individually by the teacher.
Problem Solving: Students compare and contrast the surface areas of differently sized figures.
Intra-interpersonal: In small groups, then as a whole class, students share examples of different shapes with similar surface areas.
Creative: Students design three-dimensional examples of geometric figures.

Language Arts: Story Characters
Mastery: Students individually list the characteristics of a major character from a story.
Problem Solving: Using Venn diagrams, students compare and contrast story character qualities with their personal characteristics.
Intra-interpersonal: Students collaborate in small groups to list three qualities for each of three major characters from an oral storytelling.
Creative: Students design an advertising campaign to promote characters of a story.

DESIGNING CONTENT LESSONS
It is not necessary to design activities for every lesson in order to meet the needs of all of the learning styles discussed here. Such an effort would be time-consuming and cumbersome to deliver. However, regularly delivering lessons to accommodate a different learning style or providing activity options for students to match their learning style preferences would help to increase student comprehension and motivation.

There is a twofold purpose for differentiating delivery of instruction according to learning style: 1) to provide successful options for ELLs to match their individual learning style preference; and 2) to expand the range of performance assessment experiences for students as they learn content.

The above model is a practical, holistic procedure for addressing the broad range of learning styles represented in the classroom. Mastery, problem solving, intra/interpersonal, and creative expressions of content performance enable all learners to achieve success in their content learning.

SOURCES: