

Differentiation in the Literacy Block

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Our Agenda. . .

Goals:

- Explore ways to differentiate instruction using small groups and conferring
 - Think about the range of purposes for small groups and conferences
 - Observe one conference
 - Conduct your own conference!
 - Plan to incorporate more small groups and conferences in your own classroom
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Pause and ponder

- What makes an effective conference or small group?
 - What stands in the way of effective conferences and small groups?
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Let's think about differentiation

- ❑ Student's progress waxes and wanes throughout their K – 12 experience
 - ❑ You're currently serving a wide range of students – everyone is!
 - ❑ Conferences and Invitational Groups are powerful opportunities to assess specific needs and tailor instruction for each student
 - ❑ Well-led conferences and Invitational Groups help us eliminate instruction students don't need
 - ❑ We aren't really differentiating in "Level"-based groups
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Let's think about differentiation

- ❑ True differentiation takes “hard” data into account, but is based on observations and performance in the classroom.
 - ❑ Teachers need to collect and study observations and performance data – that study is best accomplished in teams
 - ❑ Standards provide guidance on the big goals, but observation and performance tasks show progress toward those goals and point the way to day to day teaching moves.
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Pause and ponder

- In what ways are you successfully differentiating for your students?
 - In what areas might you do more?
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Purposes for Conferences and Invitational Groups

- ❑ Assess application of a deep or surface structure skill or strategy
 - ❑ Monitor application of a skill or strategy
 - ❑ Revisit instruction for those who aren't applying
 - ❑ Set meaningful and ambitious goals
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Purposes for Conferences and Invitational Groups

- Surface structure skills assessment
 - Use oral reading (grapho-phonetic, lexical, syntactic)
 - Use silent reading, student self-report for all three surface structure systems
 - Deep structure strategy assessment
 - Listening comprehension (semantic, schematic, pragmatic)
 - Silent reading prior to the conference (all three)
 - Oral reading (all three)
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Invitational Groups – key points

- ❑ Small group meetings in which the teacher works with a group of invited children
 - ❑ Invitational Groups meet for a purpose and then disband
 - ❑ To introduce a skill others already apply i.e., surface structures, particularly the grapho-phonetic and syntactic
 - ❑ To provide more in-depth instruction for students who aren't yet applying a skill or strategy already taught, particularly the schematic
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Invitational Groups – key points

- ❑ The teacher may begin by thinking aloud in a short, common text
 - ❑ Students are asked to practice in the group
 - ❑ Invitational Groups are short and active!!
 - ❑ The other students are reading and/or writing while the teacher is meeting with an Invitational Group
 - ❑ Invitational groups are often used to extend and/or accelerate students who have already mastered a skill or strategy
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Conferences – key points

- ❑ One-on-one meetings with a child designed to assess present performance level and leave him/her with ambitious new goals
 - ❑ Vary in length based on previously set goals
 - ❑ Try for once a week, but don't worry too much if you don't!
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Conferring – key points

- Issues to consider
 - Don't hesitate to think aloud/model during the conference
 - Conferring related to a comprehension strategy can start in the second week of the study
 - Consider reading aloud and checking on listening comprehension – compare it to reading comprehension
 - Work toward deeper understanding by using terms like, “what else”, “say more”
 - Follow up is key – give kids a choice in how to share their thinking
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Setting goals in conferences and Invitational Groups

- Students should have at least two goals simultaneously in reading
 - One that is tailored to their needs
 - One that the whole class is working on, i.e., a strategy or genre
 - Differentiation tactics
 - Look over the list on pg. 5, discuss with a partner – which of these tactics are new? What would you like to try?
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Read Remembering All the Boys

- ❑ With a partner, take turns conferring.
 - ❑ Focus on the reader, not exclusively on the text
 - ❑ What are this reader's strengths?
What does he/she express as a need?
 - ❑ What are the goals for this reader going forward?
 - ❑ Switch roles.
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Demonstration Conference

- What do you notice about the child's present performance level? Is he/she able to articulate what he/she has been working on as a reader?
 - What kind of teaching occurs during the conference?
 - How does the goal align with this student's specific needs?
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Rethinking Reading Conferences

□ Debrief demonstration conferences

- What applies to your situation?
 - What surprised you?
 - What would you like to try?
 - What would you like to encourage your colleagues to try?
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Final Thoughts

- ❑ Good conferences are structured opportunities for needs-based learning.
 - ❑ They are very goal focused
 - ❑ They are very forward thinking – the child leaves with a goal
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Final Thoughts

- Speak to your colleagues about how you might take some of the information back to colleagues?
 - What is still unclear?
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