When I taught information literacy at Northumbria, I used to encourage the students to select their own topics for investigation. I stressed that the area had to be such that the assessment criteria could be satisfied. The onus was then on the students to explain how tackling their proposed topic would enable them to address each individual issue. As generating one's own topic is cognitively more demanding than choosing from a predetermined list, there were inevitably some students who struggled to select a subject so it paid to have a diverse list of half a dozen standbys at the ready!

Andrew Shenton

My preferred method of differentiation remains the A3 template designed around the Accelerated Learning cycle. I create three versions - upper, middle and lower - and give these to students accordingly. Without fail, students produce excellent work and are engaged throughout the lesson. I have just recently introduced it to my year 10 English class and had exactly the same results; improved engagement, improved quality of work and improved quantity of work. When I asked them why they had worked differently, they explained that they liked being able to see from the outset exactly what they were going to expected to complete during the lesson, and more importantly, that they felt the structure of the template supported them more effectively. My lower attaining students in particular said that they had the work easier to understand as it was more broken down for them.

Kat

Assessment title - Heroes and villains: Explore the ways sympathy for and/or dislike of a character is created by J.B. Priestley in An Inspector Calls.

MONKSEATON HIGH SCHOOL

Editorial

Differentiation remains a key priority, so this edition of the newsletter will focus exclusively on bringing together ideas from staff which have been successfully implemented with their classes. There are a wide range of differentiation strategies, but all of them share the core purpose of ensuring that students of all attainment levels are supported and challenged accordingly so that they are able to make progress.

Kat

I found a version of the Bloom's Taxonomy grid that includes some really useful information that can be used to differentiate. The levels of skills covered start with low level knowledge based objectives and move up to higher levels of thinking including synthesis and evaluation. For each area there is a selection of question openers provided. I have used these to set differentiated questions as connect and consolidate activities as well as using them to target questions during discussions. This has worked really well with all of my classes. *(copy on SharePoint in staff blog)*

Paula C

'Differentiation' is the process by which differences between pupils are accommodated so that all students have the best possible chance of learning.' (Training and Development Agency)

"The teacher, the student, the content – if you change one, you have to change them all." (Professor Richard Elmore, Harvard Graduate School of Education)

"Teachers proactively plan varied approaches to what students need to learn, how they will learn it, and/or how they will show what they have learned in order to increase the likelihood that each student will learn as much as he or she can, as efficiently as possible"

(Tomlinson, 2003).

A main focus of mine since coming back from the summer has been incorporating more literacy, in particular reading, into lessons. In the beginning I asked all students to read an article to summarise and define a key term but found this wasn't working as the weaker students hadn't read the whole article by the time the higher ability students were finished and becoming restless. A way to combat this has been to set lower ability students key questions that they must answer; the weakest of these students only need to underline key information that would help to answer the questions, whilst the others make bullet point notes. I have setting middle ability students to read and highlight key points in the article then answer key questions. However, higher ability students often read very quickly and finish before the others, therefore I have been asking them to annotate the article and infer what this could mean using previous knowledge and make notes on why this would be a relevant piece of information to help answer the question. This gives them the opportunity to use higher order thinking skills to build on their own knowledge and apply it, whilst using annotation and inference skills. I have found this is an effective way for students to finish the task at the same time, all have the opportunity to finish reading the article and pick out key points and actually doesn't take that much planning – winner!

Kim

One of my big foci since returning was to make G48 into a better learning environment for all students. A way in which I hope I have done this is by making the room much more appealing for both students and staff. As a department we have worked together to create some displays that students can use in lessons and create a focus for student's curiosity. In terms of differentiation I really wanted to do something which appealed to everyone in my GCSE class, so I created a number of exam question posters and colour coded them depending on the marks that were given for that question. In lessons students are directed to questions depending on the colour of the question, it's a great way to start or end a lesson and means that all students can engage in the task. The posters themselves have created curiosity just by being up as my tutor group have started to try and answer them as well.

Kerry

For my PM observation I focused on differentiation with Y12 BTEC. I started by setting a whole-class task (1/4 students were able to tackle this without any teacher input – group A, G&T). The rest of the class needed a short presentation, after which a further ¼ were able to start the activity (Group B, those with average ability). I then gathered the remaining ½ of the class around two tables (Group C, lower ability) and had them to identify each cost/revenue and we jointly attributed it to the correct financial document then the whole class were 'activated'. Shortly after this point Group A were finished and they then read an article with higher order questions attached to which they had to complete. I then walked around and marked the Group B students work whilst they were finishing and setting them individual targets. Then went through the work as a class and used higher order questioning dice to push students to come up with a ranging complexity of questions.

Leon

I've tried to differentiate with website references. Below is a copy of the email I sent to students for an ICT-based research lesson.

Leanne

Hi All,

Today's lesson is another INDEPENDENT SEARCH lesson, but this time using ICT sites.

Come to the classroom first but for the main part of the lesson we will be in ILA 215 (Maths).

Task:

1. **Create a 5Ws page on SPARTACUS:** Word or Publisher; max. 2 sides of A4 (NOT PowerPoint); use headings; key words in italics or undeline; bullet point for notes; add a picture; NO colour as I will print in B/W.
2. **Add a final answer to this question - Why has Spartacus become such a legendary figure?**

Sites to use in order of difficulty … cross-reference between then to get accurate details as possible - email document when complete.

1. http://rome.mrdonn.org/spartacus.html
2. http://www.ducksters.com/history/ancient_rome/spartacus.php
3. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/spartacus.shtml

With a lot of help from John Mitchell, 10X3 came up with a variety of Beatles songs to remind them of the names of various 2D shapes. Whilst the connections may be tenuous at best, it really helped them visualise the shape and remember its name:

- Heptagon - 8 days a week (there should be 7)
- Pentagon - Back in the USSR (the pentagon spied on the USSR)
- Isosceles - Help! (Note the SOS part of the isosceles word)
- Right angle - Drive my car (indicator – turning right)
- Equilateral - Come together (everybody is equal)
- Decagon - When I'm 64 ("Deck a Granny or Nana)

As a differentiation strategy, I have since allowed other classes to try and choose a song to help them remember a key piece of mathematical information. The songs and reasons they come up with are quite ridiculous at times, but if it helps them to remember a piece of maths then it's a step in the right direction. Music is a very individual taste; hence students get the chance to express their preference in the context of maths…or any subject for that matter.

Colin E