



Pathways for Parents



A Differentiation Publication

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Hats Off to You, President Lincoln!

Students across District 123 participated in the National Teach-In Day to honor the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birthday. Each school building participated in the nation-wide recitation of Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, and the elementary schools have each been recognized as Lincoln Legacy Schools.



From reading to writing, to math, and even P.E., the children of Oak Lawn-Hometown District 123 were actively engaged in this national celebration of Lincoln's life and legacy.

This issue of *Pathways* focuses on differentiation of the learning process.

What Can We Differentiate?

Along with the learning environment & content of what students learn, teachers also differentiate the processes by which students learn. The instructional process consists of the "activities designed to ensure that students use key skills to make sense out of essential ideas and information." (Tomlinson, 1999)

How Can We Differentiate?

One approach to differentiating the processes of learning is to take into consideration the various learning styles of the students in the classroom. There are three basic learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

Visual learners learn best through seeing. They may prefer to sit in the front of the class. They pay attention to the teacher's body language and facial expressions. They make pictures in their heads when they think about or read something. Visual learners like videos, diagrams, illustrated books, overhead transparencies and Smart Boards. In other words, if they can see it, they can learn it.

Auditory learners learn best by listening. These are the students who might not be looking at the teacher, but they are hanging onto every word. These students pay close attention to the teachers voice, pitch and tone in order to learn. Auditory learners also do well when given the opportunity to "talk" about their learning. They enjoy listening to stories, teaching others, hearing the flow of spoken language, writing and even giving speeches. Auditory learners think with words instead of pictures.

Kinesthetic learners learn best by "doing." These are the students who always want to be moving and touching. So, students who are kinesthetic like hands-on learning in which they get to actively engage in whatever is being taught. They enjoy working with manipulatives in math, using computers; constructing or building displays and activities that let them move around the classroom.

How do Learning Styles Affect the Processes by which Students Learn?

Knowing the learning profiles of students helps teachers plan their instruction. When planning a lesson or unit of study, the teacher considers all three learning styles so that when he or she is preparing to teach a concept or idea, instruction and related activities are developed to be inclusive of as many of these styles as possible.

Here are some examples:

For a math lesson on addition, a teacher would orally explain or think aloud as he/she models with the students (auditory). The teacher might use a display on an overhead transparency or Smart Board to go along with the modeling (visual). Then, students would use manipulatives in learning groups to practice the math skill (kinesthetic).

When completing a science experiment, the teacher would give an oral explanation and read directions aloud (auditory). The students would be provided with a lab sheet with directions of the steps in the experiment process (visual). The experiment would be conducted by the students using the lab equipment and materials needed (kinesthetic).

Aside from planning for instruction, there are many other ways teachers incorporate learning styles in the classroom:

- Audiotapes of stories and content for students
- Instructional posters and other visual images hanging on the classroom walls
- Centers and stations that allow students to move to places (other than their desks) to perform individual or cooperative group work
- Computers that provide opportunities for auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning

It is important to note that while we all have learning style strengths, we must also work to develop those styles of learning that are more challenging to us too!

Great Web Sites for Kids!

Check out this web site from the American Library Association.

ALA Great Web Sites for Kids

Students can use this web site to conduct research in social studies or science or learn about literature and math.

The web site lists in each category are organized according to grade level appropriateness (preK, elementary, and middle school). There are even sites for parents and caregivers. Each site on the list includes a brief description of the content available at the site.

