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2015

Secondary English Teachers' Perceptions of Differentiated Instruction for Limited English Proficient Students

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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2015

Abstract

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EdS, Lincoln Memorial University, 2005

MA, Old Dominion University, 1994

BA, Pembroke State University, 1990

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

In a suburban high school, an average of 50% of limited English proficient (LEP) students did not meet the required standard on the 9th grade literature and composition end of course test (EOCT), and an average of 46% of LEP students did not meet the required standard on the American literature and composition EOCT in the years 2008-2011. LEP students were expected to meet the same standards as their native-born peers in order to pass courses and ultimately graduate. Using the professional learning community (PLC) model and the concept of differentiated instruction, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how 7 regular education English teachers from 2 different schools described the ways they differentiated instruction for LEP students in their regular education classrooms. Data were collected by using open-ended questions, member checking, and reviewing documentary data they related to professional development on differentiation and then analyzed by transcribing and coding for emerging themes. Findings revealed that the participants wanted to have meaningful professional development where differentiated instruction is modeled for them in their content area with the time to implement and collaborate on the effectiveness of the lessons. Results of the project study will be shared at the local schools to encourage teachers to see the benefits of differentiated instruction with LEP students. This study has the potential for social change for English teachers, by revealing how to integrate differentiation, help students increase scores on required standardized tests, and thereby maximize their students' learning potential.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my parents for providing the opportunities in life that allowed me to make it to this point in my academic career.

I would like to thank my friends and colleagues, especially Dr. Wang, who kept offering advice and encouragement throughout this exceptionally long process.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Whaley and Dr. Penny for their guidance and expertise in helping me to achieve this goal.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

A Southern state has established new standards for each subject area to encourage a consistent framework of learning for students (Georgia Department of Education, 2013). The English language arts department in the school under study has implemented these new standards based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The English language arts department at this school needed to differentiate lessons that form the new curriculum as limited English proficient (LEP) students at the school were assessed by the same end of course tests (EOCTs) given to all students within the department based on these new standards.

LEP students have the ability to reach the same standards as other students. However, according to World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA, 2014), teachers and administrators need to be aware of how to differentiate instruction for LEP students in order to offer them the opportunity to master a rigorous and challenging curriculum. WIDA suggested that three factors support greater learning with students who have limited proficiency in English: getting to know students on a one-to-one basis, understanding what skills and assets these students can add to the classroom, and identifying their English language proficiency levels. Once teachers have this knowledge of their students, the teachers can scaffold and support the LEP students offering them equality in the learning process (WIDA, 2014). It is vital that teachers have this knowledge of their students as LEP students enter into U.S. schools with a wide scope of learning abilities anywhere from being highly educated to possibly not having had any

prior education at all (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2010). All of these factors must be considered when tailoring a curriculum to meet the needs and abilities of LEP students.

At this time, there are many acronyms used to describe students who did not learn English as their first language: English language learner (ELL), English learner (EL), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and LEP. For the purposes of this paper, the term LEP was used to describe students whose primary language is not English and who are limited in their current proficiency in the English language (LEP.gov., 2013). LEP is the designation of the federal Department of Education and is used on documents and policies referring to persons whose proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English, as a result of national origin, is such that it would deny or limit their meaningful access to programs and services provided by the department if language assistance were not provided (U.S. Department of Education Limited English Proficiency Plan, 2005, p. 2).

The goal of many school systems has been to implement a set of common standards for several different disciplines. A number of states are incorporating the CCSS into the curriculum having chosen to work together implementing these standards in the hope of creating "a focused and coherent set of standards that will cross all state boundaries in the United States and be a set of rigorous expectations that a student will be able to find at any school he or she attends" (Loertscher & Marcoux, 2010, p. 8). The state in which this study was conducted has also implemented similar standards. Eventually, assessments will be designed from these standards for students to indicate mastery with teacher evaluations tied to the results of these scores. With these

monumental changes, Goodnough (2010) asserted that teachers are expected to differentiate lessons in numerous ways in their classrooms in order to facilitate this new method of teaching and learning for a wide variety of students who make up every classroom across the country in the new millennium. Therefore, it is important that teachers understand what differentiated instruction is and how to infuse it into lessons and units to help students meet the required standards.

This project study contributed to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by examining how teachers define and use differentiation methods in their curriculum, lessons, and classrooms. While there is much information on differentiation, researchers have not offered examples and scenarios specific to the school setting and population affected for this study. The information about differentiation is often more general and cursory in nature and does not address how differentiation can be included appropriately in the new standards. In many ways, the new standards stifle differentiation with their lock-step approach to curriculum. Johnsen (2012) noted, "the Common Core needs to be differentiated and include open-ended opportunities for more complex thinking and real world problem solving" even within the realm of gifted students who may begin a course already having mastered what the assessments will be testing (p. 81). Differentiation for all students in the CCSS is a consideration as the standards recently revised by this state are based on the CCSS. By understanding how teachers see the different aspects and attributes of differentiated instruction as related to the new standards, educators can collaborate using data from assessments tied to their curriculum to enhance their teaching methods and strategies. As teachers begin to understand the

relationship between differentiated instruction and the standards, a higher percentage of LEP students may meet the standard on the mandatory assessments in the English department.

Definition of the Problem

In a suburban high school of approximately 1,200 students, records archived at the Georgia Department of Education (2012) for 3 consecutive school years from 2008-2011 indicated an average of 50% of the students in the LEP program did not meet the required standard on the 9th grade literature and composition EOCT. Additionally, an average of 46% of the students in the LEP program did not meet the required standard on the American literature and composition EOCT as reported for the same years. EOCTs comprise 15% or 20% of a student's total grade for the course; therefore, the scores can affect the overall grade average which determines if a student possibly passes or fails the class or earns the correct Carnegie units to graduate (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2014), the focus school had approximately 55% Hispanic students as the main ethnic group, 33% White students, 4% Asian students, and 8% of a number of other small ethnic groups. Seven-hundred and eleven were eligible for free lunch, and 97 were eligible for reduced-price lunch, although the focus school is not a Title I school. In the English department at this high school, 9th grade literature and composition and American literature and composition were the two classes that give an EOCT as the final exam where the scores were reported on the school report card (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). Because of the requirements initiated to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) according

to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) act, states currently have to demonstrate that they are designing and "implementing a single statewide state accountability system" (U.S Department of Education, 2002, pp. 21-22) to make AYP based on academic standards and assessments. These state-mandated tests results are used to assess schools for the purpose of determining a school's accountability rating which in turn can have an effect on teacher's evaluations (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2014).

The problem of new requirements of standards based on the CCSS affects LEP students and their learning. LEP students now scheduled in regular education classrooms are expected to meet the passing expectations of the standardized tests that comprise part of the school report card grade (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). These students may have mastered the language enough to graduate from the LEP program but may still have difficulty interpreting and understanding the specific content language on standardized tests. Many LEP students go home to parents and extended family members who may not be fluent in English. LEP students in regular education classes need to earn credit in the courses they take in order to receive a high school diploma (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). If LEP students decide to pursue a postsecondary education or join the workforce after graduation, they will need to have the same knowledge and skills as any other student.

Teachers are also affected as the assessments the students are required to master will directly reflect upon the teachers through their evaluations. According to the Georgia Department of Education Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES, 2013), these assessments count as a portion of the teacher's overall accountability score. If the

required standards are not met, eventually a teacher can be replaced. Furthermore, administrators can be affected as they observe and evaluate teachers to see how content, process, and product are delivered to the students. If an administrator is ineffective as a leader in helping teachers gain the necessary skills to aid students in passing these assessments, it is possible for the administrator to also be replaced. As greater numbers of LEP students are placed in regular education classrooms, administrators will need to be adept at recognizing differentiated instruction in a variety of ways implemented by the teachers they are evaluating. The problem is significant in that many teachers and administrators need to alter the way they have worked in the past in order to adapt to the new standards and evaluation process.

Currently, the district of the focus school has been proactive in starting the process for both teachers and administrators at several schools within the local setting to receive professional development on the topic of differentiated instruction. Teachers viewed videos and read articles on differentiated instruction to understand this strategy more clearly. Experts in the field such as Cash (2013) and Carbaugh (2013) have been invited to speak at some of the local high schools to offer guidance regarding differentiated instruction. According to documentary data, professional development has been explored in several different ways including videos, articles, and expert speakers. At the suburban high school being studied, faculty discussions during planning periods have taken place throughout the 2013-14 school year to share ideas and thoughts on the concept of differentiated instruction. LEP students have struggled for a number of years on state-mandated tests such as the required EOCTs (Georgia Department of Education,

2012). While the district offered to help administrators and teachers to become more knowledgeable regarding differentiated instruction and how to apply this concept in classrooms to help LEP students, consensus still needs to occur within a faculty as to which differentiated instruction strategies will be the most beneficial for LEP students.

Addressing the new concepts of differentiated instruction for LEP students is challenging for a number of reasons. Differentiated instruction is defined differently by many different people in the field of education. Goodnough (2009) conducted a study of preservice teachers asking how their knowledge of differentiated instruction would develop as a way to teach diversity. These teachers were also asked to identify challenges they experienced as they explored differentiated instruction. Goodnough noted that regular education teachers are expected to meet the needs of all students in their classroom including LEP students. Goodnough further added that preparing preservice teachers to teach in diverse settings is a challenge as there is little research in the area to offer any effective approaches and strategies. Because many teachers do not have the same background as their students, it can be difficult to understand all of the needs students may have. The preservice teachers in the study identified a number of challenges with differentiated instruction, such as the amount of time required to develop fully differentiated lesson plans that were equitable to all students in a classroom including LEP students and how to determine which lessons should be differentiated as it was not possible to differentiate each lesson every day. Finally, much of the evidence presented by Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) was anecdotal in nature with little quantifiable proof of how effective differentiated instruction is within a high school classroom setting for

students. These are challenges that require answers in order to be able to differentiate instruction for students in an effective manner and are being addressed presently in the school being used for this study.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

In this Southern suburban school, LEP students were not meeting the required state standard for the EOCTs in the English department and were at risk of failure to earn required credits for graduation (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). As reported by the Georgia Department of Education (2012), data over a 3-year-period indicated LEP students had anywhere from a 13% to 22% higher rate of not meeting the standard of passing the 9th grade literature and composition EOCT than the whole group taking this test. For the EOCT in American literature and composition, the Georgia Department of Education indicated an even greater discrepancy in scores with a range of 28% to 41% LEP students' higher rate of not meeting the standard as compared to the whole group tested for this particular assessment. This data indicated the LEP students need to have lessons differentiated in order for them to possibly achieve higher on required state-mandated tests.

Projected performance targets through 2017 for EOCTs are outlined at the Georgia Department of Education (2013) and are based on the 2011 EOCT's proficiency rates. In 9th grade literature, by 2017 the performance target for LEP students is 72.9%. For the American literature EOCT, the performance target for 2017 is 77.7%. These percentages of students expected to meet the standard on the EOCTs are significantly

higher than the number of LEP students who did meet the standard over the reported years from 2008-2011. Teachers are expected to meet these target percentages with LEP students.

Teachers were not only being evaluated on the EOCT scores, but also on 10 performance standards while walkthroughs and formative assessments were being conducted throughout the year. One of the 10 standards is specifically targeting differentiated instruction stating "the teacher challenges and supports each student's learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences" (Georgia Department of Education TKES, 2013, p. 27). Teachers need to be educated in the area of differentiated instruction and be provided professional development in order to cultivate this approach in their teaching. Teachers in the state of Georgia are evaluated on The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), which is made up "of three components which contribute to an overall Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM): Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), Surveys of Instructional Practice (student perception surveys), and Student Growth (SGP and SLO)" (Georgia Department of Education TKES, 2013, p. 4). Having a full understanding of differentiated instruction will be important not only for a teacher's evaluation score, but also for the scores that the teacher's students make on state-mandated testing.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

LEP students are often at a deficit when it comes to education specifically due to language. According to McElvain (2010), LEP students "are expected to simultaneously acquire English literacy and language skills in an English immersion setting" (p. 179).

This challenge can add to the difficulty of teachers being able to meet the content learning needs of non-LEP students as well as language needs of LEP students. If LEP students are not able to master the language in any course of study, their ability to achieve and meet the set standards in order to pass the course are affected. Without earning the required number of credits, LEP students cannot graduate.

Making sure that each student, especially LEP students, understands the difference between academic language and everyday language was a challenge many teachers faced. Westover (2012) noted that academic language includes any reading, writing, and speaking that a student uses to indicate proficiency of content area skills. Knowledge of academic language was important in order to transfer the knowledge of specific content and indicate mastery on assessments and assignments. Many LEP students can converse effectively in informal English with peers; however, when using academic language, they may not be as knowledgeable of the specific content vocabulary necessary to master the standards of that particular subject. Often teachers do not know at what level their LEP students are at in relation to native English speakers; therefore, it is imperative that students are given every opportunity to learn (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010).

One way to deliver instruction for LEP students is through differentiated instruction. Wang, Many, and Krumenaker (2008) stated that in using this method, the main content will be unchanged, but how a student is able to access it is differentiated. De Jesus (2012) mentioned many benefits of differentiated instruction for students: it meets the needs of diverse students, aids students with special needs, encourages

language learning for students who have English as their second language, and allows for creativity encouraging students to learn concepts in a higher mode of thought. Differentiation is a strategy that teachers can use to help reach all level of students within a classroom.

Definition of Terms

The project study included terms associated with differentiated instruction and LEP students and were defined to be clear within the context of their meaning.

Common core standards: "A clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help students succeed" (Rust, 2012, p. 32). A majority of states have adopted these standards to incorporate into their curriculum.

Curriculum compacting: A three-stage strategy first developed by Renzulli at the University of Connecticut: 1-the teacher identifies students who would benefit from this strategy and assess what the student knows on a particular subject; 2-the teacher pinpoints any skills or understanding in the subject the student did not indicate mastery and constructs a plan for the student to learn those concepts; 3-the teacher and student create an investigation for the student to work on while other students continue working on the general lesson (Tomlinson, 2001).

Differentiated content: Allows teachers the ability to adapt what is taught to students while adapting/modifying "how we give students access to what we want them to learn" (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 72). Note-taking organizers or curriculum compacting are two such ways to differentiate content.

Differentiated instruction: "An approach to teaching that advocates active planning for student differences in classrooms" (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 1). According to Tomlinson differentiated instruction allows teachers to serve students of all levels effectively in a typical classroom and meet the needs of all students through a variety of different strategies (as cited in Wu, 2013).

Differentiated process: Includes types of "activities designed to ensure that students use key skills to make sense out of essential ideas and information" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 11). Differentiating process can allow students to use their interests and talents to learn the topic of study.

Differentiated product: Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) defined differentiated product as "how students demonstrate what they have come to know, understand, and are able to do after an extended period of learning" (p. 15). End of unit products help students to show mastery of a specific unit of study.

English learner (EL): The NCLB (2001) act identifies students whose primary language is not English as limited English proficiency students or LEPs. The Georgia Department of Education, ESOL program "follows the lead of national researchers with expertise in the field of second language acquisition with the identification of these students as English learners or (ELs) since this term clearly delineates the English language acquisition process." (Georgia Department of Education ESOL/Title III Resource Guide, 2013, p. 5).

Formative assessments: Based upon walkthroughs, formative observations, professional interactions with teacher, and any other pertinent documentation to result in

a well-rounded overview of the teacher's performance throughout a school year (Georgia Department of Education TKES, 2013).

Infinite campus: A web-based student information system being used by the county where the study was conducted ("Infinite Campus About Us," 2014).

Limited English proficient (LEP): "Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can be limited English proficient, or 'LEP'" (LEP.gov., 2013, p. 1). This is the official term used in this paper to refer to students whose first language is not English.

Professional learning communities: "Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008, p. 14). Hord, Roussin, and Sommers (2010) stated that a PLC requires the faculty to learn together in order to focus on the needs of improving student learning.

Walkthroughs: Brief visits to a teacher's classroom throughout the year, numbering anywhere from one to four, in order to see a glimpse into the teacher's typical classroom practices and are used toward performance ratings (Georgia Department of Education TKES, 2013).

Significance

The results of the study may offer insight into the instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction teachers that can use effectively with LEP students in regular education classes. The study may also reveal how these strategies can increase test scores for LEP students and promote positive social change through increased achievement for

these students. The information gleaned may affect the local setting by helping members in the school being studied change teaching practices and increase standardized test scores that can boost the school's end-of-the-year performance rating. The following sections describe the significance of the study.

Differentiated Instruction and the Achievement Gap

Differentiation is a necessity in classrooms; however, many teachers see this approach differently (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Differentiated instruction is a large concept with many different avenues that can be pursued in the classroom. With so many school systems dealing with diverse populations including LEP students, differentiated instruction is needed to offer a quality education to each student. Levy (2008) explained that with the implementation of standards, all students are expected to achieve regardless of what prior background knowledge or level they join in with their peers. Levy further stated that all teachers at one time or another have differentiated instruction for their students; however, Levy argued teachers can be more effective with students if teachers are systematic when delivering these strategies. When teachers understand the needs of their students such as LEP students, teachers can tailor differentiated instruction to meet these specific needs.

Understanding what differentiated instruction is and how it can be successfully implemented in the classroom is important to all stakeholders from administrators, teachers, students, and the community. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) noted that educators are leaders who move "differentiation from an abstract idea on paper….to a fundamental way of life in the classroom" (p. 9). In order to do so, teachers will need to

be able to clearly define differentiation and understand its many components to ensure a positive outcome.

Research on this topic is vast and includes a variety of ways in which teachers can include differentiated instructional activities within classrooms (Tomlinson, 1999, 2001, 2003; Tomlinson & Imbeau 2010). This study was important in that it helped to define the idea of effective differentiated instruction in a local high school in order to help teachers work together to offer students including LEP students many alternative ways to learn the important concepts of the discipline being taught and decrease the achievement gap.

Positive Social Change

The results from this study can promote positive social change in several areas. Important data can be obtained about teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction for LEP students which can guide proper professional development for the teachers in the local school. Allowing the faculty and administration to be informed about differentiated instruction and how to use this concept in classrooms will empower the staff to meet the instructional needs of LEP students. The new standards could be understood and used in a manner that would be better suited for the LEP population being served by incorporating differentiated strategies in the lesson designed from the standards.

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Guiding/Research Questions

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At the study site, an average of 50% of LEP students were not meeting the expected pass rate on EOCTs in 9th grade literature and composition and American literature and composition classes (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). The test

scores for these assessments were in turn used to evaluate teachers and to calculate the

school report card score which can determine job security for teachers and administrators.

According to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (2014), as of December

15, 2010 "an educator with two unsatisfactory annual performance evaluations during the

previous 5-year validity cycle that have not been satisfactorily remediated by the

employing school system shall not be entitled to a renewable certificate in any field" (p.

4). Teachers' evaluation scores will eventually be used to determine renewal of teaching

certificates in the state. One of the standards required for each teacher in the state is

proficiency in differentiating instruction for students including LEP students (Georgia

Department of Education TKES, 2013).

The following overarching research question guided this study:

How do regular education teachers in the English departments in two suburban

high schools describe the ways they differentiate instruction for LEP students

within their classrooms?

Many studies have been conducted regarding LEP students and their lower

achievement rates on standardized tests. Differentiated instruction has also been explored

as a possible strategy to help LEP students close the achievement gap with non-LEP

students. With the current school population becoming more and more diverse, with

many new students not being born to native English speakers, LEP students are at a

greater risk of academic failure (Slama, 2012). According to Good, Masewicz, and Vogel

(2010), in spite of good intentions, the achievement gap between LEP students and their

peers continues to widen and has little chance of being solved if teachers continue to

work in isolation. A clear problem exists as evidenced by student assessment data, "yet there is a lack of consensus about what causes the achievement gap and what solutions might close it" (Good et al., 2010, p. 322). Researchers have not elaborated on the best way for individual districts to institute new strategies to help LEP students. Studies need to be more individualized for specific districts in order to find best practices that will work for teachers and students to help LEP students increase meeting the standards on required standardized tests.

Review of the Literature and Conceptual Framework

In this qualitative case study, I used a theoretical base and conceptual framework grounded on the professional learning community (PLC) model by DuFour et al. (2008) and the concept of differentiated instruction by Tomlinson (2001). PLCs help teachers to work together and focus on issues unique to their schools allowing them to solve issues that their school may be facing (Dufour et al., 2008). One way lower achieving LEP students can be helped is through the strategy of differentiation. Differentiated instruction allows teachers to meet the needs of all types of learners in their classrooms (Tomlinson, 1999). However, teachers need to have the time to collaborate, such as in a PLC setting, in order to determine the best strategies to implement for their specific populations.

Saturation for this literature review has been reached by researching a variety of terms including *differentiated instruction, process, content, product, diversity, differentiation, English learner, El, English language learner, ELL, limited English proficient, LEP, English for speakers of other languages, ESL/ESOL, learning levels, collaboration, professional development, achievement,* and *professional learning*

communities. Online databases were searched through the Walden University Library including Ebscohost, Education Research Complete, Google Scholar, and Proquest. Experts in the areas of differentiated instruction such as Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) were explored. Information on PLCs by DuFour et al. (2008), Huffman and Hipp (2003), and Hord (2004) were examined. Articles were retrieved from the databases on relevant topics and any related books to the topic of study were investigated as well.

Collaboration

Collaboration is important among a faculty in order for teachers to learn from one another and grow professionally. PLCs help to facilitate a collaborative atmosphere that erases the isolated environment many teachers have felt at one time during their careers. To foster a collaborative environment, Lee (2010) mentioned the following principles need to be present to encourage growth and successful professional development: create community, establish a shared vision, capitalize on similarities and differences, build on leadership/expertise, model collaborative relationships, maintain professional networks, and link collaboration with student learning. Similar to the characteristics of a PLC, collaboration inherently requires these principles in order to promote a positive atmosphere where teachers can work together sharing ideas to encourage better teaching and student achievement.

As teachers continue to witness an increasingly diverse student population, collaboration is becoming a necessity in addressing the needs of LEP students. All educators are required to work together if they wish to develop methods and strategies to work with students of diversity. Teachers of all experience levels are necessary when

building an atmosphere that would allow both the teachers and students to benefit from

this supportive environment. However, in order to do this, teachers must be willing to ask

questions about learning goals and instructional practices (Nelson, Deuel, Slavit, &

Kennedy, 2010). Through the process of inquiry and developing questions, teachers can

achieve true collaboration. Often teachers remain congenial versus collegial which

hinders reflective, meaningful dialogue (Nelson et al., 2010). If colleagues are not

challenged to think, deeper discussions may not emerge and the collaborative process

will not be as productive for either teachers or students.

Differentiated Instruction

The concept of differentiated instruction is complicated and has many different

facets to explore. Diversity in the classroom is becoming more prevalent as the 21st

century moves along and with this diversity, the need for teachers to address student

differences in learning is becoming more necessary (Tomlinson, Brimijoin, & Navaez,

2008). Differentiated instruction can help a wide range of students including LEP

students by designing and adapting learning experiences to meet individual needs with

the goal of promoting success (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2009). As faculty come together

and create a PLC, they can begin to explore any number of ways in which to improve

their teaching practices. One pedagogical concept to consider is differentiated instruction.

Teachers face many challenges each year including having a diverse group of students to

educate while trying to create a curriculum that will reach everyone in their classes (De

Jesus, 2012). De Jesus (2012) defined differentiation as "the practice of modifying and

adapting, materials, content, student projects and products, and assessment to meet the

learning needs of students" (p. 6). Incorporating differentiated instruction offers several

advantages including meeting the needs of diverse students, accommodating students

with disabilities, facilitating language learning for students from different cultures, and

promoting creativity to help students grasp concepts at higher levels of critical thinking

(De Jesus, 2012). All of these benefits noted from the incorporation of differentiated

instruction are useful to students of any learning range, but are especially impactful for

fragile learners who need extra help and encouragement as they forge their path to

mastery of any given concept be studied.

Having a faculty work together is also an important aspect of differentiated

instruction. In one case study, Weber, Johnson, and Tripp (2013) examined a school's

journey toward implementing differentiated instruction in the teachers' classrooms in

order to reach all learners including gifted students to those who struggle the most with

learning. In 2009, a group was formed to determine the greatest needs of the school with

differentiated instruction being one of the areas to improve. The school consulted with an

expert to help investigate this philosophy, and teachers formed communities of learning

where true collaboration took place discussing all aspects of differentiation (Weber et al.,

2013). To initiate the study, teachers filled out a survey on their knowledge of

differentiated instruction to determine what they knew and what misconceptions they

may have had. Because it appeared many teachers were confused as to exactly what

differentiated instruction was, grade level meetings were set and literature on

differentiated instruction was provided for discussion. Teachers also attended larger

group workshops to continue discussing various aspects of differentiated instruction and

finally had classroom visits where suggestions were offered as to how to meet the students of all learning levels (Weber et al., 2013). While the process takes a long time to fully see results, working together and providing opportunities for thoughtful inquiry allows educators to grow in their knowledge of different teaching methods while seeing how others might interpret the same information. In trying to change any school's culture, the effort involves "many individuals, extends over time, and requires attention to every component of the school day and curriculum" (Beecher & Sweeny, 2008, p. 506). Beecher and Sweeny (2008) further offered that differentiation allows teachers to move away from planning generic lessons for an entire class to considering the needs of smaller groups within their classrooms. Together, a faculty can come to consensus to see what best practices will work for them.

Differentiating content, process, and product. Differentiation has several key components. When researchers such as Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) discussed differentiated instruction, they mentioned three curricular elements: content, process, and product. Content is what students are expected to master. Differentiating content deals specifically with what methods are used to help students gain key knowledge. A number of strategies can be used to differentiate content that take into consideration a student's readiness level, interests, or learning profile such as using a learning contract, note-taking organizers, mini-lessons, and curriculum compacting. These strategies allow teachers to address a number of students at various learning stages to maximize the content being delivered.

Differentiated process includes sense-making activities to aid students in learning the content (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Literature circles, learning centers, role playing, and graphic organizers are just a few strategies that educators can employ to meet students at their readiness level in order for them to master the necessary content. Classrooms with a wide spectrum of learners can benefit by incorporating these strategies into unit plans. Differentiating process allows students to demonstrate mastery of content in a way that capitalizes on their individual learning needs.

To indicate what has been learned over an extended period of time through the content and process, students should be able to produce a product that illustrates this knowledge (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). The product is significant in allowing students to show an extension of the knowledge they now have from the unit of study. The product can take on any number of possibilities, such as developing a web page, performing a puppet show, conducting a debate, holding a press conference, or developing an exhibit. Tomlinson (1999) also suggested that it is important to convey clear expectations of what is expected in the final product while providing scaffolding and one or more modes of expression to redeliver the information. Differentiating product is important in that it allows students a way to indicate mastery of the necessary content studied.

Differentiating instruction for LEP students. According to Thomas and Collier (2002), it is estimated that LEP students will account for 40% of the total number of students in 2030 as cited by Honigsfeld (2009). With classrooms becoming more diverse each year, teachers have to be aware of how differentiated instruction can work for all

students including LEP students. A number of ways exist to incorporate this approach

into teaching that can help educators reach students of all diversity levels.

Brooks and Thurston (2010) reported LEP students often have a higher drop-out

rate and much more difficulty in learning the necessary material to meet the standards set

by many states. According to the study they conducted, it was found overall that LEP

students had a negative probability of learning language while in a whole group setting,

but these same students had a much more positive probability of learning language when

in smaller groups or one-to-one settings (Brooks & Thurston, 2010). Differentiated

instruction can be individualized for smaller groups within the classroom with the teacher

offering alternative activities to cover the main ideas of a lesson (Baecher, et al., 2012).

This research suggests that teachers can work together during common planning or with

other faculty and experts to develop in greater depth much more meaningful lessons that

incorporate differentiated instruction with the intent of reaching each child to maximize

learning. Teachers may have many questions about differentiated instruction and through

collaboration they can find answers that will be beneficial to them as well as their

students.

Challenges LEP students face in regular education classrooms. Robb (2013)

mentioned in any given classroom there can be a wide level of reading abilities which can

present a problem for both teachers and students. LEP students are particularly vulnerable

as being able to read on grade level is important not only in their English courses, but

also in their other courses across the curriculum. A 7th grade teacher revealed in one

classroom reading levels ranged from 3rd grade to 12th grade. With an emphasis on

reading promoted by the CCSS being implemented in many areas, Robb wanted to point out how teachers can be successful by continuing to infuse their classes with quality differentiated lessons that they have always used while incorporating the new CCSS. Three key principles Robb mentioned in regard to differentiating instruction in reading are learners reading levels are diverse, formative assessments are needed to determine students' reading levels in order to design lessons and scaffolding, and tiered instruction helps students' progress. One way to reach LEP students is to alter assignments incorporating the reading by citing textual evidence. Robb suggested, for example, if a class were asked to write an analytical essay on a selection using textual evidence to prove the main claim in the paper, one way to help those who struggle like LEP students with the reading and writing is to have them write an analytical paragraph on the same topic. By doing this, the assignment is not as daunting to a struggling student, and the teacher has more time to continue to scaffold the assignment and offer a better learning experience for the students (Robb, 2013). Teaching LEP students to read proactively is necessary for their success not only in English classes but all courses throughout the curriculum.

Another challenge LEP students face is the time it takes to be able to understand academic language within a classroom. Often these students are still learning English, so understanding specific jargon that accompanies a particular class of study can be difficult. According to a study conducted by Slama (2012), LEP students frequently start high school knowing basic English while just beginning to develop academic language. However, even though LEP students revealed initial growth in the first year, their

achievement slowed down and generally took until the third year to be minimally

proficient with academic language to then participate in mainstream classes (Slama,

2012). Because these students start behind many of their peers and have to do twice the

work not only learning English but content knowledge, their academic career can be grim

and hinder them from having a variety of postsecondary options such as entering college

or the work force.

Professional Development

Professional development is a strategy that can be used to help teachers learn

about implementing differentiated instruction in classrooms to help their LEP students.

Albrecht and Sehlaoui (2009) noted the LEP student population has grown from the years

of 1979 to 2003 an astounding 169% and by 2015 will account for 1/3 of the student

population. Recognizing the need for professional development for educators of LEP

students in their local area, Albrecht and Sehlaoui discussed the five-year professional

development grant designed to meet the needs of educators serving LEP students. The

collaborative professional development teaching model was used to help teachers become

proficient working with diverse populations, and it was reported that 100% of the

selected candidates in the program were meeting high standards determined by the

coursework assessment data studied. The teachers continued to collaborate at their school

but also through online networking opportunities (Albrecht & Sehlaoui, 2009). This

professional development has been successful in offering current best practices for

teaching LEP students and incorporating research-based instructional strategies and

professional development practices.

According to Vogt (2009), newer teachers of LEP students need professional development to offer aid in learning to work with diverse learners. Teachers need to be equipped to meet the demands of students whose first language is not English. While transitioning from traditional methods of teaching to those that include differentiated instruction, offering professional development choices are crucial to aid in the success of teacher's willingness to participate and learn this new concept (Hewitt & Weckstein, 2012). By allowing teachers to choose different options to develop their understandings of differentiated instruction, differentiation is being modeled for educators as they can attend a variety of workshops both inside and outside their own classroom (Hewitt & Weckstein, 2012). Initially, teachers were asked to complete a self-assessment using a differentiation rubric which provided guidance in identifying at which state they felt accomplished in areas of differentiation. Teachers also determined goals they wish to work toward and attend PLCs which fit their interests and needs (Hewitt & Weckstein, 2012). Professional development is a process that cannot be done quickly; rather, it needs to be thoughtfully planned out and executed fully in order to ensure participants are engaged and proactively learning.

Professional Learning Communities

PLCs are an invaluable resource for any faculty. By creating an atmosphere that includes a shared mission, vision, and goals, teachers and administration can work together to create an environment that will focus on the students as individuals (DuFour et al., 2008; Hord, 2004; Huffman & Hipp, 2003). When students are offered differentiated learning, they have a better opportunity to succeed. This allows teachers to

meet the learning needs of LEP students while creating a climate of trust within the faculty.

According to Huffman and Hipp (2003), PLCs have several common characteristics that make the model successful: supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application of learning, supportive conditions, and shared practice. To begin with, any PLC must have an administration that is willing to work with the faculty by learning and investigating in order to work towards better achievement for students. This supportive and shared leadership helped to forge a relationship between an administration and faculty that allows trust to be solidified. The next characteristic needed is shared values and vision. Having common goals helps individual teachers to focus on what the faculty has agreed to work on while catering to the specific needs of his/her classroom. DuFour et al. (2008) mentioned that the importance of shared values and a shared vision helps to "create an agenda for action" (p. 144). When the vision is clear, it is more likely to be followed and explored than if people do not see where they are to go or what they are to accomplish. A tertiary element was through collective learning; this allowed the school staff to have time to reflect on what they have accomplished and to see if the expectations have been met. This was a great opportunity for teachers to see how to move forward or perhaps review and reset goals. None of these factors will work, however, unless supportive conditions were present. Meeting at convenient times and in close proximity helped teachers to facilitate a supportive and collaborative atmosphere. Attention to these small details can allow a group to thrive and achieve the goals that have been set. Finally, the staff must have a

shared practice. Teachers should be empowered to collaborate and observe one another with the intent of improving best practices for all. Visiting other classrooms to see how colleagues approach similar situations can only serve to help educators see a variety of lessons being taught that they can then tailor to bring back into their own classrooms. Through all of these different aspects of a PLC, teachers and administrators can use this "structure for schools to continuously improve by building staff capacity for learning and change" (Hord, 2004, p. 14). Only through continual reflection and vision can positive change be implemented and successful student achievement mastered.

Implications

The school district in which this study was conducted has witnessed an increase of over 72% in the Hispanic population over the last decade based on the 2000 and 2010 census reports (U. S. Census Bureau, 2012). Because of this, many LEP students were behind in overall student achievement and standardized test scores anywhere from more than 10% on the 9th grade literature and composition EOCT and more than 20% on the American literature and composition EOCT due to the possible lack of English skills in their own homes as well as at what point they began to learn English.

The purpose of this project study was to bring to light different ways in which English teachers in this district incorporate differentiated instruction in their regular education classrooms to determine what methods may be the most effective in helping LEP students. Through professional development on the topic of differentiated instruction, this project study hopefully will uncover the best practices of differentiated instruction such as flexible grouping, tiered activities, extended time, and different modes

of teaching (Wang et al., 2008) and illustrate instructional strategies teachers can implement in their classrooms in order to increase student achievement for LEP students. The results of this study will be shared with school administrators and appropriate members at the county office.

Summary

LEP students as a whole were not meeting the standard on the EOCT in 9th grade literature and composition and American literature and composition courses. With increased importance being placed on standardized tests especially in determining a school's successes or failures, LEP students need to be provided with the necessary skills in order to be successful and meet the required passing standard. Unfortunately, LEP students face many challenges such as lower reading levels and an inadequate knowledge of academic language needed for high school level courses, but also for after graduation when attending college or joining the work force. The research question guiding this study was how do regular education teachers in the English departments in two suburban high schools describe the ways they differentiate instruction for LEP students within their classrooms. With student achievement being a major part of the school report card at the schools to be studied, investigating how differentiated instruction can be effectively achieved in the school setting will be most helpful. LEP students made up approximately 10% of the total student populations at the two schools in this school district studied, so having an understanding of differentiated instruction will be beneficial to teachers, administrators, and most of all, students (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). Differentiated instruction may offer strategies for teachers to implement that could be

particularly helpful in meeting the special needs of LEP students regardless of readiness level in ELA courses.

The next section will detail the methodology included for this qualitative case study through guided interviews of teachers at the two schools to be studied. The research design will be outlined and justified in addition to explaining why other designs were not appropriate to use. Finally, an in-depth explanation of the findings will be presented.

Sections 3 and 4 will explore the proposed project and reflection of this study. In section 3, the reader will be provided with a detailed description of the project. The description will provide the reader with an explanation as to why this project is necessary to the field of education in the two schools being studied within this local district. Section 4 will conclude with a reflection of the study and proposed project while adding recommendations for future research that culminated from the findings of the study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

A qualitative case study research design was implemented in this project study inquiry guided by the following research question: How do regular education teachers in the English departments in two suburban high schools describe the ways they differentiate instruction for LEP students within their classrooms? Yin (2009) noted several criteria of a case study: the research question is in the form of *how*, no control of behavioral events is needed, and the study focuses on current events. All three of these criteria were met within this study. Additionally, Stake (1995) described a case study as "the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). Having English teachers reflect on differentiated instruction in relation to their LEP students may illuminate the many layers of this strategy to help them come to a consensus as to what would constitute best practices.

As participants were interviewed and the transcripts were coded, complexities of the research question emerged to offer more specific clarification. Participants were able to member check their transcript and respond to follow-up questions that stemmed from the original interview. Documentary data were also collected from a professional development seminar on differentiated instruction that teachers at one of the high schools attended indicating the activities and topics explored. The data were triangulated by analyzing the interviews, exploring documents regarding professional development on differentiated instruction, member checking interviews for clarification with the participants, and comparing interviews from teachers at one school to the teachers at the

other school. Creswell (2009) noted that the analysis of public documents such as records and archival material is a part of the data collection in a qualitative study. This additional information allowed for a broader view of the gathered data. Creswell stated, "qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Included in this process were emerging questions and procedures, collecting of data in the participants' settings, materializing themes upon data analysis, and the interpreting of meanings that came from the data collected (Creswell, 2009). According to Merriam (2002), "understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" (p. 3). Through this process, an understanding of teachers' experiences regarding differentiated instruction was explored. For this qualitative study, a case study design was used as I gathered data through one-on-one interviews with each of the participants.

A bounded system was explored as a specific group of teachers was asked to participate in interviews while a time and place was determined as convenient to the teachers who agreed to take part in the study (Creswell, 2007). Because differentiated instruction has such diversity in the way in which teachers interpret this concept, interviewing each participant was the most effective way to gather information regarding how each person defined differentiated instruction and saw its role within the classroom or school setting. This type of study was most useful when speaking with teachers individually about their perceptions and expectations regarding differentiated instruction

because it helped to shed light on how they saw differentiated instruction specifically beneficial for their LEP students.

Within the district studied, there are several schools with a high percentage of LEP students with English as their second language who would possibly benefit from differentiated instruction being properly implemented in their classrooms. In order to avoid bias, two sister schools were chosen within the same district for the study that had the next highest LEP populations. Conducting the study at two sister schools allowed for a fresh perspective on this topic away from my colleagues, students, and school. Differentiated instruction has become a topic of interest in the current educational environment because of the diversity that is being seen more in classrooms across the U.S. By exploring this approach and gaining a better understanding of what effective differentiated instruction for LEP students is, members of this district will benefit by understanding and having the ability to implement these strategies to help increase standardized test scores that make up part of the annual evaluation the school is measured.

This research design was ultimately chosen because of its effectiveness of gathering the data needed for the study. Through one-on-one interviews, individual responses to the research and interview questions were explored. Yin (2011) explained that qualitative research allows the researcher to study "the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions" (p. 8). Speaking individually to each teacher in the English department at two suburban high schools allowed for specific answers to be given and explored. Teachers were in their own environment speaking about their perceptions of

differentiated instruction and how they see it as related to their LEP students. In exploring this topic, patterns emerged to reveal how differentiation can make a difference with LEP students that may help them be more successful on standardized tests by meeting or exceeding the standards set.

While a narrative study shares similar methods, it is more story-based telling anecdotal information of individual experiences and includes a more in-depth interview while this case study was shorter focusing on perceptions and understanding of the research questions to be explored (Creswell, 2007). Teachers were not only asked to reflect on how they differentiated instruction for their LEP students, but also what they suggested should be done to improve the success of these students. In addition, data collection for this case study involved multiple sources such as interviews, documentary data, member checking with follow-up questions, and comparing one school's responses to the other. The qualitative case study was the best choice in order to gain a depth of answers to the questions that were posed to the participants supporting the study of their perceptions of differentiated instruction for LEP students in their own classrooms and how it may help in raising scores on EOCTs to meet or exceed the standards put in place by the state.

Participants

Selection of Participants

Initially, one administrator at each of two schools was contacted via e-mail to set up a meeting to explain the study and project to be conducted. All administrators and teachers in this county have e-mail addresses listed on public websites for their individual

schools, so pertinent people for this study were accessible to be contacted. When the administrators agreed to have members of their faculty participate, teachers from each English department were asked to join the study to be interviewed who met the necessary criteria for the study. Purposeful sampling was used in this study as selected teachers in each English department at two different schools were located in the same suburban area as my school with similar populations (Creswell, 2007). The participants were intentionally selected from the English departments at two schools as the demographics most matched my school in population and size. A total of seven participants, five from one school and two from the other school, accepted the invitation to be interviewed for the study. Creswell (2007) noted that the size of the sample is an important consideration in a qualitative study, and for a case study, four or five participants can provide enough detail to distinguish themes and guide cross-case theme analysis. Creswell further added that "one general guideline in qualitative research is not only to study a few sites or individuals but also to collect extensive detail about each site or individual studied" (p. 126). Hatch (2002) concurred that one important factor in a qualitative study is the depth of the information garnered from each participant.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

An institutional review board (IRB) application was submitted for approval of this case study. An application was also submitted to the district where the case study was conducted. Gaining access to the participants started with a person at the central office to be contacted and given pertinent information regarding this study. Once the study was approved by the IRB, approval # 07-01-14-0049817, and the central office sent a letter of

cooperation from the community (See Appendix D), contact was made of the administrators by e-mail. Then a meeting was set that explained the study and possible project. Once the administrators had been briefed, they provided a list of teachers who met the criteria for the study. The teachers needed to be from the English department and teach LEP students in regular education courses. The first administrator provided seven names of whom five agreed to participate in the study. The second administrator mentioned six teachers who met the necessary criteria, and two agreed to be interviewed.

Initially teachers at each school were contacted by e-mail where the nature of the study was clearly outlined to each participant (See Appendix C); the expectations were reviewed; a letter of informed consent (See Appendix C) was sent to be signed by the participants; once thy agreed to participate, convenient interview times were agreed upon to take place at each teacher's school. Confidentiality measures were outlined regarding how this information would be protected (See Appendix E). Next, a certificate of completion of the Protection Human Research Participants' course, Certification Number: 1268151, was provided to each participant.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) stated that participants are more apt to speak if the interviewer is open about the nature of the study and establishes rapport with them. An overview of the Walden program, the essential reason for the study, and the interest in the topic were shared with participants. The participants in turn were able to share their professional background information which helped to establish a relaxed atmosphere. Hatch (2002) stated that "participants are the ultimate gamekeepers [as] they determine whether and to what extent the researcher will have access to the information desired" (p.

51). Confidentiality was established by assigning a number to each participant based on the order in which invitations were accepted to be a part of this study, and I was the only one viewing the collected data. When the findings were written, each participant was then given a pseudonym to help with the narrative fluency and further establish confidentiality.

Data Collection

Data Collection Procedures

Once approval was granted from the Walden University IRB and the central office within the local county to conduct this study, potential participants were contacted via e-mail at the two local schools. When the participants agreed to be part of the study, interviews were scheduled at a convenient time at their home school to encourage privacy as well as comfort while being in their own settings. For this qualitative case study, I conducted 30-45 minute one-on-one interviews in a semi-structured environment (Creswell, 2009; Hatch, 2002). A semi-structured environment allowed for specific questions to be asked of each participant (See Appendix B) but also follow-up probes that arose during the interview based on initial responses (Hatch, 2002). Asking additional questions, or follow-up probes, allowed me to understand the participant's experiences and reconstructed events that may not have been initially known or revealed with the original questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Participants had the opportunity to clarify any answers that may have been unclear or misinterpreted in a member checking interview. When participants were provided a transcript to member check for accuracy, a few additional questions were

asked to expand upon original answers given in the interview to help offer more detail or clarification if needed. In addition, data were collected by exploring documentary data related to professional development on differentiated instruction teachers at one of the participating high schools had completed. Hatch (2002) explained that using data in isolation can offer an untruthful view of the material while using multiple sources of data allow researchers to present a fluency in the gathered information.

Interviews

To develop sharp insight into the data, I recorded and transcribed the interviews. These recordings and transcripts will be saved for five years and placed in a locked filing cabinet in order to protect the participants. This type of data collection was appropriate for this study because interviews helped to build "an in-depth picture of the case" (Creswell, 2007, p. 132). Seven teachers, five from one school and two from another school, were interviewed to inform the research question how do regular education teachers in the English departments in two suburban high schools describe the ways they differentiate instruction for LEP students within their classrooms. Interviewing teachers from two local schools allowed for different points-of-view from one school to the other to be explored depending on the knowledge and professional development one school may have had over another. Rubin and Rubin (2005) explained the researcher needs to pursue answers to questions that go beyond initial responses in order to add "layers of meaning, different angles on the subject, and understanding" (p. 131). It was in the follow-up questions in the interviews that additional, insightful answers were gathered.

Member Checking

Participants from both schools were able to check their information for accuracy by reviewing their interview transcript and answering follow-up questions based on statements made in the interview. The follow-up questions helped to clarify further the emerging themes from the original interviews. Allowing all participants who were interviewed to check their final report helped in determining the accuracy of the data collected. According to Hatch (2002), "it is common for final formal interviews to become an opportunity for member checking" (p. 101) where participants were allowed to react to the initial findings gleaned from the researcher. When the study was completed, participants were provided, upon request, with a one to two page summary of the overall results.

Member checking also allowed participants to add or clarify meaning to the questions and answers from the interviews. This process helped to give participants an opportunity "to react to tentative findings generated by the researcher" (Hatch, 2002, p. 101). As the data unfolded, patterns of both regularities as well as irregularities were sought. As themes emerged, categories were created allowing information to be sorted.

Documentary Data

Documents from professional development on differentiated instruction that teachers attended at one of the high schools were used in conjunction with interviews. A sample from the documentary data of one of the techniques mentioned in some of the interviews on learner types and what these students need was included (See Appendix F). The documents were helpful in exploring what knowledge the teachers had regarding

differentiated instruction that they shared in the interview process. These data also provided understanding as to what strategies they were using at their school and in their classrooms. Yin (2009) noted collecting multiple sources of data is imperative to conducting a case study. These documentary data helped to make clear what some of the teachers were referring to in their interviews when they mentioned grouping students by personality types or learning styles.

The Role of the Researcher

Finally, the role of the researcher was to make the participants feel at ease in order to encourage them to answer each question thoughtfully and thoroughly to the best of their professional knowledge. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), researchers have to be inclusive with the participants to help facilitate the interview process and allow the participants to become involved and part of the study on a personal level. I refrained from interrupting or expressing personal opinions while the participants were answering the interview questions. The teachers were encouraged to share personal experiences and thoughts on the research topic throughout the interview process. While a similar school setting in terms of population with the teachers I interviewed is shared, I do not work with or know any of the potential participants outside of a work setting who were targeted for the study which helped to eliminate bias.

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Data Analysis

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How and When Data Were Analyzed

Hatch (2002) mentioned that data analysis is an organized search for meaning in the topic of study. The data were organized by assigning a number to each participant as

they agreed to join the study, and then assigned a pseudonym when writing the findings.

Analysis began as soon as all of the interviews and member checks were completed, and

the information was transcribed by hand. The data were then coded looking for relevant

themes that emerged as well as any information that may not have coincided with what

the other participants had discussed. The purpose of the coding was to "systematically

examine concepts, themes, and topical markers, sorting them into appropriate groups,

comparing them, and looking for patterns and connections" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p.

224). In order to locate the five themes that emerged, the interviews, documentary data,

member checks, and follow-up questions were analyzed for commonalities based on

topics stemming from the original interview questions. The topics were then searched for

in each interview under any associated terms and coded by different colors to help reveal

throughout the interview where the topic had been discussed. Each of the main topics

was then further analyzed by offering additional coding of more precise aspects of the

individual topics. After this process was completed, the topics were looked at once again

to determine the individual themes that were evident based on the answers provided from

the teachers who had participated in the interviews. The information was further divided

by members from each of the two participating schools in order to offer a comparison of

the data collected.

As a final means of data analysis, I examined documentary data collected from

one of the schools regarding recent professional development on differentiated instruction

the teachers had completed. Creswell (2009) stated that analyzing documents can help the

researcher "obtain the language and words of the participants" (p. 180) to provide a

deeper understanding of the answers provided by the participants. Using documents as another data source helped to indicate a fuller view of how regular education teachers in the English department at one of these two schools used differentiated instruction strategies for their LEP students. In the documentary data samples provided (See Appendix F), information on personality types and learner styles taught in one professional development session allowed for better understanding of what some of the teachers were referencing during the interviews for this study.

Trustworthiness

Once the information was coded through typological analysis, the categories created had to be sufficient for the data collected (Hatch, 2002). Using the interview questions and the gathered interview data as a guide, the data were then divided into several different topics based on predetermined typologies which can be "generated from theory, common sense, and/or research objective" (Hatch, 2002, p. 152). At that point, I needed to decide if the data had been coded properly or if adjustments needed to be made. Initially, I read through all of the interviews a number of times, and five main topics emerged. I then coded these five topics within each interview searching for the topic or any related terms and highlighting each topic by a different color. Next, I coded the interviews by adding specific comments for each of the main topics which further clarified the participants' answers. Once the coding process was completed, the data were again analyzed by topic to arrive at the five themes that emerged from the interviews. Rubin and Rubin (2005) stated that coding helps "to sort statements by content of the concept, theme, or event rather than by people" (p. 219.) Additionally, coding in this

manner allowed me to locate the themes even when the participant may not have used the same terminology or if the researcher had "to infer the concepts or themes from a broader statement" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 219). This method of coding allowed me to gain a fuller view of the data collected and where answers intersected or diverged among the participants.

Triangulation was also employed with the one-to-one interview data from teachers at two different schools, member checking, comparing the interviews from teachers at one school to the second school, and the analysis of documentary data. All of the data were considered together as conclusions were reached regarding the research question. The study was triangulated to construct and justify themes to help reveal the validity of the study (Creswell, 2009).

Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, a transcript was sent to each participant to member check. Participants could clarify or add to their answers if they felt changes needed to be made. Follow-up questions were also sent along with the transcripts for the participants to further describe specific answers to the original interview questions where more detail was required. Mills (2003) noted that member checks add to the credibility of the study by testing the overall data with the participants before it is finalized.

As the data were finalized and the findings constructed, the information was presented individually by each of the two schools included in the study. Having presented the data in this manner, a comparison of the findings was explored analyzing the data from the one school to the other school. Specifically, one school had had additional

professional development with an expert of the topic studied which offered further insight

as to how the participants from one school to the other described the emergent themes.

By offering this type description, I was able to provide multiple perspectives on the

themes which allowed the results to be "more realistic and richer" (Creswell, 2009, p.

192.)

A final part of the triangulation for this study was the addition of documentary

data. Samples from this documentary data were included in this study (See Appendix F).

For the one school, Ash High School, that had additional professional development with

an expert in the field of differentiated instruction, the handouts and power point

presentation slides provided from the speaker were analyzed and then compared to

relevant answers given by the participants at that school. Hatch (2002) indicated one

advantage of this type of data collection "is that it does not influence the social setting

being examined," so it can add to the study by offering another angle into the data

collected (p. 25). The documents helped to bring an objective lens to what the

participants at the one high school stated about the professional development they

attended on differentiated instruction.

By exploring several different sources of information, a number of views of

different data with which to make logical conclusions was gained. Hatch (2002) noted

that this method helps to facilitate assurances on the reported information and findings.

Including a number of different perspectives of the data offered me the ability to see the

themes in a variety of ways and to realize the final outcomes of this study. Bias was

prevented as inserted opinions and anecdotes were avoided while the participants answered and elaborated on the questions asked.

Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases

Each participant's answers to the interview questions needed to be looked at and considered individually to see if the interview data were dramatically different from the majority of responses by the other participants. Hatch (2002) suggested this type of data could be looked at in terms of a competing case to the research question being investigated with the data propelling any further decisions of additions or changes. In this case, it was possible that new categories needed to be adjusted and explored when the data were reviewed. Generally, I planned to organize the data by each interview question to locate possible patterns in responses; however, after the interviews were studied, the findings were coded by five different topics that eventually emerged into major themes. The themes came from any number or order of the interview questions asked as often multiple topics and themes overlapped in many of the answers to specific questions.

Findings

The question guiding this qualitative case study was: How do regular education teachers in the English departments in two suburban high schools describe the ways they differentiate instruction for LEP students within their classrooms? The seven participants, all given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality, represented two different high schools that were also provided with pseudonyms: Broad High School who had two participants (Michael and Bianca) and Ash High School who had five participants (Jackie, Josh, Bruce, Bill, and Matthew). The information obtained from the interviews was presented

within each theme beginning with the data from teachers at Broad High School first followed by the data from teachers at Ash High School to help indicate both similarities and differences in the answers to the interview questions and subsequent follow-up questions asked when sent a transcript to member check.

As a result of this study, it was evident that each participant had an idea of what differentiated instruction is; however, the teachers all had slight variations of this strategy and how to employ differentiation within their classrooms. As the data were analyzed, five main themes emerged based on the research question. The research uncovered the following aspects of differentiated instruction in relation to the research question: differentiated instruction defined, ways of differentiating instruction, differentiated instruction professional development, collaboration, and challenges of implementing differentiated instruction in an English high school classroom.

Differentiated Instruction Defined

Broad High School. Initially, each participant was asked to give a personal definition of differentiated instruction. Meeting students at their readiness level was the one component of the definition of differentiated instruction each participant mentioned. For the two participants at Broad High School, this could be determined through academic ability or choice.

*Academic ability***.** Michael stated "You got to know where they are coming from" in order to differentiate for students. He uses past data provided on Infinite Campus to determine a student's academic performance. He made the analogy that differentiating instruction for students is similar to the types of shoes students wear. Each student has a

unique size and style of shoe just as each student has a unique way of learning. His idea

of differentiation is that he is going to meet students where they are at and help them

"grow from wherever that is." He conducts a writing pre-test or gathers background

information with his students in order to determine where to meet them academically.

Choice. Bianca defined differentiated instruction "as giving students

opportunities to learn in a different way, so giving them a choice in what they can do to

demonstrate their learning." She allows her students to choose from a number of options

to indicate mastery of a concept. For example, if students are to indicate an understanding

of a character, they can choose to make a Facebook page on the character, rewrite the

section from a different point-of-view, or make a video. She offers a "buffet" of choices

in terms of assignments and projects at the beginning of the year with the intent "to see

what's working for what kids." From here, she can observe fairly quickly what activity

will work with certain students or what type of choices she will need to offer as the year

progresses to know how to assess her students. This information is helpful to her in order

"to create activities that can be flexible to how my class learns."

Ash High School. Like the participants at Broad High School, the teachers being

interviewed at Ash High School were asked to give a personal definition of differentiated

instruction. They also mentioned it was important to meet students at their readiness

level. For the participants at Ash High School, readiness level could be determined

through academic ability or interest level.

Academic ability. Jackie starts each year by assessing her students' abilities to

know a baseline of reading and writing skills in order to adjust "instruction to meet them

where they are and take them to the next level." She gives her students an informal reading passage to have an initial idea of their reading ability, but she also takes time to look at past standardized test scores on the student information system provided by the county, Infinite Campus, to identify a student's ability level. She noted that while this method may not be scientific, it has been fairly accurate, and the results "usually correspond fairly closely with what the test scores say" that are reported on the students' profiles in Infinite Campus.

Bruce tailors his lessons by also looking at past standardized test scores of his students in Infinite Campus as well as individual Lexile levels to determine reading ability. He further uses Socrative.com to determine where students are on a particular subject to know how to meet their academic needs. This online tool helps him to determine what students will need in order to master a particular standard, and the data can be populated and color coded into an Excel spreadsheet that he can use to design student groups as they move into specific lessons on the standards being tested.

Interest level. In order to determine the student's interest level, Josh has each student complete a thorough survey through Google Forms where students answer a number of multiple choice or short answer questions on their general background information, learning styles, weaknesses and strengths, and then ends with students writing seven to ten paragraphs on various subjects. Josh sees differentiated instruction:

as meeting the students' needs and the students' desires at an intersection where I also am making sure the student learns the prescribed standards and the curriculum, but to me differentiated if it is not 50/50 as far as the student and the

teacher co-creating that, then to me I don't care how it's flipped or how it's worded, to me it's not differentiated instruction.

From this information, he can generate specific lesson plans to target students with certain learning styles as well as what their personal interests are both inside and outside of school. All of this data are then populated to allow him to know his students' interests and abilities at the beginning of the year. He noted that this survey "works beautifully because they know themselves, and if they don't, that's what I'm here for."

Bill stated that he sees differentiated instruction being more effective by trying to appeal to a student's interest level; however, he also noted he is not able to do this much because of the demands of the job and the time limitations. He does try to allow them to choose a book of interest at times during the year when they are not beholden to all reading the same selections out of the text book. He also gives a pre-reading and writing assignment and uses this information in conjunction with other data obtained on Infinite Campus such as previous test scores, noted accommodations for specific students, and Lexile levels to determine students' reading and writing levels. He will also be working with a colleague in his department to pre-test his students further on learning styles and interests. Although, he states he would most likely focus on students' interests versus learning styles as he has not seen "any data that supports that" type of learning.

Matthew also views differentiated instruction in terms of student interest by using the multiple intelligences theory. He believes that to be "an important gateway into getting into differentiation." He tries to offer assignments that will appeal to students who might be musically, artistically, or even technologically inclined. He primarily meets with

his students one-on-one in order to find out their main interest in learning. He believes that finding out a student's interest may help to "sink the hook a little deeper or maybe turn the light on," so the student will be more interested in the material being studied.

By asking each participant to define differentiated instruction in their own words, the definitions helped to inform the study by answering the research question. It was important to know where each participant in the study was coming from in terms of their specific ideas on differentiated instruction. Whether these teachers defined the basis of differentiation through academic ability, choice, or interest level, all seven participants indicated they use various tools to know their students in order to help meet them at the students' readiness level with the goal to have students achieve mastery of the standards and subject matter.

Ways of Differentiating Instruction

Broad High School. Many different ways of differentiating instruction were mentioned throughout the interviews and generally fell under two different categories: grouping and scaffolding. The teachers at Broad High School explained how they grouped or helped to scaffold for their students.

Grouping. Michael employs grouping strategies by working one-on-one with his struggling students or sometimes forming a small group of two to three students to discuss with them the assignment at hand to make sure they understand the material and have him available to ask specific questions. He also might place four or five students within a group to work on a project where each person may have a specific role to complete like artist, writer, and organizer.

Bianca employs multiple groups at any given time. She and her co-teacher may pair students by ability or allow the students to self-select their own groups depending on the assignment. For one reading assignment, her co-teacher further grouped students by pulling out students who struggled with the reading going to a quieter location, so they could get more individualized help from the co-teacher. She then stayed in the classroom and worked with the remaining groups. She and her co-teacher may also group weaker LEP students with stronger LEP students and allow them initially to converse in Spanish if necessary to help with understanding the material being covered. For one assignment on ethos, logos, and pathos, students work in groups compiling information for a class document on the material to be covered in this unit. As groups complete their tasks, they go over to help other groups in order to have a better final class document to use ultimately for their test on the entire unit of study.

Scaffolding. Michael offers students online links to translations of text being studied in class. His students can also listen to audio versions of the text, so they can hear the words being read aloud. Another scaffolding technique he employs is to find something within a text being studied that can connect to his students. For example, when teaching *The Great Gatsby*, he explains to them that the main character is not much different from people today. He related the main character to his students by telling them that "you got a poor guy trying to get rich" which is something many people, especially his students, understand. He also uses an outline to help students put together a multi-paragraph essay in preparation for the writing test. In this assignment, he has students outline their main ideas but then color code the examples that match up with the main

ideas. Color coding helps visual learners in particular see the correlation of information within an essay to keep focused and on topic.

Bianca uses visual aids and modeling to scaffold for her students. For one unit on ethos, logos, and pathos, she presents a series of commercials to help the students identify these persuasive techniques. The class discussions serve as modeling for their upcoming assignment where they are to locate rhetorical strategies in famous speeches. The students finally write a persuasive letter to their administration to declare their student rights incorporating the rhetorical strategies they have learned throughout this unit of study.

Ash High School. Similarly to the participants at Broad High School, grouping and scaffolding were the two main categories of differentiating instruction noted by the teachers interviewed at Ash High School. Each participant from this high school had a number of examples to offer under each category of how they differentiated instruction for their students.

Grouping. Jackie groups her students in a number of ways. She often partners an LEP student with another bilingual student who has better English skills, so they can work together with one being a mentor. Sometimes she will sit down one-on-one with a student who is struggling to grasp the material, and other times she will do a small group setting around her desk where she can give more individualized attention to a couple of students who may need some extra help.

Josh likes to meet with each student one-on-one to conference and design a project that the student will work on to indicate mastery of a particular lesson. He also

forms groups of students both with the same learning style as well as with different learning styles. He allows the students to determine the class atmosphere at times and lets them go "where they want to take it." For one project, he and his co-teacher paired two struggling LEP students with two other LEP students who were much more proficient in both Spanish and English to put together a newscast while working on a persuasive unit. The four students worked well together and formed a "team [that] was very intimate."

Bruce groups by both same-ability and mixed-ability using the higher achieving students as leaders within the groups. Sometimes he will do a role-reversal and appoint the:

> student who is struggling as the leader, and ask that student to take that leadership role and ask the student to sort of step into that place, and sometimes that was more successful than other times. But, [he] would sometimes have students who would come and step up and take a deep breath and kind of step in that role, and they sort of used their peers as resources, and it sometimes, it would really work well.

Bruce also has each student within the group have a specific role to make sure all are involved in some capacity. In same-ability groups he differentiates and tailors the activities for each member within the group while scaling the difficulty level. For mixed-ability groups, he tries to get students to grow by moving up to the next level of mastery of the material. He also allows students to pair up as mentor and mentee to complete work. This allows students who struggle to have the ability to ask someone questions and keep them focused.

Bill allows students to partner and read together. Sometimes he will group the students, and other times he will allow the students to pick a partner:

I am flexible enough so that they can do it either way. If it doesn't seem to be working with who they are choosing, then I would be more affirmative in making the decision of who they are going to be working with.

He has also worked individually with students who have needed extra help. When he has had a co-teacher, the co-teacher might go to a quieter room to work with struggling students.

Matthew also allows for time to work one-on-one with his students especially to help his lower-level readers. He noted one grouping strategy learned at a professional development session on differentiated instruction. With this grouping method, he divides students by personality to form groups. He thought that was great way to group students as it allowed like-minded students to work together.

Scaffolding. Jackie uses a number of scaffolding techniques in her classroom to help her students. This year she will be employing a computerized reading program that will allow her to offer an individualized reading plan for each student based on their current reading level. The program will then provide students "with text and questions and activities that are designed to take them to the next level." She uses different versions of the text being covered in class to help LEP students. Students are able to work at their own pace in her classroom. She also provides graphic organizers to help students sort information. For one assignment, students are to write a theme essay on a topic from *Macbeth*. She has students use the graphic organizer to record specific textual evidence

from the play to later use as they write the essay to prove the topic they have chosen to explore. Struggling students may have fewer examples to record than students who are more proficient.

Josh likes to use technology in his classroom. One way he scaffolds for LEP students is to share with them the most up-to-date technology apps that help with translating words or phrases that are difficult to understand. He uses rubrics with his project-based learning to break down each part of an assignment so that the student knows exactly what they are responsible for in order to complete the work. He also allows students to use their own personal experiences and interests to design assignments to indicate mastery of standards. He allowed one student to design a car for Jonathan Edwards, a Puritan preacher, based on the symbolism learned in "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." This student was very interested in cars, and Josh saw this as a way to connect with the student and engage him in the reading material for this particular unit.

Bruce has a unique experience of having taught Spanish and now English. Because he has many Spanish native speakers in his class, if he notes they are struggling with a particular concept, he may teach that lesson "in a bilingual fashion, and I say a few sentences in English, and I say the same sentences in Spanish and try to get through the language barrier that way until we have that aha moment happen." For a writing unit he teaches, he will model an essay that meets the requirements of his assignment so that students understand what is expected. He also gives out graphic organizers that are individualized to students' academic level or learning style.

Bill offers his students audible forms of the text being covered in class to help with comprehension especially if they are auditory learners. He also provides rubrics for assignments to help guide students to know what is expected for the completed product. One assignment students complete for *Of Mice and Men* is to compare it to another text that illustrates a similar relationship between friends. To help his students, he modeled the lesson by presenting a movie to the students that contained a similar theme in *Of Mice and Men*, and he also offered a personal story of friendship he had with a person who had disabilities like the main character in the novella. Finally, students have to incorporate some type of technology and present their comparisons of the two texts to the class.

Matthew employs rubrics to help his students as well as modeling lessons to help them understand the concept being taught. For one of his specific units on *Animal Farm*, he starts with a visual anticipation guide where students write a paragraph predicting what they think the story will be about based on the pictures they are shown. To keep projects reasonable for students, he also breaks down the tasks for students by offering "them a choice of what chapters they want to show me what they know." Breaking the material into smaller parts helps to keep the students interested, but it also allows them to indicate mastery of a standard in manageable chunks.

Through the subthemes of grouping and scaffolding, the various methods of differentiated instruction the teachers incorporate into their classrooms helped to answer the research question by revealing concrete examples of how each participant differentiates for students. This was important information to gather in helping to answer the question as it builds upon their view of what differentiated instruction is.

Differentiated Instruction Professional Development

  Broad High School. The two participants from Broad High School have had professional development on differentiated instruction offered to them via their school and county. When asked to elaborate, they did not mention any specific expert on the subject of differentiation instruction being part of their training.

  Michael noted that much of the professional development he has had in relation to differentiated instruction has happened at his school. During his first year at Broad High School there was a course on differentiated instruction, and he was given a book to read. He cannot recall any specific examples, but he stated that hearing from other teachers and sharing strategies has been much more productive than just listening to some "sage on the stage." He mentioned he's heard a lot of different terminology when it comes to differentiated instruction, but he believes most teachers have been differentiating all along.

  Bianca also teaches at Broad High School and explained that what really helped her to understand what differentiated instruction is occurred in her graduate studies. It was at that time she learned "how to structure a classroom to meet the needs of different learners at one time." She further elaborated that while the school and county have provided professional development on differentiated instruction, she believes it has barely "scratche[d] the surface" and has been more generic noting "it's not a formula." She believes many people think putting students in groups and offering them a choice of assignments is differentiation; however, to truly differentiate in a classroom, she adds that it takes a lot more work and looks much different than what has been presented in the

professional development sessions she has attended. She sees her job as facilitating students' learning and believes the traditional classroom with desks in neat rows does not resemble what a differentiated classroom would look like. Another point she made was that teachers like herself who work with co-teachers really need to have separate professional development to understand how a co-taught class works when implementing differentiated instruction. It is also important for the co-teachers to "forge a relationship" with each other in order to differentiate together. She does not believe the professional development she has been to has addressed differentiation for co-teachers either.

Ash High School. For the five participants at Ash High School, in November of 2013, an expert on differentiated instruction, Dr. Richard Cash, came in for a full day work session to offer detailed training on this subject and presented to the teachers at Ash High School ways to incorporate this concept into their classes. Documentary data were obtained and reviewed to compare to some of the answers provided by the participants who attended this professional development session. Similar to the participants at Broad High School, these five teachers have also had professional development on this topic through the school and county.

Jackie noted her school had a speaker, Dr. Cash, come to elaborate on differentiated instruction. She explained that her school is trying to focus on data collection and differentiation, so she thought it was beneficial to have this expert offer advice on these topics. She liked one of the activities Dr. Cash had the faculty do where the teachers learned a bit about their personality by realizing what learner type they were. She remembered she was a slinky and stated:

a slinky is a creative person who thinks outside the box who doesn't do

everything by the book, so I guess…I did take this back to the classroom because

I was looking at my students thinking oh that guy's a paperclip, and that girl is

definitely a slinky, and it's different learning styles; it's basically how you

approach and deliver.

She took this experience back to her classroom and used the knowledge to group her

students accordingly by different personality roles to help in completing assignments. She

would like to spend more time learning about differentiating instruction; however, she

believes it often takes a back seat to other matters. What she really would like is to "see a

concrete example of doing that in a language arts room with a language arts lesson." She

would like the administration to offer teachers time to observe differentiation in action

and have an expert come in and personally model for them what it looks like on the high

school level. She mentioned that often times the examples they are presented with are of

elementary and/or middle school students in a perfect setting which is far from the reality

of what her classroom looks like.

Josh also attended the professional learning on differentiated instruction provided

by his school. He stated that listening to Dr. Cash was helpful in that it "validate[d] some

of my classroom practices" such as classroom design, interactive learning structures, and

project-based learning. While he does appreciate professional development provided at

the school and county level and sees immense value in it, he has actually learned more by

attending International Society of Technology (ISTE) conferences where he has been

both an attendee and instructor. It is at these conferences where he learns the most up-to-

date modes of technology that he can immediately use in his classroom, and he finds that

he is usually ahead of other teachers when it comes to knowing the latest technology he

can incorporate when planning his lessons. This knowledge helps him to differentiate in

his classroom to serve all of his students. He further added that his use of Twitter has also

been helpful in expanding his knowledge in regard to technology and literature. By

utilizing this online networking service, he can be connected to people all over the world

and have information within 30 minutes on a variety of topics. Twitter also affords him

the luxury of accessing information at any time of the day by being able to talk to

teachers around the world who can offer any number of resources.

Bruce also attended the professional development with Dr. Cash. He gives the

administration credit for making differentiated instruction a priority in having this expert

come and speak to the faculty at Ash High School. He was not completely sure what

differentiated instruction looked like and said Dr. Cash "actually modeled how to

differentiate a classroom." Because of this professional development, Bruce used many

of the strategies he learned and saw that they "proved themselves to be effective"

especially on the standardized test scores earned by his students at the end of the year. He

has also shown teachers in other disciplines how to set up quizzes on-line for students

and how to use that data to differentiate lessons. He said the tools he gained at this

professional development have been helpful to him as he learned how to differentiate his

classroom.

Bill recalled Dr. Cash engaging the faculty in a variety of activities to help them

understand differentiated instruction and also providing handouts and websites that could

be accessed for further information. Bill could not recall any specific strategies he took from the professional development but did note he had heard of some of them prior to this meeting. Similar to Josh, Bill has done some research on his own regarding differentiated instruction. He stated he took his own initiative to search for useful websites to gain some good information on the topic. While he stated the administration has not specifically followed-up on the professional development received from Dr. Cash, he noted they are supportive and willing to help the faculty in any way. He also mentioned that the ELL coordinator lets the faculty know of professional development seminars that might be useful especially in helping with the LEP population at the school. When able, Bill tries to attend professional development that will help him with the classes he is teaching even if he has to arrange this on his own outside of the district.

Matthew learned a little from Dr. Cash on differentiating instruction but thinks there are valuable resources at the school and county level that could be used instead. In the past, his school has had teachers lead workshops where he believes learning from one's neighbor might prove to be more illuminating than listening to an outsider. He stated that he cannot recall learning anything "groundbreaking" in the professional development seminars he has attended in the past. One strategy, however, he did take away from the professional development with Dr. Cash was the activity based on personality. He thought that might be interesting to use this strategy when deciding on student groups. He could place like personalities together or "throw one of the opposite personalities in the group to maybe mix it up."

All seven participants clearly noted having attended professional development on differentiated instruction. Most stated they had taken away something from the sessions they have attended; however, it was articulated that the participants need more information on differentiated instruction. Whether it be more realistic examples or the ability to observe fellow teachers in action, the participants definitely want to continue to learn about this teaching method and how to implement differentiated instruction into their classrooms to best help students be successful. This theme was important to explore as knowing what background the participants had regarding differentiated instruction helped to further answer the research question. Like their students, teachers also need to be assessed as to what level they are at in order to help them continue to grow toward mastery of any given subject.

Collaboration

Broad High School. Each participant mentioned collaborating on some level within their department and with colleagues. The two participants from Broad High School agreed with the other participants in this study that collaboration is an important part of differentiating instruction. All expressed the need to have more time to collaborate in order to understand differentiated instruction better.

Michael said teachers and administrators at his school have discussed differentiation, but he added he learns more when teachers can speak directly of their own experiences in sharing what has worked for them. He noted that his colleagues sometimes share their successes at the professional learning sessions. He often collaborates with his colleagues and takes back to his own classroom recommendations

his fellow teachers have suggested. He believes it adds credibility to what they are

saying if they can speak directly from personal experience. He wants to know how they

differentiate by hearing specific examples. Another form of collaboration he finds useful

is taking something he has learned from one of his co-teachers and then applying it to

another classroom and sharing with that teacher. He has earned the title of "refiner" from

some of his co-teachers because when they collaborate on a lesson, he often tweaks it

slightly to work better for their students. He defined collaboration among co-teachers as

having trust in each other. However, he would like more time to co-plan with his

colleagues to work on differentiation. He believes that collaboration:

> is if you trust them, trust the person you're working with, and they are open to
>
> your ideas, and you're open to their ideas, then there's almost, to me, no limits on
>
> what you can accomplish together. And, I've been fortunate with just about
>
> everybody I've co-taught with has been open to suggestions.

Bianca is also a co-teacher and stated both teachers have to have an open,

collaborative environment where they can merge their teaching styles. She said it's

almost as if the teachers have to differentiate themselves in order to work together. She

described herself as creative and her co-teacher as analytical. Together they create

assignments, and she believes "it's differentiation because he's this and I'm this and we

come together and it creates something that works for the kids." She wants to have co-

planning time together because as it stands now, much of her collaboration with her co-

teacher happens in the initial few minutes of class. Because she does not share a planning

period with her co-teacher, they have little time to sit down together and plan units for their students.

Ash High School. As voiced by the participants at Broad High School, the teachers at Ash High School also believe collaboration to be an important part of being successful in differentiating instruction. The one thing they need more of in order to differentiate better is the time to really learn and understand this method of instruction.

Jackie stated that she collaborates plenty with her department on a variety of issues. She would like, however, to be able to have the time to specifically sit down with teachers in her department who teach the same course and share a lesson they all teach to see how it could be improved to include more differentiation. She would like to hear from others as to how to address better LEP students and their weaknesses such as not having enough background knowledge, having difficulty with reading, or having difficulty with the writing process. She wants to be able to "see the strategies in action" and then transfer the strategies to other literature she teaches. She further added that the faculty as a whole has not discussed the needs of the LEP population and believes much of that falls on the Language Arts department.

Josh uses technology partly to collaborate. He has been working with fellow faculty members to teach them how to use Google forms to find out about their students' interests and learning styles. Josh then can team up with teachers who teach the same students to design lessons that will appeal to the students' interests and learning styles to help them be more successful academically. Another way Josh has collaborated in the past was with a co-teacher. He and the co-teacher would discuss how best to deliver a

certain lesson to the class. He elaborated that collaborating with his colleague allowed

him to incorporate creative strategies into his lessons. He would also like to have more

time to collaborate with his colleagues in order to work with "brilliant minds…to kind of

bounce ideas off of."

Bruce explained that his faculty is part of a professional learning community, and

they meet weekly. Here they discuss data and determine goals to help students improve

their performance on standards. He reports these data to administration, and they discuss

the results of the set goals. He has also collaborated with other colleagues teaching them

how to incorporate Socrative.com to track data to help students master standards in their

specific discipline. He expects that his colleagues will eventually find new ways to

differentiate using these tools, and then they will come back to teach him. He has co-

planning with the ELL coordinator who offers valuable information to help Bruce with

his LEP students. He stated he works in a great environment where the faculty can

bounce ideas off of each other.

Bill has found it useful to work with the ELL coordinator as well as the bilingual

paraprofessional. Both have helped give him assistance with LEP students. The ELL

coordinator is "willing to provide any coaching or help" Bill might need in working with

his LEP students. The paraprofessional helps him by communicating with Spanish

speaking parents when he needs to contact them. He also would like to have more time

and flexibility to collaborate with his colleagues. He noted that often the department

members have a specific time to meet with a pre-set agenda, so it hinders them from

reflecting on or being able to collaborate effectively on differentiated instruction. In the

past the teachers at his school were to observe other teachers but explained that they no longer do this. This year, though, he is excited because one of his colleagues who is very skilled with differentiation will be free in the afternoons to "come in and use his expertise and experience" to work with Bill and other teachers in the Language Arts Department.

Matthew would like to collaborate more with his faculty by seeing teachers lead workshops and model strategies of differentiated instruction. He believes that seeing differentiated instruction from a colleague would be "watching practice in motion." Seeing differentiation would be more beneficial that just hearing an expert speak about this strategy. He would like to see his entire department have the time to meet and reflect on the differentiation strategies they learned at the workshop with Dr. Cash. As of now, he has only had the opportunity to discuss informally with a few colleagues some assignments utilizing differentiated instruction. He mentioned that some of his best lessons happened when he was a co-teacher. His co-teacher "would just say something, and it would spark something in me, and that was really some of the best years of teaching I ever had as far as coming up with creative ideas."

The seven participants in this study all noted that they do collaborate, but they want more time to work with colleagues to develop lessons and activities that are better differentiated. Many expressed that much of their collaboration time is spent on other school issues, and they do not get the necessary time to share with peers who teach similar subjects and students. This theme aids in understanding the research question better as it again shows what resources are available in order for these teachers to

continue to develop their understanding of differentiated instruction and employ in their classrooms.

Challenges of Implementing Differentiated Instruction

Broad High School. All of the participants in this study articulated a number of challenges they each face when trying to implement differentiated instruction for their LEP students. The two teachers from Broad High School offered similar challenges they face when differentiating instruction for their LEP students. Given the continuing changes in education and the current demands on teachers, they expressed the difficulty with trying to keep up with everything they are required to do each day. Two main categories were mentioned: lack of time and students not possessing sufficient skills.

Lack of time. Michael sees time as a challenge when trying to help with his struggling students. He believes they need more time to learn the required standards and would like to see an English support class offered as they do in the math department. This extra support would give his students more time to master the concepts needed especially in the English courses that have a state-mandated assessment. He also explained he would like more time to collaborate with members of his department because "it makes a huge difference…even if it's just ten minutes to say hey here's what we did." Collaborating with his colleagues is important in allowing them to tweak lessons to make sure all of the students are being helped in a way that will benefit their learning needs.

Bianca wants to be able to have more collaborative planning time with her co-teacher and colleagues to better differentiate lessons for her students. She explained that her co-teacher and herself:

don't even share the same planning period. A lot of the planning that happens

between the two of us, like I said we work really well together, but it happens

right there on the fly in five minutes when something's tanking. We're over here;

that's not working; let me go run this copy, or let's blow this up. I'll be right back.

Let me go get my highlighters. If we had more time, not five minutes that are

reactionary, and we're great on it and you wouldn't know, but how great would

we be if we had more time to really talk about and have more collaborative time

with co-teachers.

She also elaborated that there are colleagues whom she would like more time with to

speak about students and their needs, but again, finding time to collaborate is an issue.

She believes differentiated instruction takes time to work, and it is not something that is

just a quick fix.

*Lack of academic skills***.** LEP students often begin high school without the skills

necessary to be on their grade-level target. Because of this lack of skills, teachers have to

differentiate to help them master the necessary standards to earn Carnegie units and pass

state standardized tests. High school English teachers have added responsibilities of

teaching reading and writing skills that must be achieved by all students regardless of the

level they test at when they join a particular class.

Michael mentioned in his classes that the lack of reading comprehension skills

and vocabulary are a major challenge with his students. His LEP students also have "a

lack of exposure to English at home" which furthers hinders them from improving their

reading comprehension skills. Additionally, he noted that many of his students do not

have the historical background information that is needed in tandem with the literature that is being taught. For example, when he is teaching *The Great Gatsby*, students really do not have the necessary background knowledge of the 1920's to analyze the text and apply to the characters and events. Technology also can pose a problem as Michael noted it tends to distract students from using it to benefit their education.

Bianca said one challenge she faces is having students who do not take the initiative to seek help when they need it. Her LEP students are still learning English and often do not know what help to ask or even how to ask for help. Some of her LEP students do not turn in writing assignments because she thinks they think they'll be judged by lack of grammar and proper writing skills. Bianca also discussed how her LEP students have test anxiety and trouble decoding test questions. She spends a lot of time in her classes helping students learn how to break down a question, so they will be better prepared when taking tests.

Ash High School. The five participants at Ash High School echoed the same challenges as the two participants from Broad High School. Lack of time and students not possessing sufficient skills were again the main challenges noted. Teachers need more quality time to work with students in order to help them master the required standards of each course.

Lack of time. Jackie stated that it is a balancing act for her in classes with multiple academic levels to differentiate because she has to keep moving to get through the required pacing of the material to be taught during the year while challenging her higher level students and keeping the struggling students from falling behind. She

explained that she does not "have the time to sit there and you know go through and create resources and everything for every gap in everybody's knowledge." She also lacks the time to be able to work one-on-one with LEP students as much as she would like. Often it takes her 15 minutes to speak with a student about a writing sample to go over everything and answer any questions the student might have, so she's "lucky to get to five kids in a class period." Typically she can have 30 students in a class, so she is only able to have maybe two writing conferences a year in this manner.

Josh also discussed time as a barrier in being able to address his students' needs. He believes English teachers need more than 50 minutes for a planning period with everything that they are expected to do. He would like to see teachers have more planning time where they would also be able to collaborate and reflect with each other especially on the topic of differentiated instruction. In addition, he would like to give each of his students the exposure needed to understand the material presented and have his students learn in the best manner for them, but he does not believe he has been able to truly reach all of his students given the constraints of larger class sizes with shorter class times from in the past when he was on a 90 minute block schedule. He says that it is "exhausting" to try to reach all of his students, although he continues to spend a lot of time creating lessons and activities that will best help his students to learn in a way that is unique to their individual learning styles.

Bruce would like to see his faculty have more time to work with the ELL coordinator at his school. Bruce added the ELL coordinator is a great resource as "he's clued in culturally in a way" that many of the teachers are not regarding their Spanish

speaking students because the coordinator deals with things on a different level than the faculty does. Bruce also voiced that his LEP students need more time to just read in English to help their skills. He noted that as a Spanish major in college, he had to have "exposure to a broad spectrum of the written word in the target language" in order to become proficient in it. He noted that often his Spanish speaking students may be proficient with the speaking and listening standards, but they may not be proficient in the reading standards.

Bill expressed that he sees himself always "running a sprint" to get everything completed that is expected of him. He likes to take his time when planning and grading and needs more time in order to do it effectively. The morning of this interview, he took a lot of time to prepare for grading a set of papers by reviewing the assignment, actually doing the assignment himself, and then grading his students' writing to make sure it aligned with the rubric. He would also like for the students to have more one-on-one time with him or a co-teacher. He noted it is difficult to give the struggling students what they need given the constraints of a large class size and a shorter class period of only 52 minutes.

Like the other participants in the study, Matthew also discussed time being a major challenge to differentiating instruction for students. He wants to be able to collaborate more with his colleagues about differentiation and to see it modeled. He learned from the professional learning provided in the fall on differentiated instruction but says it has taken him time to understand what differentiation looks like in a classroom. He also needs more time to work individually with his LEP students when

they are having a tough time working on an assignment and are not understanding the material.

Lack of academic skills. LEP students are required to pass state standardized tests and graduate with the same Carnegie units as all other students. Many LEP students, however, lack the necessary skills needed to accomplish these goals. English teachers are still responsible to have LEP students achieve at the same rate as their peers by the time the course is completed regardless of the skills they initially bring to the course.

Jackie has noticed that her LEP students often do not possess the necessary background knowledge such as biblical stories or mythological characters. This lack of background knowledge hinders them from being able to apply this knowledge to the literature that is being studied. Her LEP students are often reading below grade level sometimes at a 6th grade level while being in a traditional 11th grade American literature class. She mentioned that many of her students are not taking the time needed to read to help perfect this skill. She elaborated that her students struggle with test questions and the technical wording they need to know in order to arrive at the correct answer.

One challenge Josh encounters is having LEP students in class who do not have a firm command of the English language, and he believes he is part of the barrier with his students. Because he is not bi-lingual himself, he cannot help bridge some of the confusion his students might have when reading higher level texts. Another challenge is making sure students are aware of their learning style. Sometimes "the kid is not going to know everything about himself or herself," so if the student chooses a particular learning

style and it is not working, Josh and the student will have to reevaluate and possibly change the type of assignment the student does in the future.

As a native English speaker who majored in Spanish, Bruce understands the skills his LEP students have. He explained that "the first language you learn is going to determine the way your mental processes will work for the rest of your life." Students' first language can be a challenge to them as they will not have the skills initially when they enter a classroom in a new setting that is different from the culture they are coming from and learned from previously. Additionally, they may not know similar nursery rhymes, biblical stories, or historical events to have connections to the literature they are studying. Bruce explained that it took a lot of time reading in Spanish to help him immerse into the language and have an understanding of the Spanish culture and their way of thinking. He also notes that his students do not spend the time they need reading and writing in English in order to gain proficiency.

Bill has noticed that his LEP students have a more difficult time with their writing skills especially in using correct prepositions. However, he added that they also have problems with reading proficiency. While he offers his time before and after school to help them improve these skills, the students have to ride the bus, and they do not have the time to seek out help. Another challenge he sees is that these students lack the skills of communication in advocating for themselves and asking questions. He sees them as shy and "not wanting to be recognized as somebody with limited English proficiency."

The biggest challenge Matthew sees in his LEP students is the language barrier and the idea that LEP students do not get to hear English all day every day in order to help facilitate their language skills:

Sometimes you may take for granted a very simple assignment like, for instance, today you know I was teaching transitions class, and I was teaching subjects and predicates. Some of the kids just like didn't even have a clue as to what I was talking about, and you know that is something that should have been taught in elementary school and probably was, but maybe they didn't retain the information or maybe they just didn't understand you know the way I was teaching it.

Another skill LEP students often do not have is understanding the difference between everyday language and the academic language of a particular subject. He spends time breaking down the standards for his classes, so they will be exposed to certain words such as "delineate" or "juxtaposition." Understanding the language of the standards is a necessary skill in today's classes as the wording of the standards is employed when designing the standardized tests for these classes.

The theme of challenges the participants face in regard to implementing differentiated instruction was an important aspect of the research question to also inquire about as it helped to elaborate on what these teachers need in order to differentiate instruction for their students. The lack of time for both teachers and students is becoming an important issue as is the lack of skills the LEP students are bringing with them to high school. All of the participants discussed challenges in both of these subthemes.

Themes and Subthemes: Discussion

The guiding research question for this study was: How do regular education teachers in the English departments in two suburban high schools describe the ways they differentiate instruction for LEP students within their classrooms? Findings from this study indicated that the seven participants have similar ideas regarding the following themes: what differentiated instruction is, ways of differentiating instruction, differentiated instruction professional development, collaboration, and the challenges teachers face in order to properly differentiate for their LEP students. There was very little difference in the answers to the interview questions overall from the seven participants at the two different high schools and no significant outliers or discrepant cases.

The interview questions were designed to answer the research question. After the initial interviews were transcribed, participants were provided with a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy. Follow-up questions were also asked based on the original questions and answers provided. These follow-up questions helped to clarify or add depth to the interview themes that emerged.

The findings revealed that the participants all have a personal definition of differentiated instruction believing that students need to be met at their readiness level, and they all incorporate various aspects of content, process, and product throughout their lessons for LEP students. The participants offered multiple examples of grouping and scaffolding techniques used in their planning and lessons. They also had strong opinions on professional development. Several participants mentioned wanting to see specific

examples of differentiated lessons that were relevant for high school English teachers.

They all mentioned gaining from their professional development experiences, but the

teachers at Ash High School seemed much more confident about their experience with

the expert Dr. Cash joining them in discussing differentiated instruction. Many of the five

participants who attended that professional development session incorporated strategies

they learned that day and lesson planning including grouping students by perceived

learning styles or using technology to determine a student's readiness level. This was

compared to the documentary data from that training day and indicated a correlation to

what the teachers say they learned from Dr. Cash regarding different types of learners

and their preferences in being able to master a particular topic of study.

Only one of the teachers interviewed who had attended the professional

development on differentiated instruction at Ash High School did not completely agree

with the idea of student learning styles. He stated he did not believe in students' learning

styles as he had not found any research to prove this idea. Instead, he believed students'

motivation and interest levels to be what drives student success. To clarify, I did ask this

participant if it was possible to have a correlation between learning style and interest

level with a student. I suggested that one might have a creative, artistic student whose

interest is in art. If so, I asked this participant if a correlation could exist within these two

concepts, and he admitted it was possible, although he added the caveat that he had not

seen any data to prove students' learning styles existed.

The participants also all noted that collaboration is very important in being able to

successfully differentiate, but they need more quality time to do this. They want to be

able to collaborate with their fellow English teachers in order to see exactly what type of differentiation will work for certain students while also improving their lessons. However, the main challenges in achieving these things are the lack of time and the lack of skills their LEP students bring with them as they enter high school. Having co-planning and more planning time would help tremendously in allowing these teachers to work toward their goals of differentiating better for their LEP students. They would also like the additional time to help their struggling students in learning English more proficiently while working with them one-on-one to give these students the extra time and help they are in need of to be successful.

Conclusion

Section 2 outlined this qualitative case study by describing the research design and approach. The potential participants were discussed as well as how they were chosen for the study, the number who were invited to participate, how they were contacted, and how all ethical standards were met in protecting those who chose to participate in the study. Data collection and analysis were then considered. The findings were presented and discussed thoroughly by detailing the themes and subthemes that emerged from the interviews.

Section 3 will explain the project to be conducted. It will include staff professional development learning days where teachers in the English department will collaborate on a number of topics regarding differentiated instruction. Using the PLC model, the faculty might wish to collaborate and consider reaching a consensus as to what methods of differentiated instruction would best suit the local setting and their LEP

students in order to help foster better student achievement rates on the EOCTs which are

a major contributing factor to the school's rating each year. Section 3 will discuss the

project in-depth.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to inquire about secondary English teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction for their LEP students. The participants offered information to help inform the research question of the study. Section 3 will present the reader with a description of the project in order to address the main points of the findings.

According to the study findings, the participants in the study used differentiated instruction strategies in many aspects of their lessons and activities including modeling, grouping, and technology; however, the majority of participants noted that time was an issue in being able to successfully collaborate with their colleagues in order to fully understand what differentiated instruction is and how to better serve LEP students with this concept. The teachers interviewed also expressed that they have been offered professional development on this topic, but they would like to have other opportunities where they could see differentiated instruction modeled for them to understand better what it looks like in an actual high school English classroom setting. Finally, the participants were adamant that they needed more time to see differentiated instruction modeled for them, to design differentiated lessons, to deliver the lessons, and then to collaborate on the effectiveness of the lessons for the students. With the extra time needed to prepare lessons incorporating differentiated instruction that addresses individual students' learning needs, teachers felt it was more important than ever that they be allowed to collaborate, have relevant professional development, be given the time

to process this information, and then fully implement it in their classrooms. Helping teachers to understand differentiated instruction is germane in the teaching field today. One of the goals of this study was to develop a professional development opportunity that included time to create differentiated lessons that can be applied directly in classrooms (See Appendix A).

Description and Goals

The concept of differentiated instruction was investigated as many LEP students were not meeting the necessary standards on EOCTs. Differentiated instruction could be better implemented in classrooms to help struggling students meet the standards on state-mandated tests. Furthermore, teachers are being evaluated based on the new state model, TKES, that records how differentiated instruction is noted within their classrooms. In order to learn how teachers define differentiated instruction and what challenges they face, it was necessary to speak directly with teachers and explore their perceptions. In the findings of the interviews, I found that the majority of the teachers had similar ideas about differentiated instruction; however, they wanted to see more authentic modeling of this concept. The participants also expressed that they would like quality, collaborative time with colleagues in order to develop differentiated lessons for their students.

The goal of this project study was to examine the perceptions of secondary English teachers of LEP students regarding how they differentiate instruction for their students. After surveying the data, I determined there is a need for a professional development opportunity to provide teachers with the tools necessary to administer

differentiated instruction within their classrooms that will provide resources, strategies, collaboration, and the time needed to accomplish this.

Rationale

Differentiated instruction has become an important topic not only in the district of the study, but also in the state as it is part of TKES, the new state evaluation model for educators (Georgia Department of Education TKES, 2013). Differentiated instruction is a standard that all teachers are being evaluated, and administrators will need to be able to see that differentiated instruction is evident when observing classroom teachers. Each teacher is required to have a total of six evaluations throughout the school year, and most are unannounced. Consequently, teachers need to be proficient indicating mastery of this concept as lessons are delivered to students.

The purpose of this study was to offer the teachers in the school district a professional development opportunity on differentiated instruction focusing on secondary English teachers who teach LEP students in their regular education classes. Even though all of the participants have had some professional development on this topic, and five of the participants have had a specific expert in the field of differentiation speak at their school, most interviewed wanted more modeling of this concept and the necessary time to properly see differentiation in practice. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) noted the teacher who shares ideas with colleagues "will help them grow in their work" (p. 66). The teachers would benefit from a 3 day training session that would provide them with the skills needed to integrate differentiated instruction within their classrooms. Teachers who participate in a collaborative atmosphere are able to "apply new ideas and information to

problem solving and are therefore able to create new conditions for students" (Hord, 2004, p. 9). As a result, the findings from this study provided a framework for developing a professional development opportunity that will help the teachers come to a consensus as to how differentiated instruction is defined for a high school English classroom, have time to collaborate directly with colleagues of the same discipline and course, be able to develop quality lessons that are differentiated, and have the time needed to create and deliver these lessons. Finally, this study may provide teachers with instruction on how to receive a meets or exemplary score on their TKES evaluation for this standard. This professional development of differentiated instruction should offer teachers the confidence to develop differentiated units of study to help all of their students, but especially aid with LEP students who must meet the same standards as everyone else in the class.

Review of the Literature

The review of literature conducted for the study was based on the information gathered from the findings regarding how secondary English teachers differentiate instruction for LEP students in their regular education classrooms. Specific topics such as professional development, PLCs, collaboration, and types of differentiated instruction were researched in the interest of locating ways to help LEP students in regular education classrooms perform better on state-mandated tests created from the CCSS. The following databases were accessed for this literature review from Walden's library: Education Research Complete, Sage Premier, Google Scholar, and ProQuest. The Boolean search terms consisted of *differentiated instruction, differentiation, mixed-ability grouping,*

tiered lesson planning, preassessment, academic ability, interest level, technology,

professional development, professional learning community, collaborative learning, and

collaboration.

Professional development for teachers is an important component in furthering

their pedagogical knowledge, but it must be effective. Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, and

Hardin (2014) stated that professional development offered to teachers on the topic of

differentiation is often ineffective because it only provides limited information. It does

not allow teachers to have the time to develop activities, practice strategies, or receive

necessary feedback that offers guidance in the process of designing differentiated lessons.

If teachers are to be successful in a 21st century classroom, they will need the skills and

tools to know how to differentiate the material that will be presented to students.

Teachers will need to meet all students at their individual readiness levels "with the intent

of maximizing each student's growth and individual success" (Dixon et al., 2014, p. 113).

Organizing meaningful, effective professional development for teachers on differentiated

instruction and promoting a collaborative atmosphere is much needed in the current field

of education.

Professional Development

Professional development is vital for many professionals. Teachers especially

need to be exposed to continuing education if they wish to stay abreast of new ideas and

requirements in their chosen field of study. According to Kesson and Henderson (2010),

professional development has helped with both student achievement and school reform.

When teachers are provided with effective professional development, they have the

ability to change roles and become learners; therefore, "professional development must become more meaningful, effective, and applicable to daily practice" by addressing the needs of each school, student, and teacher (Dever & Lash, 2013, p. 12). The days of ineffectual professional development need to be transformed into more dynamic learning for teachers where they are part of the process and leave with advanced knowledge that will inform best practices to benefit not only their teaching skills but also their students.

Professional development has four main objectives when applied within a school setting: enhance individual performance, rectify ineffective practice, establish the groundwork for the implementation of policy, and facilitate change (Blandford, 2012). Each of these attributes should be included in any professional development offered to educators with the main purpose of improving collegiality and enhancing teaching practice. Also included in this process are personal, team, and school development (Blandford, 2012). These three groups that form a school must work in tandem as each affects the other two. As a teacher is exposed to quality professional development, it is natural that the teacher will begin to mature in the professional setting allowing them to then become more invested in working together and increasing the synergy produced within a team environment. Finally, as teachers work together to improve professional practice, the school will begin to develop and indicate growth as a result.

Similar to a PLC, professional development helps to promote shared values and equality of opportunity (Blandford, 2012). As teachers see the value in quality professional development and reap the benefits provided, commonalities of practice will be established as learning opportunities will apply to all who participate. Professional

development is a useful tool for educators to learn from one another, access the most

recent information, and see the perks in becoming part of a team atmosphere.

Professional Learning Communities

Dufour and Mattos (2013) reported that PLCs help to encourage shared leadership

among teachers and often entrust these teams to make important decisions within the

school setting. Shared leadership allows teachers to have autonomy in deciding what

material to teach and how to teach (Dufour & Mattos, 2013). When teachers of the same

discipline are given the ability to work with one another, it is much more efficacious than

working with other members of the faculty who do not know the intricacies of a

particular subject. PLCs help to encourage a collaborative atmosphere where

administrators and teachers work together in collective inquiry to decide on what areas to

explore with the goal of helping all students to achieve at higher levels (Dufour &

Mattos, 2013).

In a study conducted by Dever and Lash (2013), they noted that teachers who met

together during common planning time in content-specific PLCs indicated much more

professional growth than teachers who met in interdisciplinary teams. When teachers are

able to lead and be a part of a group with common goals and teaching similar material,

the conversation will be more focused and rewarding for all stakeholders. It was observed

that teachers who formed the interdisciplinary teams often were engaged in nonacademic

talk and did not form a collaborative environment that was productive (Dever & Lash,

2013).

PLC models require collegiality and collaboration to be successful. Owen (2014) reported that collaboration is a key characteristic of PLCs noted by a number of researchers. Owen described a case study of three schools where teachers were interviewed about their opinions and observations of the PLCs they were members. The teachers at each school overwhelmingly rated collaboration positively, stating that working together with colleagues allowed them to be more innovative in planning lessons, gathering data to understand students' learning needs, and questioning their own teaching practices with the intent of improving pedagogy (Owen, 2014). Teachers working in teams with both content and interdisciplinary members mentioned positive outcomes as they were able to see other innovative ways of delivering content as well as understanding how colleagues across a number of disciplines engage students. These ideas will be helpful in creating a professional development experience for my study.

Preassessments

Understanding where students are when beginning a new unit of study is imperative for teachers to know in order to be able to differentiate instruction effectively. Tomlinson and Moon (2013) noted that preassessments are not meant to test every piece of knowledge associated with a new unit of study. Instead, teachers can use a variety of preassessment methods to gain an understanding of how comfortable their students are with the course material. Many teachers in the study reported using preassessments when gathering initial data on their students.

One informal way to preassess students is to find out in the beginning weeks of school what interests each student. If a teacher notes that a number of students are

interested in music or art, lessons can be designed to include activities that would incorporate these areas of interest for students to showcase their knowledge of a particular topic of study (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). A more formal way of assessing where students are at within a unit is to ask them to raise their hand and use specific signals to indicate their level of comfort with the material that has been presented up until this point (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). This knowledge helps teachers in their planning of differentiated lessons to help each student master the standards being studied. According to O'Meara (2010), preassessments should strive to offer students some information regarding a new unit of study with the intent for the student to indicate understanding. It is the level of understanding the student reveals which will allow teachers to differentiate instruction depending on the readiness level exhibited by the student from the preassessment data. Preassessments should be completed individually, have a catalyst to prompt background knowledge, include a number of dimensions of the student's approach to content, and allow for new connections to be made by students without intentionally introducing information (O'Meara, 2010). Preassessment data offers invaluable knowledge of students' readiness levels within a classroom and can help teachers maximize the authenticity of lessons to provide the bridge needed for students to master the standards being addressed in a particular unit of study.

Differentiated Instruction

Watts-Taffe et al (2012) defined differentiated instruction as allowing "all students to access the same classroom curriculum by providing entry points, learning tasks, and outcomes tailored to students' learning needs" (p. 304). In order for teachers to

be successful in differentiating their content for students, teachers will need to know students' ability levels when entering into a classroom for the first time. Once teachers know their students' readiness levels, the content, process, and product can be designed to fit the different learners in the classroom.

According to Tomlinson and Imbeau (2014), planning for a vast array of learners within a classroom requires a teacher to begin "teaching up" (p. 3). When teachers employ this philosophy as they plan units, the goal is to help students aim higher with their learning while teachers provide scaffolding to help the students achieve these goals. The intent of "teaching up" is not to create a more difficult curriculum, but rather to create a more "intellectually rigorous curriculum that stretches students' thinking" (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2014, p. 4). By approaching teaching in this manner, teachers will be better able to differentiate instruction to reach all students including LEP students in their regular education classrooms.

Tiered lesson planning. Another way to differentiate instruction for students is by providing tiered lesson plans which are essentially "multiple versions of assignments and activities that permit students to work at their appropriate levels" (Coil, 2011, p. 145). According to Coil (2011), tiered lessons help students build upon prior knowledge helping to meet the needs of all level of learners within one classroom. The different levels of the assignment should be similar to one another; however, the level of challenge should be varied depending upon the readiness of the student (Whitworth, Maeng, & Bell, 2013; Laud, 2011; Coil, 2011). For example, if one group is writing an essay, the other groups should also be writing but at an adjusted level based on their academic

needs (Coil, 2011). By offering tiered lessons to students, the standards are still being met while allowing students to work at the depth and pace they are capable.

Interest level. Laud (2011) explained that when students are given the opportunity to work on lessons that are designed based on interest level, student motivation is higher and makes for a much more productive class environment. One way a teacher might obtain information on a student's interests is by having the student fill out an interest profile. The teacher can offer a number of potential interest categories on the profile while asking the student to contribute any other interests not listed (Laud, 2011). Ely, Ainley, and Pearce (2013) conducted a study and found that when students' interests were taken into consideration when teachers developed activities, students were much more likely to stay motivated and participate in the learning process. Engaging students in this manner is a valuable way to differentiate instruction and include the student in the units being designed. Several teachers mentioned using interest level to differentiate instruction for their students.

Grouping. A number of different types of grouping methods can be employed to help in differentiated instruction. Grouping students allows for a wide range of learning abilities to be addressed within the classroom setting. Tomlinson (2001) suggested "a variety of grouping strategies allows you to match students and tasks when necessary" (p. 26). The teachers participating in this study noted using a number of different types of grouping strategies with their students.

Flexible grouping. Flexible grouping can be determined by a student's interest or ability levels (Conklin, 2010). Students can work with a partner, cooperative or whole-

class grouping to learn material (Chapman & King, 2014). According to Conklin (2010) and Tomlinson (2001), flexible grouping is beneficial especially to struggling students as they will not be in the same group all the time and possibly stigmatized. It can also help to keep students interested in their classwork because flexible grouping changes the routine often allowing students to move around and work with different people within the same classroom.

Heterogeneous grouping. This type of grouping consists of students with various academic abilities. Gregory and Chapman (2012) stated that heterogeneous groups simulate a real-world atmosphere for students as they are working with students who have different abilities and interests. Conklin (2010) noted that diversity in ability and achievement can be beneficial for students to support one another but warned that too much of an academic difference can be counterproductive when grouping heterogeneously. Teachers can also have students grouped by preferred interest, location in the classroom, or by students self-selecting (Conklin, 2010).

Homogeneous grouping. Another way to arrange students is by the same ability level. Conklin (2010) stated that when assigning reading, language skills, or math lessons, placing students together who have similar academic levels makes sense. Even though some of the research has indicated this type of grouping to be less than effective at times, LEP students can benefit from homogeneous reading groups (Gregory & Burkman, 2011). Students who are studying English as a second language will have similar issues with new words; therefore, working with other students who struggle

learning a new language can be helpful. Students will be less self-conscious if around a peer who shares similar knowledge of a particular subject area.

Flexogeneous grouping. A final means of grouping is to allow flexible grouping of heterogeneous or homogeneous groups. In this manner, teachers are basically employing the jigsaw strategy where students work together for part of a lesson, then a selected member of the group switches to another group to continue the lesson and learn from a new set of peers (Conklin, 2010). This type of grouping allows for students to continually form new groups and gain from others thus maximizing the material learned on any given topic.

Technology. Technology has become part of the educational world for both teachers and students. Utilizing technology in a 21st Century classroom has a number of benefits. According to Stanford, Crowe, and Flice (2010), technology helps to motivate students by keeping them interested in their studies, allowing them to work more independently, and increasing their ability to gain real-world skills. Liu, Navarrete, and Wivagg (2014) conducted a case study where iPod touch devices were given to teachers and LEP students to find out the impact of these devices on LEP students' learning. The findings of this research indicated that the iPod can significantly aid in the learning of LEP students. The devices were able to provide a number of tools such as audio books, Internet access, and media creation tools (Liu, Navarrete, & Wivagg, 2014).

Andrei (2014) conducted a technology study at three middle schools where teachers and LEP students used digital technology. The findings revealed that the students did benefit from the various types of technology available such as a digital

board, language learning websites, document cameras, computers, access to the Internet, and iPods. Andrei further noted, however, that while there were many positive outcomes of the students and teachers having this up-to-date technology, many of the lessons did not indicate a sophisticated ability to combine technology with the curriculum to create units and lessons that would be the most helpful to LEP students. While technology has the power to change classrooms of the past, it is ultimately up to the teachers and students to properly use technology to enhance the learning environment.

In conclusion, the research was consistent with the findings from this study. The participants stated many of the same ideas mentioned in the literature review such as wanting to collaborate with peers teaching the same courses and using preassessments to know students' readiness levels. The participants articulated similar definitions of differentiated instruction as well as a number of the same ways to differentiate instructions such as through tiered lessons, interest levels, grouping, and technology. Having more focused professional development with secondary English teachers and working together in a collaborative setting analogous to a PLC were also topics the participants mentioned.

Implementation, Potential Resources, and Existing Supports

As per protocol of the district of the study, I applied for and was granted permission to conduct this study at the two local high schools (See Appendix D). Two administrators at the two local high schools were then contacted and given an overview of the study. Both administrators offered their assistance in providing names of potential participants and were interested in the topic of the study as differentiation is a concept the

county has embraced in order to help local teachers become proficient in adding differentiation in lessons and units of study. Differentiated instruction is a necessary component today for all teachers to master and meet on the state evaluation TKES. Because of the importance of this standard of evaluation, I explored possible solutions to help the secondary high school English teachers in this district become more proficient in implementing differentiated instruction for their students. In conjunction with the support of the school district, the participants of the study were eager to offer ideas of what they believe is needed to better differentiate lessons and units. Many of the participants voluntarily expressed ideas of what they would like to see in a professional development opportunity that would be more beneficial than sessions they had attended previously.

Potential Barriers

The biggest barrier in implementing this project would be the time necessary to complete 3 professional development sessions over the course of one semester. It would require the English teachers to be out of their classrooms potentially during regular school days thus requiring substitutes. Many teachers may be resistant in attending the professional development seminar due to a loss of valuable class time needed to prepare their students for required assessments throughout the year. Having nearly an entire department at each school high out for 3 separate days over the course of a semester might be difficult to manage presenting another potential barrier of funding as many budget cuts have had to be made over the last several years in the district. A possible solution to this barrier would be to schedule the professional development days during pre-panning and pre-determined work days if offered within the semester which would

reduce the cost as substitutes would not be necessary. Additionally, scheduling professional development on teacher work days would allow teachers to not miss class time with their students. A second barrier is that the teachers in this district have attended many sessions of professional development on differentiated instruction and may not believe another session would offer any new insight or information for them to use in their planning. Finally, another barrier to consider would be finding a number of qualified personnel to lead the professional development sessions at the high schools in the county. One possible solution to this barrier might be to have all of the English teachers at each high school meet at one common location for the 3 days of professional development thus reducing the number of presenters needed.

<p align="center">**Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**</p>

Once the study is completed and all findings recorded, I would need to meet with local administrators at the county high schools to share the findings of the study and the professional development opportunity designed based on the findings. I will create a 3 day professional development opportunity for the secondary high school English teachers in the local district that will delve into the concept of differentiated instruction, allowing the teachers the opportunity to collaborate and decide on a working definition that reflects the school setting and populations being served. The professional development plan would incorporate all the major themes generated in the findings and include a number of examples of differentiated strategies throughout the sessions to help model for the teachers ways they can include differentiation in their own classrooms. In addition, teachers would have the time to collaborate with colleagues who teach the same courses

to develop lessons and a unit to be implemented in their classes. Upon subsequent days of the professional development sessions, the teachers would have collaboration and reflection time to review the lessons and unit in order to concentrate on the strengths and weaknesses noted during the implementation process. The completion time to create the professional development should take approximately 3 months with another 4 months to implement with the teachers meeting at 3 different times between August and November.

Training would be conducted at individual schools where the teachers currently work or possibly at on central location if arrangements are possible. Having teachers work together at a specific location would help foster a collaborative atmosphere akin to a PLC where the teachers could work directly with colleagues who teach like courses. Providing a central location would aid teachers in having the time to talk specifically to a colleague who teaches the same class and would further allow the English teachers to hear successes and challenges regarding differentiated instruction from people they are able to speak with frequently who share similar experiences.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others

The role of the students would be to benefit from the differentiated lessons and units prepared by teachers in order to help with mastering the standards especially on standardized tests. Students would be exposed to different types of learning through interest level or academic ability. The newly developed lessons would also assist struggling LEP students as their individualized needs would be met through differentiated assessments in their English classes. The role of the teachers would be to use the collaborative time provided in designing quality lessons and units incorporating

differentiated instruction. The expectation would be for teachers to then implement in their classrooms what they have designed. The teachers' responsibilities would be to continue to collaborate with peers and develop differentiated materials to help their students. The role of administrators would be to encourage their teachers to continue the process differentiated lessons while collaborating with peers. Administrators have a responsibility to promote an atmosphere of collegiality where teachers can takes risks and challenge themselves to continue to grow as educators while instituting best practices.

Project Evaluation

The purpose in designing this 3 day professional development seminar over the course of a semester was to address the needs expressed by the participants of the study regarding collaboration and differentiated instruction. The project itself was designed based on specific findings from the research dealing with differentiated instruction. Many differentiated strategies were added to the design of the sessions to be included in the actual execution of activities over the 3 day period to model for the participants a number of different ways in which they could differentiate their lessons for students.

Berriet-Solliec, Labarthe, and Laurent (2014) posit that a main "objective of the evaluation process is to organize and analyze the information gathered about the program concerned" (p. 196). Therefore, several evaluations were included throughout the program to obtain needed information to inform future professional development sessions. To begin with, at the end of the first and second day of the seminar, teachers will be asked to tell what was most beneficial to them and what else they need in order to complete the designated assignments. Encouraging open discussion can help in

determining what else might need to be included on subsequent days of the professional development. On the third day, teachers will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey of the professional development sessions (See Appendix A). By providing an anonymous survey, honesty will be encouraged in their answers. Completing the survey online will also save them time. In addition, the survey data will be helpful in addressing what additions or deletions to the schedule are needed in future professional development offered. After all 3 of the sessions are completed, teachers will be provided with online access to a Google drive account with all other English teachers in the county. Here, teachers would be able to download relevant materials and lessons by course, and they would have the ability to ask questions and make comments about various aspects of differentiated instruction. This site could be monitored by designated personnel and allow for helpful information to be gleaned on how the teachers are incorporating what was learned at the professional development they attended.

This goal-based evaluation is the most appropriate approach as the professional development sessions are developed on a set of goals with the final evaluation being created based on these same goals. The main goal of this professional development seminar will be to provide secondary English teachers with the time to collaborate and reflect on various aspects of differentiated instruction including the design of lessons. Another goal will be to create a seminar that included from the findings of this study what the participants mentioned as most important when attending professional development on differentiated instructions. The goal of the final evaluation will be to make sure the teachers who attended were able to have a clearer idea of differentiation,

how to incorporate this concept in their lessons, and to have the ability to collaborate with fellow teachers even after the sessions were completed.

The key stakeholders are first and foremost the teachers who would benefit from this professional development as it was created based on the participants' needs. The professional development not only would help to include teachers in the process of creating these seminars, but target the most important facets of what the participants mentioned was important to be included in any future professional development on differentiated instruction. The administration is also a key stakeholder as all members of a school should work together as newer teaching methods and ideas are replacing older methods. In addition, students are key stakeholders as they would benefit from their teachers being more knowledgeable in understanding a student's readiness or interest level. Having students graduate from high school better prepared for college or the work force would be beneficial to the community as students would become productive members of society.

<div align="center">**Implications Including Social Change**</div>

This project study inquired as to how regular education teachers in two English departments differentiated instruction for LEP students. All schools in the county have LEP students who can benefit from the findings of this study. Teachers would be offered the opportunity to attend a 3 day professional development seminar where they can learn more about differentiated instruction and develop lessons with peers incorporating this knowledge. Teachers would be provided hands-on training that would be of use when

delivering the lessons directly in their classrooms where they could observe the results of the lessons designed.

This experience has the potential of offering social change on a number of fronts. Teachers would be able to collaborate and reflect on differentiated instruction which can lead to an atmosphere of collegiality and trust. Teachers can also benefit as they will be evaluated on how they use the concept of differentiated instruction within their classrooms. Another area of social change is encouraging teachers who attend the professional development sessions to become leaders at their own schools by passing along the information learned to colleagues and new teachers.

Students would benefit as well due to the fact that their readiness and interest levels would be considered when teachers construct future unit plans. The community also has the potential to be part of the social change. Including differentiation in lessons encourages higher achievement in students and on standardized test scores which can help students as they graduate from high school. The results of this study also have the means to reach beyond the local school district and encourage further social change. Many districts in this state have similar demographics and could benefit from the professional development outline presented in this project study on differentiated instruction to help LEP students as well.

Conclusion

The professional development opportunity is needed to help teachers further their understanding of differentiated instruction and how to better incorporate it into a regular classroom setting to reach all students regardless of academic ability. Giving teachers

ability to learn, collaborate, and reflect on differentiation is an important step in encouraging best practices and allowing for professional growth. Students also benefit because teachers would be using a more up-to-date approach to teaching that strives to serve students' readiness and interest levels. Combining information gathered from both interviews and research on the topic of differentiated instruction, collaboration, and professional development, I have created a professional development opportunity for the secondary English teachers in my district. Section 4 will offer a detailed description of the project study along with my reflections and conclusions.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to examine how regular education teachers in the English departments in two suburban high schools described the ways they differentiated instruction for LEP students within their classrooms. In Section 4, I will offer my reflections regarding this study and examine my role as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. To conclude, analysis of the project's potential impact for social change will be discussed as well as what future research needs to take place in order to further add to the findings from this study.

Project Strengths

This project study has several strengths. The project study addresses all five of the themes that were presented in the findings: differentiated instruction defined, ways of differentiating instruction, differentiated instruction professional development, collaboration, and challenges of implementing differentiated instruction in an English high school classroom. By analyzing each theme individually and then synthesizing the information, the findings helped to inform the research question of how regular education teachers in the English departments in two suburban high schools describe the ways they differentiate instruction for LEP students within their classrooms. In understanding the answers to the research question, the project was designed to incorporate what teachers needed to better be able to differentiate instruction within their classrooms such as a specific definition of differentiated instruction for their local setting, how to differentiate

instruction, collaboration with colleagues, identifying challenges in differentiating instruction, and purposeful professional development.

Another strength of this project is offering the opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues in the English department. According to Huffman and Hipp (2003), when teachers have shared goals to accomplish, collaboration becomes "focused, intentional, and urgent" (p. 79). Collaboration encourages teachers to speak directly with another teacher who not only teaches the same subject, but more specifically, the same course. In this setting, the participants would be able to hear directly from their peers and collaborate on similar lessons. Teachers would be able to get immediate feedback on lessons taught by other teachers for the same unit. They would also be able to share what the lessons' strengths and weakness are with the ability to continue to improve when designing the next set of lessons for their course. Dufour et al. (2008) stated that when members of a group help teach each other using individual strengths, the team as a whole will benefit. By sharing with peers, a collaborative environment could be created for the teachers to learn from one another.

A final positive attribute of the project is that reflection is included, which may allow teachers the valuable time needed to review the ideas of differentiated instruction and how it relates to their classrooms. Without time to reflect on the created lessons, it would be difficult to move forward and continue to work to develop unique lessons incorporating differentiated instruction to help serve all students including LEP students. Reflection is a valuable aspect of any collaborative atmosphere. If teachers are not allowed time to reassess what they have learned, it can be difficult for them to advance

their knowledge of differentiated instruction and continue to provide quality lessons for their students.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

One limitation I anticipate is the time needed to not only have the 3 days of professional development, but also the time the teachers will need to deliver their created differentiated lessons from the 3 seminar days. Because a number of people would need to be involved in this professional development such as teachers, presenters, and administration, finding the time all parties could meet could also pose a challenge. A second limitation is money. Like many school districts across the country, finances can be of primary concern and asking for monies to cover substitutes can be costly. One solution to both of the limitations mentioned would be to try to schedule at least 1 or 2 of the professional development days during preplanning or on teacher work days. It would be much easier to ask the district to supply substitutes on perhaps only 1 of the training days instead of all 3. It would also help teachers by not having them miss as much instructional time in their classrooms. One other alternative to the 3 professional development days would be to have teachers attend planning period meetings where the objectives of the study would be delivered in much smaller chunks over a more significant portion of the year. Some of the information could also be sent prior to the planning period meetings for the teachers in the English department to peruse ahead of time, so that discussion could be generated immediately in the planning period meetings. Teachers could also collaborate before or after school on some of the topics in the sessions.

Scholarship

In completing this project study, I have come to a far greater understanding of the impact differentiated instruction can have on students, especially LEP students. While I have been incorporating differentiated instruction in my classroom for years, the research and interviews I have conducted have revealed to me a number of new strategies that can be employed when designing lessons for my students. I have also arrived at a fuller understanding of what differentiated content, process, and product are and how these concepts all work together to provide a complete unit of study for students that allow them to start at their readiness levels and indicate growth within a unit of study.

There are many trials and tribulations that others have faced when trying to successfully implement differentiated instruction in a school or district. Many of these scholars have outlined the challenges teachers face when trying to include differentiation in their lesson planning, such as the additional time needed or the vast difference in ability levels within a single classroom that should be addressed. However, the researchers also reveal how to overcome these challenges to delineate successfully lessons that embody the concept of differentiation. I have come to the realization that differentiated instruction is more of an intrinsic philosophy that teachers need to continually embrace; differentiating instruction for students is not something that can be accomplished quickly or perhaps ever fully. Rather it requires time and effort on the teacher's part to move toward a differentiated classroom.

I would be remiss in not mentioning that the knowledge of scholarship did not begin with this project study. I have been a life-long student who enjoys learning. I have

always been inquisitive and sought to learn far beyond what was presented in many of

my courses of study. My EdS provided me with a glance into the process of writing a

dissertation which solidified my determination to complete my goal of earning a

doctorate degree. Many of the courses I completed at the beginning of my studies at

Walden provided a framework from which my eventual project study emerged. I was able

to eventually design my project study having learned about theorists, data analysis, and

various methods of gathering data. All of these learning tools were relevant to the study,

but it was also necessary in considering any future studies on this topic. Finalizing my

research study afforded me the opportunity to share my knowledge with colleagues and

administrators as differentiated instruction is a most important topic being discussed in

education today.

Project Development and Evaluation

Developing this project study required synthesizing a number of sources. As

themes emerged from the findings based on the interviews with the original seven

participants, it became clear that professional development was needed in order to offer

clarification on differentiated instruction and how to include this concept in lessons and

unit plans. In having teachers meet in an environment similar to a PLC to help foster a

collaborative atmosphere, teachers would be able to share and develop lessons for their

classes that will help inform best practices. The research on PLCs and differentiated

instruction helped to mold the 3 day professional development seminar. The design of the

professional development seminar on differentiated instruction for English teachers

teaching regular education classes that include LEP students would allow time for

collaboration, lesson design, lesson implementation, and reflection on several topics already mentioned. All of these components are needed to allow teachers to grow in their knowledge of differentiated instruction and to see how effective collaboration can guide them in this journey.

Leadership and Change

I chose to pursue this doctoral degree because I am one of the teachers who wish to remain in the classroom but become leaders in the school setting. One problem my school had been experiencing was low pass rates on EOCT's in the English department for LEP students. I wanted to explore this problem and seek a possible solution that could help these students meet the necessary standards on these standardized tests while also being able to help teachers understand how to differentiate lessons for these struggling students.

During my time at Walden, I have learned through research the many components of differentiated instruction and PLCs. Because of this additional knowledge I have gained in these areas, I have been able to apply it directly in my classroom and share it with my colleagues. By applying this knowledge, I have become a leader in my school and have been able to help with some of the questions teachers have regarding various aspects of differentiation such as tiered lessons or interpreting data. I have also employed many of the PLC components into the mentoring program at my school that I co-sponsor to help new teachers adjust as they begin their careers in education.

As I continued to research the topics of differentiated instruction and PLC's, I changed the way I designed and delivered differentiated lessons in my classroom. While I

had been incorporating differentiation all along, I have learned of other strategies as well as how to better implement this concept to help my students. I have also changed in that I have gained knowledge on how to collaborate more effectively with members of my own department to design lessons and discuss our goals in a manner that includes differentiation in the beginning stages of a unit.

Another avenue of this project study that allowed me to change was through my data collection. The teachers that I interviewed offered invaluable insight regarding their individual ideas of differentiation and collaboration, but also what they believed is necessary to have in a meaningful professional development seminar on differentiated instruction. With this knowledge, I was able to create a professional development plan that incorporated these necessary and worthwhile suggestions. This insight allowed for change in the typical sessions that many had expressed were not very illuminating or useful to those who had attended in the past. By incorporating these improvements into the professional development seminar, change is evident in involving the teachers through collaborating with peers in the same discipline and creating differentiated lessons they can execute directly in their classrooms. I believe this project study is timely given the wishes of the teachers in my community and will meet the needs of teachers of LEP students in regular education classes in the English department.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

By completing this project study, I have grown as a scholar. I had been interested in learning more about differentiated instruction because of its emphasis on the new teacher evaluation in my state which has a component of differentiated instruction

included, so completing this research allowed me to investigate this topic much deeper which helped me understand how to help my students better, especially my LEP students. Being cognizant of how LEP students learn, I was able to match appropriate differentiated strategies to help students reach mastery of standards more effectively.

I have also learned much more about data collection and how to analyze the data. When having students complete a preassessment on a specific unit of study, understanding what information students have mastered versus what they need to continue to work on to achieve mastery has been immensely valuable. This knowledge has allowed me to create unique lessons and activities that are differentiated to help students of all academic levels within my classes achieve mastery on the required standards. Beyond the classroom, I am able to better grasp data that has been collected on any number of topics within my profession. It has prepared me to ask important questions and understand the nature of what the data is really saying in relation to the subject.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

It is imperative that educators continue to learn and grow professionally as the field of education is continually changing. Since differentiated instruction had become a much discussed topic in recent years, I wanted to learn as much as possible about it to advance my knowledge of the subject. However, not sharing this information with colleagues would be counterproductive and not a benefit to them or our students. Therefore, I have collaborated with many colleagues and administrators regarding my knowledge of differentiated instruction. As a co-sponsor of the mentor committee at my school, I have also shared this information with beginning teachers to model

differentiated instruction for them. In this manner, as a self-practitioner, I am helping

those around me to understand the concept of differentiation and how it can be included

in a classroom regardless of the discipline begin taught or the variety of academic

abilities present.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

Creating the project of a 3 day professional development seminar has been a

valuable learning experience. This project has the potential to help English teachers

isolate how differentiated instruction can specifically be infused within their discipline to

offer best practices to a greater number of students than before they attended this training.

Using knowledge and data gathered from my research and interviews helped to enhance

the designing of the professional development seminar. I incorporated activities that

directly addressed the main themes gathered from my interviews, and I also made sure

that these activities were differentiated so that teachers will be witnessing differentiation

as they are collaborating and designing lessons at the professional development seminars.

Being able to offer teachers a learning opportunity to better their teaching practices while

also incorporating specifically what they noted was necessary in future professional

development was empowering. This experience has allowed me to connect my skills as a

leader, researcher, and project developer in order to deliver an opportunity to secondary

English teachers that will have an enormous impact on their teaching practices.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

Collaboration is a vital part of any successful team environment, and teachers

especially need to have the time provided to them to get together and share what they

know and want to learn regarding differentiation. Interviewing teachers on this topic and

reading a multitude of articles and books on the topics of collaboration and differentiated

instruction, a professional development seminar was created to help teachers come

together and expand their knowledge of differentiation. This project has the potential to

cause social change by offering teachers in this local setting a template of how to

differentiate instruction for all students in their classroom as well as how to work together

collaboratively to design and deliver more effective lessons. Through collaboration,

teachers have the ability to learn to work with one another and improve relationships

throughout the school and county within their discipline. This project will offer teachers

the ability to come together in learning more about differentiated instruction. Students

will be affected as they are being given opportunities to learn in ways that are best suited

for their academic ability or interest level. Teachers will be encouraging higher

achievement in their students which should increase scores on standardized tests.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

When teachers attend professional development sessions, they want to know they

will leave having learned something valuable that can be used in a classroom. Teachers

need to have input in the process of learning new concepts, but they also need the time to

expand their knowledge as well as reflection time to ponder what works, what does not

work, and most importantly, how to continue building and improving on what they are

learning. The comments from the participants in this study indicated that they need time

for meaningful collaboration on differentiated instruction with colleagues teaching

similar courses. The professional development sessions were developed with this knowledge.

While English teachers in the district have attended collaborative meetings in the last few years both with their own schools as well as with teachers from other schools, it appears there have not been any professional development sessions offered to give teachers extended time to sit down and work on lessons and units with members teaching a similar course. English teachers would be able to apply differentiated strategies learned in the 3 sessions regarding differentiated instruction in their classrooms to encourage a more dynamic learning environment beneficial for all students. Then the teachers would be able to meet together again at subsequent times to discuss these delivered lessons and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses.

Future research on differentiated instruction might include what is best for LEP students helping them to close the gap between their current readiness level and indicating mastery on mandated standardized tests. Teachers should continue to explore and develop collaborative skills and differentiation with the purposeful intent of helping students to achieve higher on required standardized testing. Utilizing this project study model as a guide, the district might incorporate the professional development on an annual basis to continue to support time for teachers to collaborate and further investigate the concept of differentiation. Teachers who have attended previous sessions could become the deliverers of the current sessions sharing personal experiences and expertise regarding differentiated instruction with the newer teachers in the county.

Summary

Section 4 offered an in-depth look at the professional development seminar developed for this project study. The professional development opportunity was designed based on interviews conducted with the participants in the study in order to help English teachers learn more about the strategy of differentiated instruction. Reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the project were discussed. Strengths of the project included the promotion of a collaborative atmosphere for the teachers attending the seminars along with time to design differentiated lessons and then reflect on the implementation of the lessons over the course of a semester. Some of the weaknesses mentioned were the financial aspects of conducting 3 professional development days as well as finding 3 days within a semester that all English teachers would be able to attend. Some possibilities to overcome the barriers would be to have the professional development days during preplanning or over teacher work days as to save the county money in having to employ substitutes for the teachers.

Also included were my personal reflections as a scholar, practitioner, leader, and project developer. In these sections I reflected upon what I have learned throughout the process of writing this paper along with designing the professional development opportunity based on the findings from my study. The final section of this study offered an overarching reflection of the project's potential for social change both locally and beyond the district being studied. In conclusion, I offered my recommendations for future research and how the project could be used in the future to benefit teachers and students.

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Appendix A: Differentiated Instruction Professional Development

Differentiated Instruction Professional Development Goals, Outcomes, and Objectives

Program Goals

A.   Share and review definitions of differentiated instruction to then create a specific

definition of differentiated instruction applicable for the local setting of the study.

B.   Present teachers with the necessary tools needed to be able to implement

differentiated instruction within their classrooms.

C.   Provide teachers with the ability to collaborate with colleagues of the same

discipline and course in order to garner specific, useful feedback within the

English department regarding how to differentiate lessons.

D.   Provide teachers with the time needed to create lessons utilizing differentiation.

E.   Provide teachers with the time to reflect on differentiated lessons delivered in

their classrooms to note both strengths and weaknesses of the lessons for future

planning.

Program Outcomes

A.1.   Teachers will have gained a better understanding of differentiated instruction and

its relationship to their local setting.

B.1.   Teachers will be presented with the necessary tools such as modeled lessons and a

variety of differentiation strategies to implement differentiated instruction within

their classrooms.

C.1.　Teachers will be given time to collaborate with colleagues of the same course within the English department to share feedback to help in learning how to differentiate lessons.

D.1.　Teachers will be given the time to share ideas on differentiated instruction in order to create lessons plans for their classrooms.

E.1.　Teachers will be given time to reflect on the differentiated lessons delivered in their classrooms in order to see the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons for future planning.

Program Objectives

A.1.a.　Teachers will be able to identify the main areas of differentiation that applies to the local setting.

B.1.b.　Teachers will be exposed to a variety of types of differentiated instruction such as preassessments, tiered lesson planning, grouping, etc., that can be utilized when planning lessons.

C.1.c.　Teachers will be able to share specific ideas on how to differentiate lessons with colleagues who teach the same course within the English department thus allowing them to pair lessons with appropriate types of differentiated instruction.

D.1.d.　Teachers will be able to create working lessons that can be immediately implemented within their classrooms.

E.1.e.　Teachers will be able to reflect on the lessons delivered in their classrooms in order to see the strengths and weaknesses when designing lesson in the future.

3-Day Professional Development on Differentiating Instruction:
Secondary Regular Education English Teachers with LEP Students
Day 1 Middle of August 8:30-3:00
What is differentiated instruction and how to incorporate into classroom activities?

Program Goals for Day 1

A.   Share and review definitions of differentiated instruction to then create a specific

        definition of differentiated instruction applicable for the local setting of the study.

B.   Present teachers with the necessary tools needed to be able to implement

        differentiated instruction within their classrooms.

C.   Provide teachers with the ability to collaborate with colleagues of the same

        discipline and course in order to garner specific, useful feedback within the

        English department regarding how to differentiate lessons.

D.   Provide teachers with the time needed to create lessons utilizing differentiation.

Program Outcomes for Day 1

A.1.   Teachers will have gained a better understanding of differentiated instruction and

        its relationship to their local setting.

B.1.   Teachers will be presented with the necessary tools such as modeled lessons and a

        variety of differentiation strategies to implement differentiated instruction within

        their classrooms.

C.1.   Teachers will be given time to collaborate with colleagues of the same course

        within the English department to share feedback to help in learning how to

        differentiate lessons.

D.1. Teachers will be given the time to share ideas on differentiated instruction in order to create lessons plans for their classrooms.

Objectives for Day 1:

A.1.a. Teachers will be able to identify the main areas of differentiation that apply to the local setting.

B.1.b. Teachers will be exposed to a variety of types of differentiated instruction such as preassessments, tiered lesson planning, grouping, etc., that can be utilized when planning lessons.

C.1.c. Teachers will be able to share specific ideas on how to differentiate lessons with colleagues who teach the same course within the English department thus allowing them to pair lessons with appropriate types of differentiated instruction.

D.1.d. Teachers will be able to create working lessons that can be immediately implemented within their classrooms.

Time	_Description of PD Session_	_Examples of Differentiation Demonstrated in PD Session_
8:30-9:00	-Introduction -Indicate purpose for professional development seminar	
9:00-9:30	-Have teachers write down personal definition of differentiated instruction (DI) and list one example of differentiation used in classroom -If able, list one lesson with examples of differentiated content, process, and product	Preassessment data

9:30-9:45	-Have teachers meet in small groups of 2-3 and share definitions of differentiation and lesson examples	Heterogeneous small groups
9:45-10:00	-Have one teacher from each group shift to a different group to share information from former group and then hear information from new group	Jigsaw
10:00-10:30	-Whole group discussion-have a volunteer at smart board writing down a list of shared definitions of DI and then focus on 3-4 overlapping ideas mentioned to come to a consensus of what DI looks like for their school setting/population (this will be a work-in-progress over 3 sessions) -Whole group discussion-have a different volunteer go to smart board and list examples of DI content, process, and product to help generate ideas of DI -Information on the smart board will be saved as a document and e-mailed to the participants for review	Heterogeneous whole group Technology
10:30-11:30	-Review of task to be completed after lunch which is to design 2 assignments utilizing DI -An example of each type of lesson (tiered lesson/interest level) will be included to help model the parameters of each part of the task -Participants will evaluate the modeled lessons through whole group discussion -A form will be provided to help participants include all necessary parts for the lessons they design -Q/A	Modeling Graphic organizer Heterogeneous whole group
11:30-12:30	lunch	

| 12:30-3:00 | -Meet in groups of 2-3 of same course (ie: American Lit., British Lit. etc.) and use examples of DI listed before lunch to develop an upcoming assignment that is differentiated based on academic level determined from a preassessment given for the assignment (divide students by *does not meet*, *meets*, or *exceeds* the standard when developing differentiated activity)
-Develop a 2nd upcoming assignment that is differentiated this time based on interest level (ie: art, music, drama, writing, audio visual, etc.)
-Information will be filled out on form provided
-Ticket out the door-what was beneficial for you at today's session? Do you have any questions you would like addressed at the next session? | Homogeneous small groups

Preassessment data

Tiered lesson

Academic/interest levels

Ticket out the door

Graphic organizer |
| Homework | -For the next session in 6 weeks, deliver the two assignments in your classroom developed today, and make notes on strengths/weaknesses, what worked/what did not, etc.
-A form will be provided to help participants include all necessary parts | Graphic organizer |

Day 2 End of September 8:30-3:00
Collaboration and continued development of differentiated units.

Program Goals for Day 2

B.   Present teachers with the necessary tools needed to be able to implement

differentiated instruction within their classrooms.

C.   Provide teachers with the ability to collaborate with colleagues of the same

discipline and course in order to garner specific, useful feedback within the

English department regarding how to differentiate lessons.

D.   Provide teachers with the time needed to create lessons utilizing differentiation.

E.   Provide teachers with the time to reflect on differentiated lessons delivered in

their classrooms to note both strengths and weaknesses of the lessons for future

planning.

Program Outcomes for Day 2

B.1.   Teachers will be presented with the necessary tools such as modeled lessons and a

variety of differentiation strategies to implement differentiated instruction within

their classrooms.

C.1.   Teachers will be given time to collaborate with colleagues of the same course

within the English department to share feedback to help in learning how to

differentiate lessons.

D.1.   Teachers will be given the time to share ideas on differentiated instruction in

order to create lessons plans for their classrooms.

E.1. Teachers will be given time to reflect on the differentiated lessons delivered in their classrooms in order to see the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons for future planning.

Objectives for Day 2:

B.1.b. Teachers will be exposed to a variety of types of differentiated instruction such as preassessments, tiered lesson planning, grouping, etc., that can be utilized when planning lessons.

C.1.c. Teachers will be able to share specific ideas on how to differentiate lessons with colleagues who teach the same course within the English department thus allowing them to pair lessons with appropriate types of differentiated instruction.

D.1.d. Teachers will be able to create working lessons that can be immediately implemented within their classrooms.

E.1.e. Teachers will be able to reflect on the lessons delivered in their classrooms in order to see the strengths and weaknesses when designing lesson in the future.

Time	*Description*	*Differentiation*
8:30-9:00	-Introduction to session 2 - review of first session -revisit definition of DI and examples mentioned previously -Q/A	Review
9:00-10:00	-Using completed form of the two lessons delivered over last six weeks, teachers will meet in same small groups that developed 2 activities from previous session and discuss the implementation, strengths/weaknesses, what worked/what did not, possible improvements to activities,	Homogeneous small groups

	differences in differentiating by academic ability vs. interest level -Each group should compile a list of similarities and differences of their experience with these two lessons to share with the whole group	
10:00-11:30	-Whole group discussion -Each small group will share their findings from their two activities -Q/A after each small group presents	Heterogeneous whole group
11:30-12:30	Lunch	
12:30-1:00	-Review of next task-now that the groundwork has begun for DI, looking forward to the next course unit to be taught, develop one unit where there is at least one example of differentiation in content, process, and product based on ability level determined from a preassessment -An example will be included to help model the parameters of each part of the task -Participants will evaluate the modeled lessons through whole group discussion -A form will be provided to help groups include all necessary parts for the unit they will design	Modeling Graphic organizer Preassessment data Tiered lesson Academic level Heterogeneous whole group
1:00-3:00	-Meet in groups of 2-3 again (teachers can choose the same course groups from last month or join a different course group) and design unit -Ticket out the door-What was beneficial in today's session? What else do you need to complete this differentiated unit plan?	Homogeneous small groups Ticket out the door
Homework	-For the next session in 8 weeks, deliver the unit developed today in your classroom and make notes on	Graphic organizer

| | strengths/weaknesses, what worked/what did not, etc.
-A form will be provided to help participants include all necessary parts | |

Day 3 End of November 8:30-3:00
Challenges and overcoming them to produce a differentiated classroom.

Program Goals for Day 3

A.   Share and review definitions of differentiated instruction to then create a specific

       definition of differentiated instruction applicable for the local setting of the study.

B.   Present teachers with the necessary tools needed to be able to implement

       differentiated instruction within their classrooms.

C.   Provide teachers with the ability to collaborate with colleagues of the same

       discipline and course in order to garner specific, useful feedback within the

       English department regarding how to differentiate lessons.

E.   Provide teachers with the time to reflect on differentiated lessons delivered in

       their classrooms to note both strengths and weaknesses of the lessons for future

       planning.

Program Outcomes for Day 3

A.1.   Teachers will have gained a better understanding of differentiated instruction and

       its relationship to their local setting.

B.1.   Teachers will be presented with the necessary tools such as modeled lessons and a

       variety of differentiation strategies to implement differentiated instruction within

       their classrooms.

C.1.   Teachers will be given time to collaborate with colleagues of the same course

       within the English department to share feedback to help in learning how to

       differentiate lessons.

E.1.   Teachers will be given time to reflect on the differentiated lessons delivered in

their classrooms in order to see the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons for

future planning.

Objectives for Day 3:

A.1.a. Teachers will be able to identify the main areas of differentiation that applies to

the local setting.

B.1.b. Teachers will be exposed to a variety of types of differentiated instruction such as

preassessments, tiered lesson planning, grouping, etc., that can be utilized when

planning lessons.

C.1.c. Teachers will be able to share specific ideas on how to differentiate lessons with

colleagues who teach the same course within the English department thus

allowing them to pair lessons with appropriate types of differentiated instruction.

E.1.e. Teachers will be able to reflect on the lessons delivered in their classrooms in

order to see the strengths and weaknesses when designing lesson in the future.

Time	*Description*	*Differentiation*
8:30-9:00	-Introduction to session 3 -Revisit definition of DI- additions, deletions, keep? - Finalize definition of DI for current school setting/population -Information on the smart board will be saved as a document and e- mailed to the participants for review	Review Technology

9:00-10:00	-Small groups from end of session 2 will meet to share implementation of unit with each other -Using completed form for delivered unit, groups will share the strengths/weaknesses, what worked/what did not, possible improvements to differentiation in unit -Each group should compile a list of observations from experience in delivering differentiated lesson to share with the whole group	Homogeneous small groups Tiered lesson
10:00-11:00	-Small groups share brief overview of course unit, differentiated content, process, product, and their assessment of unit -Q/A after each small group presents	Homogeneous small groups Heterogeneous whole groups
11:00-11:30	-In same small groups, list biggest challenges of implementing unit	Homogeneous small groups
11:30-12:30	Lunch	
12:30-1:30	-Whole group discussion-have a volunteer at smart board writing down list of challenges in delivering unit shared by small groups and ways to combat challenges -Participants can share specific challenges and offer solutions for one another -Information on the smart board will be saved as a document and e-mailed to the participants for review	Heterogeneous whole group Technology
1:30-2:15	-Whole group will watch an example of a differentiated lesson being delivered in a high school English classroom	Technology Heterogeneous whole group

	and write down examples of differentiated strategies seen in video -Whole group discussion sharing where they saw differentiated content, process, and product -Whole group discussion-what similarities and differences were noted in the video to the differentiated lessons they have delivered to their classes?	
2:15-3:00	-Final comments -Q/A -Survey on 3 PD sessions on computer	Heterogeneous whole group Technology Assessment data
Homework	-Continue to collaborate with colleagues once a month -Challenge yourself to use DI within course units -Incorporate a variety of differentiated strategies in your planning -Continue to reflect and revise especially with your colleagues -Use the network created for teachers in your discipline for further collaboration and support (google drive will be set up for each teacher attending this seminar which will allow you to share documents, post lessons, etc.) -Consider what you would like to see as a next step (additional resources, further professional development, etc.)	Technology

Day 1 Example of Modeled Lesson for Assignment 1

Preassessment and Tiered-Lesson American Literature 11th grade

A Rose for Emily by William Faulkner Flash back/forward

Standards to be addressed:

ELACC11-12RL3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

ELACC11-12RL5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Preassessment:

-Have students read a paragraph and see where a specific sentence should be inserted indicating a sequential order.

-Have students read a series of sentences and put them in chronological order by using transition words.

Grouping Process Based on Results from Preassessment:

-Students who received 0% to 69% will be Tier 1.

-Students who received 70% to 85% will be Tier 2.

-Students who received 86% to 100% correct will be Tier 3.

Activities by Tier:

<u>Tier 1 Does not Meet</u>

-Tier 1 students will be given a list of the main events in order from the story they have already read. This story is told through flash back/forward.

-They will work in groups to put the events in chronological order.

-They will then fill in the timeline graphic organizer on the handout with all events listed and labeled in order by date.

-Once the timeline is complete, students will discuss the essential question how does presenting events out of order change the way the reader processes the story?

Tier 2 Meets

-Tier 2 students will list each main event in order from the story they have already read. This story is told through flashback/forward.

-They will work together to rearrange the main events into chronological order.

-They will then design a creative timeline and list and label all of the main events in order by date.

-Once the timeline is complete, students will discuss the essential question how does presenting events out of order change the way the reader processes the story?

Tier 3 Exceeds

-Tier 3 students will design a timeline using some form of technology where they show both the order of events from the story as well as the chronological order of the events.

-They will label the event, date, and whether it was a flashback or flash forward example.

-They will add graphic and sound enhancements to their timeline.

-Once the timeline is complete, students will discuss the essential question how does presenting events out of order change the way the reader processes the story?

-Finally, they will share their timeline with the class and have a group discussion of the essential question all three groups have reflected upon within their individual groups.

Day 1 Example of Modeled Lesson for Assignment 2

Interest Level British Literature 12th grade

Beowulf

Standards to be addressed:

ELACC11-12W4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

ELACC11-12L2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Interest Level:

Students will be given the choice of assignments encompassing a number of different interests and talents. This information was obtained from a survey given at the beginning of the year asking students to describe an interest area or talent.

Activities Based on Interest Level:

Creative Writing

-Students will write a one page "boast" of themselves in the tradition of *Beowulf*. Refer to the scenes where Beowulf is boasting to the guards, Unferth, or King Hrothgar. This is to be done individually and should be creative including all of the following:
    -your genealogy (family history)
    -your acts of courage
    -achievements and/or awards you have received
    -and in closing, your next great act after high school
    -be sure to include kennings, alliteration, metaphors, exaggeration, and elevated
     language (at least 5 different examples throughout boast)
    -you should label and underline each example (minimum 4)
    -proofread to make sure your boast is grammatically correct

Artist/Writing

-Students will create a cartoon strip that shows the main events of *Beowulf*. This should be done individually and include all of the following:
    -a minimum of 8 separate panels
    -be colored and neat
    -be accurate in terms of setting, characters, etc.

-all frames should be in order of evens of the epic poem
-below each frame a caption in your own words must be included describing the
 actual event in that panel (2-3 sentences)
-proofread to make sure all of your captions are grammatically correct

<u>Drama/Audio Visual/Writing</u>

-Students will either perform live or record a performance of one rewritten scene from the epic poem. This can be done individually or with a partner and include all of the following:
-scene should be rewritten in 21st century language and be a minimum of 2 pages
-script should be approved prior to performance
-script should be accurate to the original scene chosen
-music and costuming are encouraged to enhance the performance
-performance can either be live in front of class or videotaped to be shown
-proofread to make sure script is grammatically correct

Day 1 Form for Two Assignments

Name_____   Course_____

Name of assignment 1 (academic ability)_____

This is the template your group should use. Feel free to plan out on your own paper.

A-Describe the preassessment to be given to determine students' ability level for this activity. Divide student results by *does not meet*, *meets*, or *exceeds* the standard(s).

B-Describe in detail the tiered-lesson plans designed to meet the students' ability levels by the three determined levels.

Name of assignment 2 (interest level)_____

A-Describe how a student's interest level will be determined. What categories will you have? (music, writing, art, technology, etc.)

B-Describe in detail the lesson planned and the choices students will have to learn based on their interest level.

Day 1 Homework

On this graphic organizer, make notes on the strengths and weaknesses of each lesson as well as what worked and what did not work. Feel free to add in any other useful comments. You will be using this on the second day to discuss with your groups.

Academic Ability	**Interest Level**

Day 2 Example of Modeled Lesson for Unit

Preassessment and Tiered-Lesson World Literature 10th grade

Rhetorical Strategies Unit: Ethos, Logos, Pathos

Standards to be addressed:

ELACC9-10L3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

ELACC9-10SL4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Preassessment: Days 1 and 2

-Students will be given the definitions of ethos, logos, and pathos along with several examples. The class will discuss how they see the rhetorical examples within the examples presented.

-Students will be given a quiz on the lesson presented the day prior on the rhetorical strategies to check for understanding. The quiz will include definitions and examples that students will have to identify as ethos, logos, or pathos.

-Lexile level data for students provided on Infinite Campus will be utilized when assigning students by tier for reading ability.

-It is possible that students could be in different tiers for the different assignments in the unit based on the preassessment score and the Lexile level data.

Grouping Process Based on Results from Preassessment and Lexile level scores:

-Students who missed all or more than half will be Tier 1.

-Students who have a Lexile level below grade level will be Tier 1. (850 or below)

-Students who received about half to a little more than half correct will be Tier 2.

-Students who have a Lexile level at grade level will be Tier 2. (855-1195)

-Students who got nearly all or all correct will be Tier 3.

-Students who have a Lexile level above grade level will be Tier 3. (1200 or above)

Activities by Tier: Days 3 and 4 (advertisement examples); Days 5, 6, and 7 (poster)

<u>Tier 1 Does not Meet</u>

-Tier 1 students will be in small groups and shown 5 advertisement examples from magazines; they are to discuss and identify ethos, logos, or pathos within the advertisement and fill out a graphic organizer listing the advertisement, the rhetorical strategy, and explain how the strategy is being incorporated.

-Students will use prior reading *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare Lexile 810 to design an advertising poster to compel other students to read this play. They must incorporate at least one element of ethos, logos, or pathos that clearly shows the rhetorical strategy being employed on the poster. The poster should include all of the following:
     -title, author, main characters, and setting
     -true events from the reading
     -at least one example of ethos, logos, pathos that is clearly employed
     -proofread and neat

<u>Tier 2 Meets</u>

-Tier 2 students will work individually or with a partner to look through magazine advertisements and pull 5 examples that show ethos, logos, and pathos. They will fill out a graphic organizer listing the advertisement, the rhetorical strategy, and explain how the strategy is being used.

-Students will use prior class reading *The Glass Castle* by Jeanette Walls Lexile 1010 to design an advertising poster to compel other teachers to teach this book as part of the curriculum. They must incorporate at least two elements of ethos, logos, and/or pathos that clearly shows the rhetorical strategies being employed on the poster. The poster should include all of the following:
     -title, author, main characters, and setting
     -true events from the reading
     -at least two examples of ethos, logos, and/or pathos that are clearly employed
     -proofread and neat

Tier 3 Exceeds

-Tier 3 students will work individually or with a partner and design 3 different advertisements showing ethos, logos, and pathos. In a caption at the bottom of the advertisement, they will list the rhetorical strategy and explain how the rhetorical strategy was included.

-Students will use prior class reading *The Iliad* by Homer Lexile 1290 to design an advertising poster to compel a book store to sell this book as part of their inventory. They must incorporate all three strategies of ethos, logos, and/or pathos that clearly show the rhetorical strategies being employed on the poster. The poster should include all of the following:
        -title, author, main characters, and setting
        -true events from the reading
        -all three strategies of ethos, logos, pathos that are clearly employed
        -proofread and neat

Differentiation by Content:

-Content: Rhetorical Strategies: Ethos, Logos, Pathos

-Ability (readiness) level based on knowledge of subject and Lexile level

Differentiation by Process:

-Students were grouped both by ability and reading levels

-Graphic organizer

-Choice in advertisements to use and rhetorical strategies to include on poster

-Homogeneous grouping

Differentiation by Product:

-Each group had a different reading selection to use for poster based on reading ability

-Each group had choice in rhetorical strategies to include on poster

-Each group had a different level of rhetorical strategies to include on poster

-Each group had a different audience to compel to use the text for a specific purpose

Day 2 Graphic Organizer for Modeled Lesson
Advertisement, Rhetorical Strategy, and Explanation

Advertisement Description	Rhet. Strat. Ethos, Logos, Pathos	Explanation of How Strategy is Used in Advertisement
Ex. 1		
Ex. 2		
Ex. 3		
Ex. 4		
Ex. 5		

Day 2 Form for Unit Plan

Name_____   Course_____

Name of unit (academic ability)_____

This is the template your group should use. Feel free to plan out on your own paper.

A-Describe the preassessment to be given to determine students' ability level for this unit. Divide student results by *does not meet*, *meets*, or *exceeds* the standard(s).

B-Describe in detail the unit activities designed and what differentiated strategies you used for each ability level for the following:

       Content: (*does not meet*, *meets*, *exceeds* the standard(s).)

       Process: (*does not meet*, *meets*, *exceeds* the standard(s).)

       Product: (*does not meet*, *meets*, *exceeds* the standard(s).)

Day 2 Homework

On this graphic organizer, make notes on the strengths and weaknesses of each lesson under content, process, and product as well as what worked and what did not work. Feel free to add in any other useful comments. You will be using this on the third day to discuss with your groups. If you need more space or have more than four lessons, please add onto an additional sheet of paper.

Content	**Process**	**Product**
Lesson 1	Lesson 1	Lesson 1
Lesson 2	Lesson 2	Lesson 2
Lesson 3	Lesson 3	Lesson 3
Lesson 4	Lesson 4	Lesson 4

Day 3 Survey of 3 Day Professional Development Seminar
Please complete this survey regarding your professional development experience by
indicating the level to which you agree with each statement.

1.   I found this 3 day professional development seminar on differentiated instruction

      useful.

      strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly disagree

2.   I have a clearer idea of what differentiated instruction is.

      strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly disagree

3.   Collaborating with colleagues who teach the same course and designing the two

      lessons based on academic ability and interest level was beneficial in learning

      more about the process of differentiated instruction.

      strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly disagree

4.   Reflecting with my group on the two lessons based on academic ability and

      interest level delivered to students was helpful in seeing the strengths and

      weaknesses my group members also noted.

      strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly disagree

5.   Collaborating with colleagues who teach the same course and designing a unit

      based on academic ability and divided by content, process, and product further

      helped me to understand the process of differentiated instruction.

      strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly disagree

6.   Discussing the challenges of implementing differentiated lessons and strategies to

      lessen or eliminate these challenges was useful.

      strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly disagree

7.   The graphic organizers provided were helpful in knowing what was expected for

each assignment.

strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly disagree

8.   This professional development seminar was designed well and was considerate of

my time.

strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly disagree

9.   I plan on incorporating what I learned at this seminar in the design of my future

units.

strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly disagree

10. I am taking away useful differentiated instruction strategies that I can implement

in my classroom.

strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly disagree

11. Please add any additional comments you feel will be helpful in future professional

development on differentiated instruction.

Outline of Power point Slides for 3-Day Professional Development Project

Slide 1 Day 1

Differentiated Instruction

-Welcome!

-In this 3-day professional development seminar, you will learn how to differentiate

lessons for all students in your classes.

Slide 2 Day 1

Introduction/Purpose

-To define differentiated instruction and understand content, process, and product

-To learn how to incorporate differentiation in your lesson plans

-To collaborated with colleagues on differentiated lessons and units that will serve all

students in a classroom regardless of ability level

-To reflect after delivering differentiated lessons and units

-To identify challenges of incorporating differentiation into your classroom and looking

at strategies to overcome these challenges

-To establish a collaborative culture where teachers can work with colleagues beyond this

professional development seminar

Slide 3 Day 1

Differentiated Instruction

-Personal definition

Share definition with table mates

Appoint one person from your table to shift to next table to share definitions from former group and record definition of new group

Slide 4 Day 1

Define Differentiated Instruction:

Whole Group Discussion

-List of Definitions

Slide 5 Day 1

Differentiated Instruction:

Content, Process, Product

Slide 6 Day 1

Review of afternoon task

-When we return from lunch, you will meet in groups of 3-4 with colleagues who teach the same English course (American Lit., British Lit., AP, etc.)

-Develop one lesson based on academic ability level and one based on interest level

-A form will be provided that indicates what to include in lessons

-A model of a sample lesson will be shared for each type of lesson

-Participants will evaluate the modeled lessons noting differentiated instruction by content, process, and product; ability level and interest level

-Q/A

-Lunch 11:30-12:30

Slide 7 Day 1

Afternoon Task

-Meet in groups with colleagues teaching same course and design two lessons based on

academic ability and interest level that was modeled for you prior to lunch

-Follow the form with the necessary parts of each lesson outlined

Slide 8 Day 1

Ticket out the Door

-What was beneficial for you at today's session?

-Do you have any questions you would like addressed at the next session?

Slide 9 Day 1

Homework due by second session in six weeks

-Deliver the two assignments you created today to your classes

-Complete the form provided noting strengths and weaknesses, etc. for the two

assignments after you have delivered them

-Compare and contrast the two differentiated types of assignments (Academic ability vs.

interest level)

Slide 10 Day 2

Introduction

-Review definition of differentiated instruction from first session

-Q/A (Has your understanding changed? Do you want to add or delete anything at this

point of your definition of differentiated instruction?)

Slide 11 Day 2

Reflection of two lessons designed at first session

-Meet in same groups and discuss the notes you made on strengths and weaknesses, etc.

-Compile a list in your group of similarities and differences in delivering these two

different types of differentiated lessons (based on academic ability and interest level)

-Each group will share the list to the whole group

-Q/A after each group presents

-Lunch 11:30-12:30

Slide 12 Day 2

Review of Afternoon Task

-Teachers will meet again in groups of 3-4 with colleagues teaching the same course

-This can be the same group as last time, or you may choose to find another group

teaching a different course this time

-You will be designing an upcoming unit by creating lessons for content, process, and

product

-These lessons will be based on academic ability determined from a preassessment

-A form will be provided that indicates what to include in the unit

-A model of a sample unit will be shared

-Participants will evaluate the modeled lesson looking for differentiated instruction of

content, process, and product; academic ability

Slide 13 Day 2

Ticket out the door

-What was beneficial for you at today's session?

-What else do you need to complete this differentiated unit plan?

Slide 14 Day 2

Homework due by third session in 8 weeks

-Deliver the unit you created today in your small group

-Complete the forms provided noting strengths and weaknesses, etc. for the unit plan

Slide 15 Day 3

Introduction

-Revisit definition of differentiated instruction

-Should we keep, add, delete anything before finalizing definition?

-Is there anything needing clarifying at this point?

-Finalize definition of differentiated instruction that is applicable to current school

setting/population

Slide 16 Day 3

Collaboration-Differentiated unit

-Meet with your group from the last session to share the implementation of your plan

-Using the form you were to complete, share strengths, weaknesses, etc.

-Each group should compile a list of observations from the experiences of delivering this

unit to share with the whole group

Slide 17 Day 3

Sharing Unit Plan

-Offer an overview of the unit plan you designed

-Explain how you differentiated content, process, and product

-What did your small group observe in delivering this unit?

-Q/A after each group presents

Slide 18 Day 3

Challenges

-In your small group, make a list of challenges in delivering differentiated unit plan

-Decide on top 3 challenges and list

-Lunch 11:30-12:30

Slide 19 Day 3

Challenges

-Share list of challenges to whole group

Slide 20 Day 3

Viewing Differentiated Instruction

-Participants will view a modeled differentiated lesson of a high school English

classroom and write down examples noted of differentiated content, process, and product

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oS45ZkIh_rA

-Whole group discussion:

    -Share differentiated instruction noted in video

    -Share how this compares/contrasts to the lessons you have designed and

    delivered to your classes over the course of this professional development

    seminar

Slide 21 Day 3

Final Comments

-Q/A

-Survey on differentiated instruction 3 day professional development

Slide 22 Day 3

Homework after the sessions

-Continue to collaborate with colleagues once a month-use your google drive that will be set up for you to share and/or post lessons with colleagues in the English departments throughout the county

-Incorporate differentiated instruction in your planning

-Continue to reflect and revise your lessons and include your colleagues in the process

-Continue to reflect on what you see for the next step in terms of resources and future professional development

Appendix B: Initial Interview Procedures and Questions

Interview Procedures:

      A. I will introduce myself explaining my research and ask if the participant has any questions prior to beginning the interview.

      B. I will explain that the interview is being recorded for accuracy with a tape recorder and will be transcribed by hand by the researcher.

      C. I will explain that after this interview the participant will receive an e-mailed copy of the transcript for a member checking interview and have an opportunity to read over it for accuracy and make any additions or corrections. Upon request, participants may have a one to two page summary of the results of the study.

      D. I will explain the consent form and obtain a signature.

      E. I will provide a signed copy of the confidentiality report to the participant.

Interview Questions:

      The research question for the study is "How do regular education teachers in the English departments in two suburban high schools describe the ways they differentiate instruction for LEP students within their classrooms?" Interview questions will be asked to explore this question.

      1. How long have you been teaching regular English classes that have LEP students?

      2. How do you define differentiated instruction?

      3. What challenges do you face teaching LEP students in regular education classes in your department?

4. How do you meet the needs of struggling LEP students in your classroom?

5. What professional development have you had to help implement differentiated instruction in your content area? Is there support provided after receiving professional development?

6. What further help do you need in order to effectively implement differentiated instruction in your classroom to help LEP students?

7. What is the biggest barrier you face in helping LEP students meet the standards on EOCTs in your department?

8. How have you differentiated instruction for your LEP students? What has proven to be the most successful in your opinion? How have you been able to measure this success?

9. Can you share an example of a lesson you differentiated through process, content, and product? What were the results?

10. What have I not asked you that I should have asked?

Additional Comments

Thank you for your time and input

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of Secondary English Teachers' Perceptions of Differentiated Instruction for Limited English Proficient Students.

The researcher is inviting English Language Arts educators who teach limited English proficient students in their regular English classes to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Maria Langley, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. I am currently a teacher at another school within the district conducting a study at two local schools with similar demographics. This study is not related to my role as a teacher and is separate from any duties and responsibilities I have in my current role as a teacher.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to inquire about secondary English teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction for limited English proficient students in their regular education classes in order to see if this strategy possibly can help limited English proficient students meet the standards required on standardized tests such as the end of course tests given in the English language arts department.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
    -agree to the study by signing this informed consent form
    -coordinate a time to be interviewed (approx. 30-45 minutes) at your school; interviews will be audio recorded
    -participate in a member checking interview to review the data collected by the researcher for clarification and additional information

Here are some sample questions:
-How do you define differentiated instruction?
-How do you differentiate content, process, and product in your classroom?
-What support do you need to differentiate instruction in you classroom?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at your school will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or well being. The study's potential benefits are to understand how English Language Arts teachers define and implement differentiated instruction strategies in their classrooms for limited English proficient students. By understanding how to differentiate content, process, and product from a number of different teachers, it might be possible to implement these strategies to help limited English proficient students meet the standards needed to pass the end of course tests in this subject area.

Payment:
There will not be any compensation for participation in this study.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by being stored in a locked cabinet. Data will be kept for a period of at least five years, as required by the university and then destroyed.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via ***-***-**** or **********@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **07-01-14-0049817** and it expires on **June 30, 2015.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep when we meet for the interview.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent   _____

Participant's Signature   _____

Researcher's Signature   _____

                                                                  _____

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation from Community

County Schools
CHARACTER • COMPETENCY • RIGOR   FOR ALL

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
FOR TEACHING & LEARNING
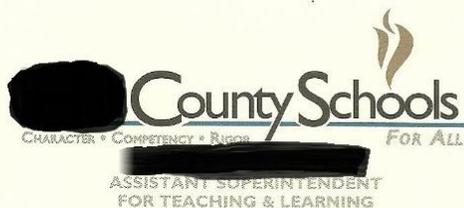
Superintendent

Research Proposal Approval/Denial Form
██ County School System

April 23, 2014

Dear Ms. Langley:

Your research proposal entitled *"A Qualitative Case Study of Secondary English Teachers' Perceptions of Differentiated Instruction for Limited English Proficient Students"* has been reviewed by representatives of the ██ County School System. The representatives have agreed on the decision as indicated below. Please contact Dr. ██ at the ██ County Central Office if you have any questions about this decision.

___X___   Proposal Approved

_____   Proposal Denied

_____   Proposal Approved with Stipulations

Comments/Explanations:

Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT
Name of Signer: Maria Langley

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "A Qualitative Case Study of Secondary English Teachers' Perceptions of Differentiated Instruction for Limited English Proficient Students" I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to

comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: **Date:**

Appendix F: Sample from Documentary Data

Logical
Sequential
Organized

Emotional
Sensitive
Contextual

Critical
Analytical
Problem Solver

Creative
Abstract
Random
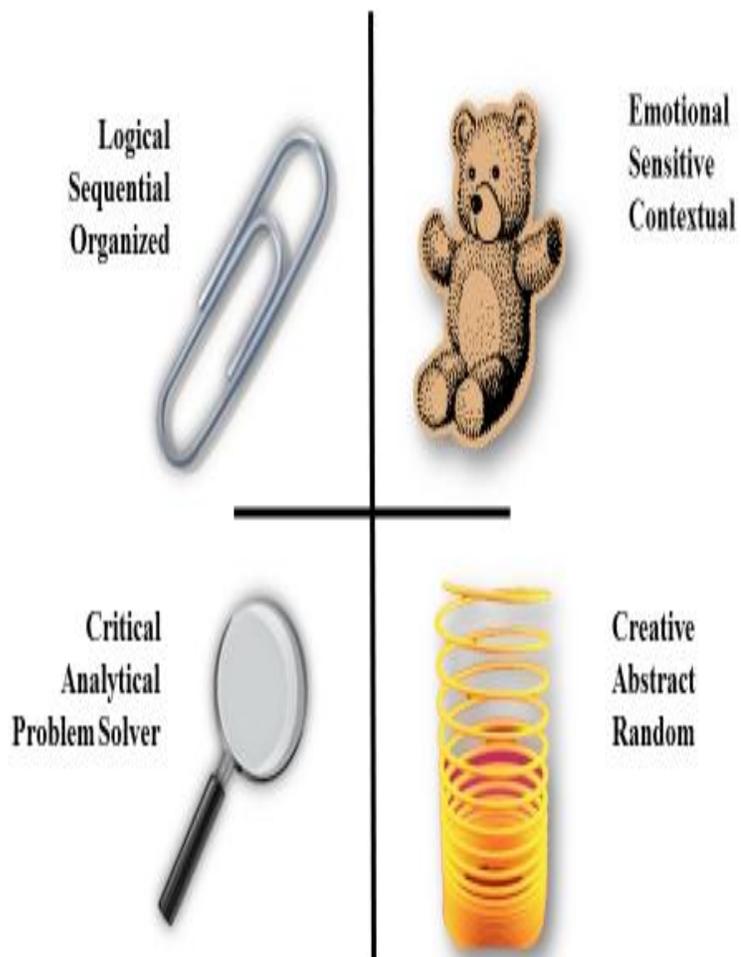
Cash in on Learning: Preparing for Different Learners

I have found it helpful to break down learners into four general characteristics. This typology is not based in any specific research; rather, it's based on my experiences with people and what I know about how we learn. Every person is a composite of all four types, though many favor one or two types when learning or interacting with the world. Some will be able to shift from one type to another when necessary to complete a task. When students struggle in your classroom, consider the following possible reasons:

- They don't work well in the way information was delivered.
- They find it hard to shift from one type to the other when the experience requires it.
- They clash with the teacher's preferred method of instruction.
- They can't recognize what type of learner they are or need to be.
- When in groups, they are mismatched with other types.

Here are the four types.

Type I: Paper Clip

A *paper clip* learner is one who likes order, sequence, and timelines. These learners prefer to know what is coming and precisely what's expected of them. They like neat surroundings that are organized and efficient. They may be uncomfortable with random conversations, inaccurate information, sudden schedule changes, and too much flexibility. Paper clips enjoy keeping time, creating and checking off the "to do list," and maintaining order. These are your "get it done" type learners. The *slinky* can be a paper clip's nemesis.

Type II: Teddy Bear

A *teddy bear* is your emotional learner. These learners recognize and pay attention to their own and other's feelings and behaviors. They like to make others feel comfortable, are interested in the other person's affect, and have a deep need for an affirmative environment. Teddy bears are also considered contextual learners—they learn in context (meaning through the wholeness of an experience). This type of learner may find it difficult to debate, watch others struggle, see the factual side of highly charged events (such as the Holocaust or acts of aggression), or be critical. Teddy bears prefer to set

group tone and mood, encourage others, or participate in service learning projects. These are your "positive"-type learners—always seeing the best in others. The *magnifying glass* can be a teddy bear's opposite.

Type III: Magnifying Glass

A *magnifying glass* is very much like a detective. These learners like to look closely at issues and often find more problems this way. Magnifying glasses are critical and sometimes emotionless in their pursuits (hence the difficulty with teddy bears). They can be argumentative—your "Yes, but . . ." students. Very much like paper clips, magnifying glasses like a logical order to information. They may find it difficult to use empathy in the decision-making process, or listen with their heart when trying to understand differing points of view. These learners love the debate, finding problems, critically analyzing tough issues, and forming individual opinions. They are your "straightforward" thinkers. They may find it difficult to work with and deal with *teddy bears*.

Type IV: Slinky

The *slinky* is your creative, abstract, random student. These learners know where they want to go, but they may take multiple pathways to get there. They enjoy "coloring outside the lines," coming up with new ideas and ways to do things, and doing projects their own way. These are true "out of the box" thinkers and doers. Slinkys have a difficult time with too much structure and order and get restless when their creative muscle is not flexed. This is why the *paper clip* can annoy the slinky.

Another way to think about the four types is based on how our brain is organized. The left hemisphere of our brain is considered the logical-sequential side (the paper clip and magnifying glass types), whereas the right hemisphere is considered the abstract-contextual side (the teddy bears and slinkys). When these two sides work in harmony, we are more likely to accomplish complex tasks efficiently and with greater success.

It's always a good idea to assist students in identifying their areas of strength and limitations. This includes the way they prefer to learn. Ask your students to identify the one or two types of learning they prefer, as well as the one or two types where they struggle. Then encourage them to work through their limitations and understand those

who are strong in those areas. I always found it helpful to assign students to partner up with an oppositional type of learner so they could support each other when it came time to do tasks that required specific types of strengths.

As you plan for your upcoming school year, keep in mind these four types and what will make their school year more enjoyable.

Paper clips **need:**

- Posted schedules
- Notification when schedules change
- Timelines and due dates
- Linear instruction that follows an outline
- An organized classroom environment

Teddy bears **need:**

- Connectivity with others
- Contextualized experiences or service learning projects
- Study topics that have emotional connections
  Flexible grouping
- Inclusion of the arts in the classroom

Magnifying glasses **need:**

- Time to investigate complex issues
- Opportunities to debate and discuss ideas
- Chances to problem-find and -solve
- Experiences that require making decisions
- Logical order to units of study

Slinkys **need:**

- Open-ended questions and activities

- Chances to think, act, and be outside the box
- Time to express themselves
- Ample opportunities to move
- Space, opportunities, and materials to be creative