Article Side

The Benefits to Using Differentiated Instruction in the Elementary Classroom

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Differentiated instruction focuses on the students and places them at the center of learning. Traditional classrooms focused on the teacher and did not account for the various learning styles of students. Although not all schools use differentiated learning as the structure of their program, more curriculums are becoming aware of the benefits to teaching this way and being able to reach out to all students so that they can learn efficiently, despite their individual abilities.Â

Advantages to Differentiated Learning

The biggest advantage to differentiated learning is that it connects with all students and provides a number of avenues to understanding the material. When teachers present the material and donâ€™t cater to the individual needs of each student, many children become lost in the lesson. This can be especially damaging to the subject of math, as each concept builds on another. With differentiated learning, students are able to grasp the concepts in a way that is best understood using their abilities. They wonâ€™t fall behind or experience the snowball effect, and they will have the necessary confidence to continue building on their skills.

If students do start to become lost in the material, differentiated instruction allows for learning aids and tools to be implemented into the curriculum to keep students on track. These learning aids, with a specific focus on virtual manipulatives, can be integrated into any classroom and serve as powerful learning tools. In the form of online games and puzzles, the virtual manipulatives are fun and engaging for young minds and allow educators to track the progress of each student.

Learning Aids in Differentiated Learning

Learning aids hold much importance in differentiated instruction, as theyâ€™re necessary for providing different avenues for children to learn. Since the lessons are focused on the students, itâ€™s important for educators to provide virtual manipulatives that strengthen a range of skills and abilities. Online games and puzzles that are part of an adaptive learning program are ideal and require no software to download. Students can begin playing the games immediately and work independently or in small groups.

Unlike standard math games that are used for fun, virtual manipulatives that are used in differentiated learning are designed to meet the individual needs of each student. There are hundreds of levels and different ways to play the games, as the puzzles donâ€™t center on choosing the â€œrightâ€• answer. Instead, they build on math concepts and encourage students to practice a variety of strategies that help them reach the answer. To interest young students, the games include full color, fun characters and sound effects.

The Educatorâ€™s Role in Differentiated Learning

With program built around the students, itâ€™s easier for children to reach math fluency. With differentiated learning, educators are often surprised to see that they have more time to work with students and are more aware of where their students fall in terms of comprehension and learning style. Virtual manipulative games and puzzles offer real-time assessments that allow educators to see how their students are progressing. This is an excellent way to provide intervention for those students who show consistent struggles.Â

Teachers differ in how they use virtual learning aids, as some use the programs to enhance the material being taught, while others use them to supplement a lesson. When choosing the right adaptive learning program, youâ€™ll find that the games and puzzles provide comprehensive learning opportunities that exercise various math concepts, while rewarding students for their time and effort. With acceptance and understanding of student-centered learning styles, more children are able to excel in the classroom, despite where their individual abilities may lie.

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Jim Wheelin writes about many different educational topics for parents and kids. Jim is always keeping an eye out for the latest teaching techniques and tools, including how a differentiated learning approaches could help teachers with struggling students. He also likes to test out-of-the-box educational resources including http://www.dreambox.com/differentiated-math-classroom-video.

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