

Differentiated Instructional Strategies for Reading in the Content Areas

Carolyn Chapman • Rita King



Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
About the Authors	xi

Introduction: Infusing Reading in the Content Areas	1
--	---

Every teacher knows that some students struggle to read their texts while others go unchallenged. Every teacher who wants to be a facilitator of learning must therefore also be a facilitator of reading. Differentiated reading instruction gives teachers in all subject areas the power to help students succeed at all ability levels. It is never too late to help students become confident, eager, and fluent readers and to move students toward their full reading potential.

1. Creating a Climate for Reading	13
--	----

An inviting, safe, and accepting classroom environment promotes optimal learning experiences. To motivate learners with diverse reading abilities, teachers can create print-rich environments, comfortable reading spots, and a wide variety of unique and differentiated celebrations when reading and learning goals are met. Attention to the affective realms of learning—rapport, empathy, challenge, excitement, humor, respect, choice, self-efficacy, and more—marks those teachers who become legends in learners' lives.

2. Knowing the Reader	29
------------------------------	----

The effective teacher in the differentiated reading classroom assesses each learner's reading behaviors, feelings toward reading, reading skill levels, developmental readiness for reading, and diverse needs. Diagnostic tools, possible problems, and suggested solutions can be differentiated for emerging, successful, and fluent readers. Checklists, surveys, and rubrics can be used to assess multiple intelligences, thinking styles, learning styles, 4Mat types, personal characteristics, beliefs, and interests.

3. Models of Reading	61
-----------------------------	----

The effective teacher in the differentiated reading classroom selects and adapts instructional models that coordinate reader needs with content standards and

Curriculum Compacting, centers and projects, Independent Choice, Guided Reading, Shared Reading, Language Experience, Read Aloud, and Four Block. Also included are strategies to support those models, such as agendas, cubing, response books, graphic organizers, and choice boards.

4. Vocabulary 87

A teacher may say, "I taught that word!" but that is not the same as the student asking, "Did I learn that word?" In the differentiated reading classroom, the teacher uses stimulating, novel, and meaningful strategies to introduce new words essential to reading experiences and assignments in the content areas. Included here are more than fifty strategies for vocabulary learning, vocabulary visuals, context clues, and assessments that can connect new words to the learner's world and help the learner take ownership of new subject vocabulary.

5. The Art of Decoding 121

No other aspect of the language arts curriculum has received as much attention as phonics. This chapter offers twelve key phonics skills and essential word analysis skills covering syllables, root words, prefixes, and suffixes. These skills can be infused across the curriculum while teaching content area vocabulary.

6. Comprehension 139

Differentiated comprehension strategies can be used to meet the diverse interests, ability levels, and background knowledge levels of each learner. Included here are strategies and assessments to use before, during, and after reading. Find flexible grouping designs for Total groups (T), reading Alone (A), Partner reading (P), and Small groups (S).

7. Pulling It All Together 183

Variety is the spice of learning, and teachers who vary their strategies, assessments, and homework assignments empower their students to become successful readers both inside and outside the classroom.

References 195

Index 199

INTRODUCTION

Infusing Reading in the Content Areas

Every teacher who wants to be a facilitator of learning (Readence, Bean, & Baldwin, 1998) must also be a reading teacher, because reading is an essential component of learning in every subject. All teachers know that some students in their classrooms struggle to read their texts while other students go unchallenged. A learner's reading difficulties become more apparent with the challenges of increasingly complex texts and materials in the content areas as he moves through the grade levels; that student must receive help to develop the skills and strategies he needs in order to succeed in school and in life.

SAILING INTO DIFFERENTIATED READING INSTRUCTION

Differentiating instruction for reading is similar to the preparation needed for a sailing adventure. The captain identifies each crew member's specialty and talent so that assignments can be made in his area of expertise to make the journey a success. Likewise, each reader has unique skills and talents as well as the right to learn all the information he possibly can. For this to occur, reading experiences and learning experiences must be personalized and individualized during the reading journey.

Teachers are the captains who set the course for the reader's journey, deciding how each one will travel and what each will learn along the way.

Differentiated instruction for this kind of smooth sailing toward learning and accomplishment in the content areas must be based on effective pre-assessments of the learner's knowledge, skills, and abilities. It must be student-centered, with active learning, and flexible enough to meet the changing needs of all readers.

Don't you wish you could wave a magic wand that could turn every student in your classroom into a fluent, comprehending reader? At the current time, we have too many readers who struggle to read their texts so they can complete assignments. We also have too many readers who are unchallenged. But we don't have a prepackaged, magic formula to teach our students to read. However, teachers do have the power to create strategies that work for readers of all ability levels by using differentiated instruction. Every teacher can use the ideas in this book to meet the needs of readers at all levels, because it is never too late to move a reader toward his reading potential.

Early childhood teachers are teaching balanced literacy programs that include effective systematic reading activities. Teachers are using an interesting variety of literature-based materials. The programs emphasize skills for comprehension, vocabulary development, and phonics. Writing as a process is strategically integrated with these programs. Differentiated instruction provides teachers with strategies and models that incorporate these quality teaching approaches while meeting the diverse needs of readers.

Too much valuable time is expended blaming former teachers, parents, textbook companies, and curriculum programs for the reader's problems. If this time and energy is used productively to assess and diagnose the student's reading ability, the information can be used to design reading lessons for successful learning experiences. Teachers need to use every opportunity to improve their students' reading ability. The learner's smallest improvement has the potential to create a miraculous change in his life. Each teacher needs to remind himself daily of the role he plays in each student's successful reading journey.

A student's self-doubt must be transformed from "I don't think I can . . ." to "I know I can . . .!" Effective teachers are aware of each opportunity to assist a learner and encourage him to reach his reading potential. The quality of a student's life often depends on his reading ability.

THE GOALS OF THIS BOOK

The goals of this reading book are to meet the unique learning needs of each reader through differentiated instruction. This book includes:

- Reading activities that empower students in vocabulary development, phonics, and comprehension

- Learning strategies designed to be infused in subject-related texts and supplementary materials
- Assessment ideas to quickly diagnose the reader's problems, along with suggested prescriptions for solutions
- Memory strategies that are easy for a reader to apply as he processes information for long-term memory
- Techniques and tips to assist teachers as they establish an effective learning environment that is conducive to reading

All of our strategies, activities, and ideas are designed to infuse basic reading skills in content areas. They are designed for teachers to adapt to the needs of individual readers so that teachers can make a difference in each learner's academic and personal endeavors.

All aspects of this resource are grounded in brain-based research that provides the rationale for the strategies and approaches used. The research includes effective practices related to establishing the learning environment (Bruer, 1994), understanding the reader's problems, and finding solutions.

The authors hope this book meets its primary goal to assist teachers with the infusion of differentiated reading strategies into daily lessons across the curriculum. We hope the activities intrigue, challenge, actively engage, and empower each struggling student to become an eager, confident, and fluent reader.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Essential questions stimulate higher-order thinking. The questions give the individual time to combine his ideas, to elaborate on the topic, and to evaluate the situation. Here are some probing questions that are related to a struggling reader's problems:

Are the student's inadequate comprehension skills the result of poor word identification and vocabulary strategies? Often the student has not mastered the skills needed to become a fluent reader. If he has not learned the basics of reading, he will have difficulty reading.

Does the student's inability to understand texts and related information exist because he has not mastered basic comprehension strategies? It is not unusual to have a student who reads fluently but is unable to mentally process written material. He does not comprehend or remember information. Another learner calls words but does not understand basic sentence structure. Yet another student may recall facts but find it difficult to get the "jist" or to summarize. The student needs a repertoire of comprehension strategies and skills to apply automatically as needed.



The Art of **5** Decoding

Decoding is an essential skill that readers use to understand unknown words. *Decoding* a word includes dividing the word into syllables, applying the rules of phonics, and identifying the root or base word. The art of applying decoding skills lets the reader put all the articulate bits together to produce the word's sounds. Most students need to know the art of decoding to become a fluent reader. Teachers must know the rules to be able to infuse them into content lessons, because students encounter words that follow the rules (and some that are exceptions to the rules) in their vocabulary lessons or when reading assignments in any subject area.

If the science lesson introduces the word *equator* or the math lesson introduces the word *numerator*, this is the time to teach the controlling *r* rule. When the rule is integrated across the curriculum, the student sees the validity of learning this rule. Plan and implement systematic, explicit phonics instruction and decoding skills if the student does not have the background knowledge to be able to apply the rules of phonics.

PHONICS INSTRUCTION

Phonics skill instruction provides a foundation the student can draw upon to recognize and pronounce letter sounds and their combinations when he sees them in print. Students who master letter-sound correspondence have a tool to help them read more accurately and fluently. Some students struggle to decode words because they have little knowledge or understanding of letter-sound relationships. The application of phonics rules guides many readers of all ages to recognize and pronounce words.

No other aspect of the language arts curriculum has received as much attention as phonics. There are two sides to this issue (Bauman, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester, 1998). One school of thought is that phonetic skills are most effective when taught in isolation in a quality reading program.

Others think a sight vocabulary develops through literature-based programs.

Phonics instruction usually receives more emphasis in lower grades than in upper grades, but phonics instruction offered in the upper grades benefits students who did not develop phonetic awareness in the early grades (Pressley, 1998). Also, some students simply need a phonics review. Some need to develop a basic knowledge base of letter sounds. Many learners know the rules but cannot apply them as they encounter them in reading. Most students need a strong phonics program to build independent word attack skills. It is essential for the reader to apply phonics and use analysis skills to decode words. The use of innovative, varied activities and active student participation can teach a reader of any age how to remember and apply the rules.

The art of decoding may be the missing link a student needs to become a successful reader.

THE PHONICS DOZEN (THE FONIX DUZEN!)

The following section describes a dozen phonics skills a reader should know and be able to apply. Use the activities to teach these important skills with vocabulary development and reading experiences.

Remember, a learner's speaking vocabulary is much larger than his reading vocabulary. When a student sounds out a word and hears himself saying it, the word is becoming part of his self-talk. This self-talk stimulates his thinking of past associations and experiences with the word. These mental connections give meaning to the word.

Actively engage the learner as he learns phonics rules and generalizations to pronounce words. The Phonics Dozen list contains strategies and activities to teach readers new ways to apply and remember the rules. If the reader knows how to divide words into syllables, knows the letter sounds in each syllable and the exceptions to the phonics rules, he is able to read most of the words he encounters. Think of key words and examples from the subject's vocabulary words that can be used to apply these strategies. Add to the suggestions. The sequence of steps presented here in the Phonics Dozen is an effective way to teach the skills.

Skill 1: Understand That Letters Are Symbols for Sounds That Form Words

Phonics is our alphabet's language. It is the study of *phonemes*, commonly called the "small units" or letter sounds (Griffith & Olson, 1992). Each letter has one or more distinct sounds. Often the letters combine to create blends, digraphs, or diphthongs.

The letters take their special places within an arrangement to form words. The reader uses the sounds of the letters to pronounce and recognize words.

When using phonics skills effectively, the student is able to distinguish the sounds of the letters and combine them for reading, writing, and speaking. He blends or combines sounds to decode a word. Mastered letter sounds are in the student's memory for automatic use. When mastery occurs, the learner has tools he can use to read and write words.

Alphabet Animals

Students need strategies to help them remember letter sounds. The initial consonant and vowel sounds in the Alphabet Animal lines provide key words the reader can use to recall letter sounds. Use one line to introduce each sound as needs. Use a chanting rhythm or the tune "Are You Sleeping?" to teach the letter sounds as shown in the following example:

Short *a* says /a/. Short *a* says /a/.
 /a/ as in Andy. /a/ as in Andy.
 Andy Ant acts anxious. Andy Ant acts anxious.
 /a/, /a/, /a/— /a/, /a/, /a/. (repeating the short *a* sound)

Amos Ape ate apricots.	Andy Ant acts anxious.
Bobby Bee buys big bikes.	Cathy Cow catches colds.
Cindy Centipede circles cities.	Dottie Dog digs deep ditches.
Eva Emu eats éclairs.	Ed Elephant edits essays.
Felicia Fish found four fans.	Goofy Goat gets goggles.
George Giraffe gips gerbils.	Henry Horse hauls heavy hay.
Irene Ibis ices icicles.	Inky Inchworm inhales insects.
Jeffrey Jaguar juggles jars.	Kate Kangaroo kisses kings.
Lucy Lion licks lollipops.	Mandy Monkey makes music.
Nancy Newt needs nice news.	Oscar Ostrich offers options.
Opal Opossum opened oatmeal.	Paula Parrot paints purple pigs.
Queenie Quail quits quickly.	Rosie Rabbit races roosters.
Silly Seal sings silly songs.	Tony Turtle tells tall tales.
Uly Unicorn uses unicycles.	Uncle Ugly unhooks umbrellas.
Victor Vulture visits Vermont.	Willie Wolf wears watches.