Chapter 1: Introduction

Bird’s-Eye

Transcript:

This is a module on strategies for differentiating instruction according to student choice. This module is part of a series dedicated to the topic of differentiation. If you are new to this topic, access the Basics of Differentiation, a brief video that explores foundational mindsets, beliefs, and terms. Modules in the “preparing to differentiate” group will teach you how to gather pertinent information about your students before implementing a strategy. Modules in the “strategy” group will teach you how to differentiate instruction based on information you gather from the “preparing to differentiate” modules. Click on each module icon for a description. Click “Proceed” when you are ready to continue with this module.
Context

Transcript:

Meet Joe. He’s an average student. At almost any given moment during the day, Joe is told where and how to sit, who to work with, what work to do, and even how to do it.

This situation gives Joe very little control in his learning environment. The only choice Joe has is to comply with the teacher’s directions or not.

Like Joe, many students find themselves with very little opportunity to make academic choices. This can impact motivation and their general engagement.
What is it?

Transcript:

When we discuss the concept of student choice, we mean providing students with the opportunity to select from a series of academic, organizational, or procedural options (Stefanou et. al, 2004).

For example, students can be given a choice when, how, and in what order to complete a task, or even what topic to study (Stefanou et. al, 2004).

Benefits

Transcript:

There are three main benefits to infusing student choice into the classroom: it promotes learning, increases
students’ sense of empowerment, and improves student perseverance (Gardner, 2011; Leotti & Delgado, 2011; Patall, 2013; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Perks, 2010; Stefanou et al., 2004).

How to Infuse Choice

Transcript:

Offering meaningful choice to students requires teachers to create an environment in which students have the space and autonomy to make those choices (Denton, 2005).

Let’s explore four research-based steps that can help you integrate purposeful academic choice into your classroom.
Chapter 2: Steps

Connect Learning to Interests

Transcript:

In step one, you will connect the learning in a lesson or unit to your students’ interests. Make sure you keep in mind that the choices you offer students should directly align to the objective(s) of the lesson or unit. Choices that aren’t aligned to objectives might be fun, but they likely won’t increase student learning.

To see an example and non-example of alignment, click Learn More. Otherwise click Proceed.

Learn More

Objective:
(2nd grade, math) Students will solve one digit addition problems using mental strategies.

**Aligned**
Students can select from a set of word problems incorporating different interests (e.g., cartoon characters, literary fictional characters, sports, video games, etc.).

**Misaligned**
This choice is aligned to the objective because mental strategies could still be used with the different word problem options.
**Objective:**
(2nd grade, math) Students will solve one-digit addition problems using mental strategies.

- **Aligned**
  Students can choose from a variety of manipulatives to help solve a set of word problems.

- **Misaligned**
  This choice is not aligned to the objective because use of manipulatives alters the strategies that students would use to solve word problems.

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**Transcript:**

Click on the buttons to see an example and short explanation.

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**Content or Product?**

- **Content**
  - Provide students different materials.
  - Present a variety of real world problems or scenarios directly related to their interests.
  - Use information related to a range of famous individuals, world figures, athletes, or even local community members.
  - Offer students the opportunity to do independent study on a different interest area as it relates to a larger topic or theme.

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For a complete list of references, refer to the On-Demand Module ‘Differentiation Strategy: Student Choice.’
Students can demonstrate mastery of the objective through:

- A form of the arts.
- Written or spoken word.
- Construction of an object or structure.
- Integration of technology.
- A form of physical movement.
- A form of social action.

Example:

Objective:
(3rd grade, science) Students will create one example of each type of figure using the same data set: bar graph, pictograph, and tally chart.

Teacher can create stations in the room organized around different interests. Each station could have examples of the three types of figures based on data sets tied to students’ interest areas (e.g., students’ favorite cartoons, athletes, animals, musicians, etc.). Practice problems can also be created and placed at these stations.
Objective:
(3rd grade, science) Students will create one example of each type of figure using the same data set: bar graph, pictograph, and tally chart.

Content

After learning about how to create each figure, the teacher can have the students create a simple survey questions of their choosing. Students would then use data from the survey to create their own versions of the three figures.

Product

Transcript:

A way of ensuring meaningful choice options is to incorporate some of your students’ interests. If you’d like more information or support on how to gather student interest data, consider participating in our module entitled, Preparing to Differentiate: Student Interest.

You can integrate your students’ interests through content or product.

Click on the buttons to see a short list of ideas for how you can incorporate students’ interests into your lesson through content or product.

If you’d like to see an example of what providing choice in content or product would look like, click on the Example button.
**Design Choices**

How can students show you they've mastered the objective?

What resources align to my students’ interests?

**Transcript:**

The second step in the process is to design the choices you will offer your students. This is where you flesh out the specifics of each choice.

To do this, you can start by asking yourself some simple questions (see image above).

**Evaluate the Choices**

Ensure that all of the choices will lead to student mastery of the learning objective (Denton, 2005; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Eliminate or modify any choices that do not.
Evaluate the Choices

Ensure that the workload for each option is appropriate for the objective. Differences in rigor or complexity may cause workloads to be different, yet still appropriately challenging and desirable for some students. Teachers should consider the consequences of such a decision carefully as it can impact the amount of time and/or resources students will need to complete it (Gardner, 2011).

Evaluate the Choices

Evaluate the number of choices you’re offering. Consider the number and flexibility of your choices in relation to your students’ age (Patall et al., 2008). It is developmentally more appropriate to give younger students fewer choices than older students (Patall, 2013; Patall et al., 2008). Older students may appreciate diverse options and can also be given opportunities to submit them for teacher approval.
Transcript:

The third step in the process is to evaluate the quality of the choices you've just designed. Click through the tabs to learn more about each criterion.

Example

**Objective:**
(3rd grade, science) Students will be able to describe the characteristics of the 18 different groups of the periodic table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>Students will watch a 2-3 minute video for each element on the periodic table. Then they will write a two sentence summary of important information that they gleaned from each video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>Students will read the chapter on the periodic table, complete three short-answer questions, and then write a two-sentence description of each group of elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Students will explore all of the functions (five total) provided on a website related to the periodic table. They will then write a two-sentence description of each group of elements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transcript:

Before moving on, let's practice evaluating choices. Review the choices and lesson information on the screen.
Check for Understanding

Evaluate the Choices

☐ There is a suitable number of choices for the age of the students (younger students - fewer choices).
☐ The choices are diverse enough to be personally meaningful to all students.
☐ The workload for each option is appropriate for the objective.
☐ All students can master or demonstrate mastery of the objective regardless of which choice they select.

Submit

Transcript:

Check-off all of the criteria that are met. Click submit to get feedback.

Feedback

Evaluate the Choices

☐ There is a suitable number of choices for the age of the students (younger students - fewer choices).
☐ The choices are diverse enough to be personally meaningful to all students.
☐ The workload for each option is appropriate for the objective.
☐ All students can master or demonstrate mastery of the objective regardless of which choice they select.

Proceed
Correct!

These choices do not meet all the criteria. The first option for videos has a workload that is not balanced with the other choices and isn’t exactly aligned to the objective. The number and type of choices are appropriate, given the content and age of the students.

Check Readiness

- Students may not understand each of the choices well enough to make an informed decision.
- Students may not have experience making individual decisions or their culture may value collective decision-making.
- Teachers may not know how to "grade" each choice because the options are so diverse.
- Teachers may fear that "chaos" will ensue from offering students choices.

(Denton, 2005; Flowerday, Schraw & Stevens, 2004; Gardner, 2011; Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Kohn, 1993; Stefanou et al., 2004)
Transcript:

Choice does not work for all students all of the time (Flowerday, Schraw, and Stevens, 2004). Here are four important considerations for student and teacher readiness. Click on each card to see a teacher action you can take to help address each (see images above).

**Presenting Choice**

- Individual options are listed on separate cards.
- Students select from a set number of cards.
Transcript:

It is also important to consider how you want to present the options to the students. Explore the three options listed here.
Transcript:

Offering your students choice can increase student interest, motivation, and a sense of empowerment. The following section will introduce you to a resource that can help you purposefully infuse academic choice into your classroom.