Differentiation Strategy: Student Choice
Coaching Guide

Module Summary

In this module, teachers will:
- Describe academic student choice.
- Explain the benefits of student choice.
- Describe four steps for integrating student choice into a classroom.
- Infuse purposeful student choice into lessons based on teacher knowledge of students.

Module activities:
During the Resource section, teachers explore one of two different classroom scenarios where they help design and evaluate different student choice options.

*Differentiation Strategy: Student Choice is part of a suite of modules on differentiation. One group of modules prepares users to differentiate according to student readiness, learner profile, and student interest. The other group of modules focuses on strategies for differentiation. We recommend that teachers visit each “preparing to” module before beginning a “strategy” module.

Key Takeaways

Essential knowledge:
- There are three main benefits to infusing student choice into the classroom:
  - It promotes learning.
  - It increases students’ sense of empowerment.
  - It improves student persistence.
- Choice can be integrated into lessons through content (what students will be learning about) or by product (how students show what they’ve learned).

Essential skill:
There are four steps that can help you integrate purposeful academic choice into your classroom:
1. Connect learning to interests.
2. Design choices.
3. Evaluate choices.
4. Check student and teacher readiness.

Essential mindset:
Part of a teacher’s job is to motivate students to learn and achieve academically. Engaging students’ interests by offering meaningful choice is one way to increase motivation. Designing choices should be a thoughtful process to ensure that the choices being offered are aligned to learning objectives.

The Skill in Action

A teacher who effectively designs and integrates student choice into his/her classroom would:
- Take the time to learn more about each student’s interests.
- Incorporate them into learning activities where students could choose how they learn academic content or how they show their understanding.
- Engage students in a variety of different learning activities that they find interesting and meaningful.
- Design the physical layout of their classroom in a manner that supports a variety of activities.
- Ensure that all needed resources are readily available to students.
- Ensure that students are comfortable and prepared to make individual academic choices.
### Questions for Discussion

The following is a list of suggested questions for engaging in a reflective dialogue with the teacher, either before or after he or she attempts to implement the skill.

- What were your takeaways from this module?
- Why is it important to engage students’ interests?
- What have you done to learn about your students’ interests?
- What are some of the things that interest your students?
- How can I support you as you prepare to incorporate student choice into your classroom?
- What concerns do you have about infusing student choice into your classroom?
- How ready do you believe you and your students are for academic choices?
- How do you believe the knowledge and skills highlighted in this module will benefit your growth as a teacher?

### Standards

**InTASC:**

2(a): The teacher designs, adapts, and delivers instruction to address each student’s diverse learning strengths and needs and creates opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in different ways.