

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXPERTS

The To-With-By Model of Differentiated Instruction

by Bruce Campbell

IF THERE IS ONE THING I have learned from my experience as a teacher, it is that I have to differentiate. Whether we are talking about using multiple resources, different instructional strategies, or performance-based assessments, I try to always be conscious of the unique group of students with whom I am working each year. I consciously and intentionally plan my lessons so they target not only state and district standards but also the readiness, abilities, interests, and learning profiles of the students in my classroom.

I use different approaches at different times but my basic formula is what I call **TO - WITH - BY**:

- ◆ I teach something **TO** my students;
- ◆ I work **WITH** my students;
- ◆ I guide them to work more independently or **BY** themselves.

The beauty of this system is that **I can use differentiated strategies in all three stages.**

Stage or Tier One is **TO**. I call this my Main Lesson.

I start out each day or each period with a lecture in which I teach something **TO** my students. It might be anything from long vowels to the binomial theorem. It is usually only 10 to 20 minutes but it provides an overview of the basic concepts with which we will be working. In the Main Lesson, I am not only introducing basic skills, I am also intentionally modeling the kinds of teaching that I expect my students to do with each other when they reach stage three: self-directed learning. It is essentially lecture-based but I use visuals (such as graphic organizers), hands-on activities (such as physical models), mnemonic devices (such as chants or jingles), interactive learning (such as "turn and talk"), or reflective learning (such as journaling).

Stage or Tier Two is the **WITH** stage. This is guided instruction.

Here I like to work **WITH** small groups, so I set up my classroom with work stations or learning centers. Regardless of grade level or subject matter, this stage involves multiple approaches to the same concepts or skills introduced in the Main Lesson.

I believe that many students learn best in small groups. Nonetheless, the same concepts or skills can be practiced in multiple ways with whole group instruction. In my classroom, students break up into small, collaborative groups and practice what was introduced in the main lesson in different (differentiated) ways. Depending on the management system or dynamics of individual teacher approaches, this will vary. In fact, I find that I have to modify my approach each year with different students.

As in any good cooperative learning lesson, I have to emphasize three things: *specific social skills, group interdependence, and individual accountability*. So students are learning to work together in intentional ways, they are collaborating to meet a common goal, and they are responsible for their own learning.

Stage or Tier Three is the **BY** stage. Here students work more independently.

This can take the form of individual practice, performance assessments, or project-based learning. Personally, I have found that project-based learning is the most powerful way to differentiate instruction. In my classroom, in the **BY** stage, students choose a topic within the content area of study, research that topic (and yes, even primary students and non-readers can do certain kinds research), then put together some type of presentation to demonstration of learning for each other.

We cannot just ask students to “do a project” and expect anything meaningful to happen so there is a lot of training and scaffolding first. As noted, I model different ways to express my understanding in the main lesson. These are my project presentations. The work stations or learning centers provide ways that students can practice different techniques or approaches. **This is the real skill building stage.** Early in the year, I start with what I call mini projects: one dimensional demonstrations of learning such as a chart, a survey, an interview, or a report. These mini projects evolve into more sophisticated, multimodal performances that are true demonstrations of understanding. This is the stage where they use their individual strengths and preferences to show others what they have learned.

The **To - WITH - BY** model provides a range of learning opportunities for all students. All three stages can be differentiated and all three stages can be personalized for the unique learning needs of students in any classroom. They can be differentiated in terms of...

- ◆ content (curriculum),
- ◆ process (instruction), or
- ◆ product (assessment).

**It is a simple formula that can be applied by all teachers, in any subject area,
at any grade level!**

Bruce Campbell teaches high needs youth and serves as a mentor to other teachers by coaching those new to the profession. He is also as an associate professor of education for Antioch University Seattle and a frequent speaker at national conferences for Staff Development for Education (SDE). His newest book is **Handbook of Differentiated Instruction Using the Multiple Intelligences: Lesson Plans and More** (ISBN: 9780205569212 | ©2008)

