

20 *teaching ideas for differentiation*

1

Style tables. Give out the same information on different tables around the room but in differing styles e.g. via pictures, audio, in writing or in clues that need to be solved. Students can then go to the table that best suits their learning style. Takes some preparing but worth it.

2

Take the lead. Allocate tasks for any group work: leader, scribe, ideas people, speaker etc. This makes sure everyone joins in and you can assign roles according to ability and/or character.

3

Mixed starter. Have a PowerPoint slide divided into four tasks. One focused on numeracy, another on words, another encouraging deeper thinking skills, one really challenging (for the most able) etc.

4

In the frame. Have differentiated writing frames with increasing levels of support. Highlight the level they're aiming for – students accept this more readily and are likely to challenge themselves to the level above.

5

What's in the box? Have a 'support box' at the front of the class or one per table. Put tips / pictures / word glossaries / advice inside. Students use the box as and when they feel they need more help.

6

Traffic lights. Give students red, green and amber cards. When they are completely happy with a task, they display their green cards; when less certain the amber ones and when they are absolutely stuck, the red ones. Works well if students are encouraged to do this throughout the course of the lesson.

7

It's mine. Get some envelopes and give each student personal instructions about what's required with individual support that still allows challenge. Of course many will be the same but use their names on envelopes – it engages straight away!

8

Reverse annotations. Try giving students your annotations for a source or challenging extract of text. They have to decide where they would place them and why. This provides structure for weaker students, but keeps the more able challenged.

9

Questionnaire. Use a mini questionnaire to find out more about your class. Students love to tell you about themselves and you can tailor lessons/worksheets to include their hobbies and favourite football teams.

10

Must, should, could. An oldie, but a goodie. Phrase lesson goals in terms of: 'All must complete ...', 'Most should complete ...', and 'Some could complete ...'. This works well as an aspirational tool, because all students want to be in the elite, 'some' category and so tend to try harder.

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11

Shared responsibility. Allocate different tasks to different groups within a class e.g. when analysing a source, a weaker group might be asked to 'describe', whilst a higher ability group might be asked to 'discuss how reliable the source is as evidence'.

12

Teen teachers. Give students responsibility for teaching part of a lesson. Give basic instructions regarding topic and length of time. Leave the structure and delivery to them – students are nearly always highly creative with this!

13

Learning styles. Offer students a range of ways in which to complete a task e.g. verbal essay submitted via video or audio file; traditional written essay; picture essay.

14

Plenary assessment. Get students to write down on a sticky note the areas they are still having problems with, or any questions they still have. Collect these in and use the information to plan the groupings for the next lesson.

15

Peer pushing. Not ground-breaking but easy to put in place. Seat students in ability groups for some activities. Peer competition can improve performance and, in a mixed ability class, weaker students don't feel intimidated by the more able.

16

Questions. Give students control over the lesson by getting them to write any questions they need answering as part of the starter activity. Divide them up and get students to suggest answers in their groups.

17

Takeaway homework. Devise a homework menu for the topic you are teaching with four tiers of difficulty (spiciness!). Students can choose items from the menu to complete at the level appropriate for them.

18

Glossaries. Prepare different types of word glossaries to support in class. Some can be to explain difficult words – others can offer 'wow' words that need to be included in a piece of writing for more able students.

19

Observers. Stretch and challenge your most able students by making them roving observers within group-work activities. They can help their peers and, at the end of the task, feedback to the class any observations about how students worked together.

20

Increasing complexity. When writing comprehension questions, make sure you place them in order of complexity, so they become more open-ended and taxing. You could try structuring these around Bloom's Taxonomy.