

Adaptations to a Lesson for Student with Learning Difficulties

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November 16, 2011

** Please note that the lesson plan is attached to the end of this essay and that this essay follows the “ADAPT” strategy of adaptation of lessons with inclusion of Universal Design for Learning**

Individualized learning is essential for students with learning difficulties, especially those with an intellectual disability that keeps them from learning in a traditional way or at grade level. For the sake of confidentiality, I am going to change the name of my student. According to the textbook, this student would fall under the category of “mild intellectual disability.” Jeff is currently enrolled in grade nine and is reading, writing, and comprehending at a second grade level. Because of his lack of comprehension, Jeff often would not complete the assignments, but would work in class. Jeff has support in the classroom through an Education Assistant, but the worker also has several other students in the classroom that she needs to provide support for. Jeff is soft-spoken, but appears to be well-liked by his peers. He has a few close friends, but does not tend to talk to anybody outside of his immediate circle of friends. Jeff had a good home life and his family supported him greatly through homework support, communication with the teachers, and making sure that all of Jeff’s needs were met through emotional, psychological, and physical support. Jeff is easily embarrassed, likely because he does not want his peers to see that he is having difficulties with reading, writing, and comprehension. When Jeff does hand in his class work or homework, it is often illegible. However, if you ask Jeff what he is trying to say, he will be able to describe his answers to you. This shows that Jeff does not have difficulty with memory, but rather just with comprehension of reading and writing. Jeff does have some troubles with fine motor skills, which would account for his sloppy writing. Furthermore, when he is allowed to use the computer in the classroom, he tends to only use one or two fingers on his

right hand to type, so it does not increase his output speed, but it does increase the legibility of his assignments. There may also be some delay in his communication skills, but Jeff has a tendency to not speak up in class, and to not communicate with teachers or other students on an intellectual level, but rather only on a social level. It does not appear that Jeff has any social delays, but also has a tendency to not enjoy meeting new people or making new friends. When doing group work, he likes to stay in the same group and appears to show some symptoms of anxiety when he is asked to work in a group in which he does not feel completely comfortable.

Although Jeff has many weaknesses, he also has many strengths. For instance, Jeff is extremely talented in mathematics. He is doing work at a grade 11 academic math level. However, even in math, he has difficulty deciphering what the word problems are trying to ask him. When he is given a problem with only numerals and mathematical signs, however, Jeff has no difficulties in completing the problem. In his mathematics class, Jeff often speaks up with the answer, likely because he knows that he has the correct answer and is confident in his ability to answer correctly. This confidence diminishes when he is asked to solve a word problem. Jeff is also highly considerate. We tend to focus on the intellectual quotient and forget the emotional quotient when talking about students. This particular student is very polite, always wishes his peers and teachers a good day, and has a tendency to perform chivalrous acts, such as opening the door for somebody else, or offering to carry somebody's books when the person looks as if they are having trouble. Jeff does not have any, or very few, behavioral issues in class.

According to his teachers, he is almost always respectful, does not create disruption in class, and indicates that he enjoys school, even with his intellectual difficulties. His weaknesses arise when asked to read aloud, to himself, or comprehend what he has read. In an English class, it is of utmost importance that a student knows how to read and comprehend a text because the student

will be given a variety of texts that they will need to understand. Jeff has trouble with lower-level thinking, based on the understanding and comprehension levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Jeff also insists on sitting at the back of the classroom. Jeff requires glasses to help him read, but does not often wear them, and will not sit at the front of the class to diminish distraction. It does not appear that giving Jeff more than one chance to read over a text affects the way he comprehends. Jeff does have the ability to advocate for himself when he is having trouble, but he will only do so occasionally, and often refuses to work with an Educational Assistant because it is embarrassing and singles him out. He always refuses help in a very polite manner, however, and appears to get "lost" in the class because of his kind and calm nature.

Much of my class work is based on interaction with peers and group work. Learning in my lesson is largely based on problem solving skills and evaluation, usually done in groups, but if a student does not have the ability to comprehend what is happening in the text, the student will not be able to evaluate what is important detail and what is "irrelevant filler." Introducing this particular learning difficulty to the classroom forces me as a teacher to have to adapt the lesson to including only the important details or make the details extremely obvious so that the student has a greater chance of comprehending the poem. There is the option of choosing a simpler poem, but that creates a lack of challenge in the curriculum for the advanced or gifted students. The textbook that I use for the poetry unit has many difficult words to comprehend. Although we go over the poem in class, if a student does not understand something when it is read out loud, read to oneself, and then discussed, the restrictions on the lesson are great. It would be beneficial if the students got to choose their own groups in order to minimize anxiety on the student with learning difficulties. This, however, is also a problem since the students do

not always know which students will help them learn better and which will merely distract them from their learning goals and targets.

There are several ways that the teacher could create adaptations for the student for this particular lesson on Dramatic Monologues. One of the biggest problems is that if I change the format or the poem for the dramatic monologue, I can no longer use the questions and I will find it very difficult to come up with questions for a simpler poem. The lesson would just not be as effective for all of the students. Instead, what I could do is give the student a summary of what is going on in simple terms so that he can quickly read over the summary after or before the poem is read in order to best comprehend the poem. If he knows what is going on in five or six sentences, using lower level English to describe said poem, he may find it more beneficial when listening and reading the poem as a class or in small groups to pick out lines that support what he has already understood to be happening. It would also be simple for me to choose the groups ahead of time so that the students know which groups they are working in. This allows for the struggling student to be placed in a group that has some of his peers that he is comfortable with in it, but still challenges him and the other students by rotating the groups so that there is somebody who is challenging in the group as well. It would also be beneficial if I put the particularly compassionate students in a group with Jeff because they would make him feel welcome in the group and he may be more likely to share his opinion or answers. The final adaptation that I could make was to shorten the assignment for Jeff. Since he has a difficult time writing, and it takes him a long time to type, I could allow him to do half of the length of the assignment, that is only write 8 instead of 15 lines for a dramatic monologue, while still requiring that he follows all of the “rules” for the assignment. This allows me to assess him on the same learning objectives, but decreases the work-load for him.

These adaptations create several consequences in the classroom. Many of them are time-consuming and need to be done on a regular basis, not just with this particular lesson. For instance, once the groups are organized, one can only use those same groupings a certain number of times before the groups need to be reorganized because students have a tendency to limit their learning once they are comfortable in their current position. Therefore, the student has to have many confidants in the class in order for this adaptation to work. Also, the student may feel as though they are being picked on because they are always put in a particular group. Students will also notice that there is no “randomness” to the groupings, because the groups are always picked before the class even starts. This may cause all the students to feel as though their education is happening to them, not that they are a part of it. I would, then, have to be very careful as to when I use particular groups and when I choose “random” groupings. It would greatly benefit the student to know what is going on in the poem before he is forced to work with it, but some students may feel that it is unfair that he gets an “answer key” to the poem. However, this too can be done discreetly and students do not have to know that it is a learning aid that only particular students receive. The shortened assignment plan will be difficult to do discreetly as well. However, since students have to write their own poem, it should not be terribly difficult to do. Many students will feel as though they are being “tortured” because they have to do more work, but I could create a talk about the difference between equality and efficacy: highlighting that efficacy is what we are aiming for, and sometimes that is only done through things being “technically” unfair. This talk should put everybody on the same page, and will be particularly effective if the students recognize that there is more than one student in the class that requires differentiation, and that it is not just special treatment for one individual.

All of the above methods worked well during the teaching process. However, I felt as though giving the “answers” to the poem was not challenging Jeff enough to put him on the path to independence. Yet, I feel that it is more important that he think critically about the poem through synthesis and evaluation, and the blocks that occur appear only to be at the lower end of the taxonomy. Therefore, it is not necessarily a bad thing to give him the answers to the lower end questions if it helps him learn to think critically. Often, especially in the “real world,” it is more valuable for people to be able to think critically on their own than to merely reiterate what somebody else has already told them. Developing those skills is more important than fighting and frustrating the student at the lower levels and having him become resentful and irritated with learning.

Universal Design for Learning allows for many more technological adaptations that may be useful for this lesson. Since the students are asked to write a dramatic monologue, programs such as Dragon Speak, which types out the words that the student reads to the computer, and CoReader 6, which uses predictive technology to give the student a list of words that will help the student think creatively. Both of these programs will help Jeff since he has a difficulty with words. Jeff does not appear to have any issues with creating meaning from something once he understands what is going on, or coming up with ideas about things that happen in a story, he just has a problem expressing those ideas. Therefore, these programs are welcome adaptations for Jeff when he goes to perform a task, but not necessarily when there is group work or direct instruction.

Especially in English language arts, the learning outcomes prescribed by the government are quite adaptable. One would have to create assessment that best suits each individual student. From the information we have on Jeff, it is clear that if things are laid out clearly for him, he has

the ability to produce quality work. He also seems to have a tendency to be able to communicate more clearly with oral language than with written language. Because of this, it would be beneficial for Jeff to be able to express himself orally instead of using written language at any given point where it is possible to do so. An option would be for him to orally present a dramatic monologue so that he could best interpret what the assignment is asking for in regard to his individual learning style. His assessment could be altered by allowing him to present to the class or to just the teacher, allowing him to have extra time when typing the assignments, or have somebody scribe for him whenever there is somebody available to do so. Since Jeff has such a strong support system at home, it will be essential that the teacher assesses only what Jeff knows how to do, as it is difficult to decipher between what Jeff is doing on his own and what he is being helped with at home. When assessing knowledge, it is essential that the teacher puts the questions into words that Jeff can comprehend on his own so that no extra clues are given during the assessment. It may be best if the teacher has several different versions of the test in order to best, discreetly, be able to assess everybody fairly.

Lesson Name or Number: Lesson 7: If it doesn't rhyme, it's not poetry. *Date:* 26 October 2011

Name: Jessica Wiebe

Subject: English – Poetry

Grade: 9

Rationale:

- Students often find poetry boring because they think there are too many restrictions. This lesson aims to have students use rhyme in order to enhance meaning and creativity rather than restrict them.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes:

- A9
- B1
- B12
- C3

Instructional Objectives:

- SWBAT identify 4 aspects of a dramatic monologue.
- SWBAT compose a found poem with internal or end rhyme (perfect and imperfect acceptable).

Prerequisite Concepts and Skills:

- Rhyme, roman numerals, numerical prefixes.

Organizational and/or Behavioral Management Strategies:

- “Boring” way of teaching meter if the students cannot behave.
- Proximity

Assessment and Evaluation:

- Correct response.
- Poem will be marked in poetry booklet by rubric.

Extension:

- Applicable to the rest of the unit, and the rest of the English curriculum for the remainder of high school.

Adaptations:

- Provide notes for students with writing difficulties.
- Ensure that everybody is included in group work.

Reflections:

- To be done after the lesson.

Materials and Resources:

Teacher:	Students:
Dramatic monologues (2), aspects of a dramatic monologue information, magazines, scissors, glue, paper.	Glue, paper, scissors.

Lesson Activities:

Teacher Activities	Student Activities	Time:
Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dim the lights, have the students sitting, hang the picture by the board, and recite the poem as if talking to the students. 	Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students watch and listen. 	10-15 minutes

<p>Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give students copies of poem and list of questions. Have students read poem and answer the questions. • Discuss Irony. (Dramatic, Situational, and verbal). • Review answers with the students. Make generalizations to create “rules.” • Give students assignment: write a dramatic monologue using only words cut out from the magazines. The poem must be at least 10 lines. This poem MUST be a good copy that goes into your poetry portfolio. • ** It may be easier to write out the poem that you want, and then find the words in the magazine. ** <p>Closure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean up books and pack up. • Depending on time constraints and completion of the poem, start the next class with completing the poem. • Remind students to dress for going outside tomorrow. 	<p>Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students read poem and answer the questions. <p>15 minutes</p> <p>15 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the answers: students note that they are creating a list of rules for the poem. • Fill out terms sheets. <div data-bbox="824 667 1390 764" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p>ADD: dramatic monologue, internal rhyme, end rhyme, apostrophe.</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students create their found poem. <p>Closure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students pack up. 	<p>15 minutes</p> <p>15 minutes</p> <p>30-35 minutes</p> <p>5 minutes</p>
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