Student Characteristics Paper: Students and Differentiated Classrooms

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 Schools today are striving to make their classes successful for students of all talents and disabilities. Also, Parents and educators are pushing for inclusion of special education learners in regular classrooms (Tomlinson, C. A., 1997). Though, several are left stuck, trying to find ways to meet their student’s needs in a classroom that won’t bore the children to death. Public schools cannot thrive unless they belong enthusiastically to all students who enter them, and gifted learners cannot thrive unless developing their talent is a full-time proposition (Tomlinson, C. A., 1997). So the big question is, “What are schools going to do to better their gifted students?”

One suggestion that was brought up by Carol Tomlinson was, that schools should have a differentiated classroom for each grade level (1997). A differentiated class is when teachers differentiate instruction, they move away from seeing themselves as keepers and dispensers of knowledge and come to see themselves as organizers of learning opportunities. While content knowledge remains important, teachers focus less on knowing all the answers, and focus more on "reading their’ students." They then create ways to learn that both capture students' attention and lead to understanding (The role of the teacher in a differentiated classroom., 2007). Having these classrooms will allow each of the students (gifted and talented, special needs, or general education) to express their own way of learning at their own pace in a general class.

Some characteristics of children who are diagnosed as a gifted or talented student are that they want to learn about complex, extracurricular topics and authentic, sophisticated knowledge and interconnections among ideas; to work with others some of the time; and to choose the format of the products of their learning. More students identified as gifted also disliked waiting for the rest of the class and asking for help (Kanevsky, L., 2011). With many different issues different learning styles revolving around these students it can make teaching difficult to cope with. Although, with students craving to learn with an open mind and having a teacher willing to listen and to learn beside them, a differentiated classroom will have success on a gifted child’s ability to succeed.

Differentiated classrooms will provide materials, activities, projects or products, homework, and assessments that are complex enough, abstract enough, open-ended enough, and multifaceted enough to cause gifted students to stretch in knowledge, thinking, and production (Tomlinson, C. A., 1997). With all of these concepts for gifted students to experience, they are getting both the one on one training and group interactions that they would have never been able to practice in a general classroom. Also, another benefit to having a differentiated classroom is that the teachers ensure that the tasks of the gifted learners don't "stick out," appearing to be abnormal. No child likes to be different from the norm, and having these teachers helps make these students blend right in with the others (Tomlinson, C. A., 1997).

So, for these gifted and talented students of today, there needs to be a place for them to settle in a school where they can learn and accomplish tasks that keep them on their toes wanting more. Also, in the differentiated program there needs to be positive energetic teachers who are willing to dedicate their time to the needs of these students. The main goal of these differentiated classrooms should always be to have a positive environment for gifted learners because they accept who these learners are, reflect an awareness of the specific achievement level of the learner at any given time, and provide learning opportunities that match the child's own achievement level and interests (Tomlinson, C. A., 1997).

In conclusion, all schools and teachers differ. There is no one-size-fits-all formula for meeting the needs of academically diverse populations in regular classrooms any more than there is a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching gifted learners. It is important to understand that teachers have special preferences, strengths, and weaknesses as individuals, just as their individual students do (Tomlinson, C. A., 1997). Thus having these differentiated classrooms allows not only students of gifted and talented to succeed, but they also strengthen the teacher in areas of better understanding how to cope with their student’s needs. These students deserve a chance just like any other student to strive for what they want most, and if that is more knowledge on their favorite subjects so be it.

Work Cited

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