

The ABCs of Differentiated Learning

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Accept that each learner is unique and has specific needs and preferences related to learning.

Base learning activities on a variety of learning modalities.

Create a learning environment in which it is okay to ask questions or challenge what you say.

Develop learning materials that appeal to a wide variety of learner needs.

Encourage learners to think outside the box and explore alternatives on their own.

Focus learner attention through use of color, sound, light, props, and anything else that helps them grasp key concepts.

Gain attention by using tools and techniques that are innovative and that relate to program topics.

Have learners work together in groups to share information to better understand concepts presented.

Involve learners in their own learning by giving opportunities where they apply what they have learned in class and receive feedback on their performance.

Jog learner's memory by building "interim reviews" in which creative tools (e.g. word search or crossword puzzles customized to session content) are used to reinforce what they have learned.

Keep brains stimulated by building in activities in which learners physically move during class.

Learn from students and participants by asking them "why does that make sense to you" when they challenge a concept or idea presented.

Make learning fun by incorporating various props and toys related to the subject or topic of the class (e.g. 8X8X8 jumbo dice can be used to discuss probabilities or for selecting participants for group activities).

Nurture creativity by letting learners come up with creative ways to teach a segment of class content to their peers.

Orchestrate acceptance of diversity by encouraging participation and involvement by all learners rather than just a few.

Prepare learners for what to expect in the class by providing learning objectives at the beginning of each session.

Qualify your understanding of a learner's response through paraphrasing before reacting to what was said in order to ensure correct interpretation of the speaker's intent.

Rejuvenate learners by providing refreshments and liquids (lots of water) throughout the event.

Stimulate brain neurons by using music in your sessions (e.g. have learners create a rap song that incorporates concepts learned in the class).

Treat all learners with respect and dignity, even when they act out or disagree with you.

Use brain-based research findings to create an environment that maximizes each learner's potential.

Validate learner understanding by giving positive feedback whenever appropriate.

Watch for nonverbal signs or confusion, boredom, or disagreement throughout your learning event.

Xperience is a terrific teacher; allow learners to practice their new knowledge and skills whenever possible.

You are not the center of attention; just the conduit for learning – never forget this.

Zero in on the needs of learners early through an in-class needs assessment in the form of questionnaires, pre-tests/quizzes, flip charted closed-end questions, or in any other creative way you can think of.

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