



Dennis-Yarmouth RSD

Instruction Office Newsletter

Making Learning Visible: On-the-Spot Checks for Understanding

"Teaching must balance lesson planning with improvising," say Brent Duckor, Carrie Holmberg, and Joanne Rossi Becker (San José State University) in this article in *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School*. They believe formative assessment in classrooms is more than calling for thumbs up/thumbs down, using clickers, giving quizzes, processing exit slips, and managing interim test data. It should also include real-time instructional adaptations, listening carefully to and making sense of students' unexpected responses (a "window" into their thinking), giving feedback on the fly, and interjecting "just-in-time moves that promote a conscious and strategic use of student thinking."

Duckor, Holmberg, and Becker suggest seven formative assessment moves that should be "fluid, flexible, and ubiquitous" during a lesson and "create opportunities for all students to interact productively and persistently with higher-order thinking."

- **Priming** – *Preparing the groundwork; establishing norms; acting to acculturate students to learning publicly. For example, a teacher might say: "I'm so glad you asked that question because it seemed like maybe some other people had the same question."*
- **Pausing** – *Giving students adequate time to think*

(Continued on page 2)



September 2017

Volume 5, Issue # 1

IMPORTANT DATES

September 7TH
September 10TH
September 12th
September 13TH
September 14TH
September 19TH
September 22nd

MMS OPEN HOUSE
GRANDPARENT'S DAY
SAE OPEN HOUSE
DYH OPEN HOUSE
MES OPEN HOUSE
NHWi OPEN HOUSE
AUTUMN EQUINOX
at exactly 4:02 P.M. EDT.
EHBi OPEN HOUSE



IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Central office is a **fragrance-free zone** so please be respectful and plan accordingly when you visit.

Due to one of our members at the CO being highly sensitive to any type of fragrance, we ask that staff visiting/meeting at the Administration building refrain from using any scented products. Fragrances from personal care products, air fresheners, laundry and other cleaning products have been associated with adversely affecting a person's health. We ask that we all work together to make the environment a safe and healthy workplace for everyone.



Thank you very much for your cooperation!



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(Continued from page 1)

and respond as individuals or as groups; the teacher poses a question to the whole class but doesn't call on students for a few seconds, putting hand to chin in a pose reminiscent of Rodin's *Thinker* conveying the message, "We take our time to raise our hands. I am protecting individual student think time now."



➤ **Bouncing** – Sampling a variety of student responses intentionally and systematically to better map terrain of student thinking: "Take 60 seconds. Talk with your team" or "Anyone have anything to add to that?"

➤ **Probing** – Asking follow-up questions that use information from actual student responses: "Based on what you saw around the room, would you stick with that answer?"

➤ **Posing** – Asking questions that size up the learner's needs in the lesson and across the unit: "Why would the $3 \times 2 \times 4$ box have less surface area than the $6 \times 4 \times 1$ box?"



➤ **Binning** – Noticing patterns in student responses, categorizing them along learning trajectories, and using responses to inform next steps: The teacher displays several student solutions in correct and incorrect "bins" without disclosing an opinion and asks, "Which are correct?"

➤ **Tagging** – Publicly representing variation in student thinking by creating a snapshot or running record of a class's responses: "So let's come to an agreement as a group about terms."



Duckor, Holmberg, and Becker say they hope these moves will help teachers see on-the-spot assessment in a new light so they can "amplify the voices and values of quieter students, particularly those English language learners in middle school math classrooms who too often have been rushed past in the race to the top."

"Making Moves: Formative Assessment in Mathematics" by Brent Duckor, Carrie Holmberg, and Joanne Rossi Becker in *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School*, February 2017 (Vol. 22, #6, p. 334-342), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2IZb5Eh>; the authors can be reached at brent.duckor@sjsu.edu, carrie.holmberg@sjsu.edu, and joanne.rossibecker@sjsu.edu.



Five Dimensions of Powerful Classrooms

In this article in *Achieve the Core*, Alan Schoenfeld (University of

- **Rigorous, appropriate content** – Classroom activities provide opportunities for students to become knowledgeable, flexible, and resourceful disciplinary thinkers. Discussions are focused and coherent, providing opportunities to learn ideas, techniques, and perspectives, make connections, and develop productive habits of mind.

- **Cognitive demand** – Students have opportunities to grapple with and make sense of important concepts and their use. Students learn best when they are challenged in ways that provide room and support for growth, with task difficulty ranging from moderate to demanding. The level of challenge should be conducive to what has been called "productive struggle."

- **Equitable access to content** – Classroom structures invite and support the active, equitable engagement of all students with core content. If a





small number of students get most of the air time, things aren't equitable, no matter how rich the content.

- **Agency, ownership and identity** – Students have the opportunity to “walk the walk and talk the talk” – to contribute to conversations about ideas, to build on others' ideas and have others build on theirs – in ways that contribute to their development of agency (the willingness to engage), their ownership of the content, and the development of positive identities as thinkers and learners.



- **Formative assessment** – Classroom activities elicit student thinking, and subsequent interactions respond to those ideas, building on productive beginnings and addressing emerging misunderstandings. Powerful instruction meets students where they are and gives them opportunities to deepen their understandings.

“What Really Counts When We Teach?” by Alan Schoenfeld in *Achieve the Core*, April 18, 2017, <http://achievethecore.org/aligned/what-really-counts-when-we-teach/>; Schoenfeld can be reached at alans@berkeley.edu.

Lesson Study as a Vehicle for Improving Formative Assessments



In this article in *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School*, Davida Fischman (California State University/San Bernardino) and Kelli Wasserman (a secondary math teacher/consultant) say the Lesson Study process can be helpful in getting teachers to more effectively plan and execute formative/during-the-lesson assessments. Here's how they have seen

this play out in the four stages of Lesson Study in a research project involving 100 grade 4-8 math teachers:

- ✚ **Study** – A teacher team decides on a particular area of student need; studies the content in depth, including common student errors and misconceptions; designs an assessment and gathers data on their students' understanding of the content; chooses academic goals and standards; and selects behavioral goals.

- ✚ **Plan** – The team carefully designs a lesson around the content, based on what they learned about student thinking; anticipates student misconceptions and possible responses; plans strategic points in the lesson at which to assess students; and plans how to adapt instruction based on assessment results.



- ✚ **Teach and observe** – One teacher teaches the lesson, implementing formative assessments as planned and noticing unplanned student actions and unexpected student errors and misunderstandings; the teacher's colleagues observe (possibly joined by outside experts) and record evidence of student learning; student work is collected and a video may be made for future reference. “By focusing on observation only (rather than teaching) during the research lesson,” say Fischman and Wasserman, “a teacher-observer hones the ability to listen carefully to students' comments, observe students' actions, and discern nuances that might otherwise go unobserved.”

- ✚ **Reflect and modify** – Teachers share observations, with particular emphasis on how well the lesson plan anticipated students' needs; look at evidence of student learning; investigate how aspects of the lesson affected student learning and behaviors;





think about how the lesson might be improved; and reflect on what might be learned for instructional practice more generally.

The authors conclude: “The process of lesson study, with its collaborative and supportive culture, is conducive to teachers asking difficult questions and venturing beyond their normal practice to explore new ways of using formative assessment and reflecting on the results... Lesson study slows down the process of teaching, providing time and support for teachers to examine their practice in depth and to develop new skills in a supportive environment.”

“Developing Assessment Through Lesson Study” by Davida Fischman and Kelli Wasserman in *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School*, February 2017 (Vol. 22, #6, p. 344-351), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2IZiuU3>; the authors can be reached at fischman@csusb.edu and kwasserman@sbcglobal.net.

How to Get the Most Out of Small-Group Math Conversations

In this article in *Teaching Children Mathematics*, Hala Ghouseini, Sarah Lord, and Aimee Cardon (University of Wisconsin/Madison) address the challenge of getting elementary students to have good math discussions when they’re working in small groups. Some teacher frustrations they’ve encountered:

- “Because students do not listen to me when I give directions, I end up talking too much during group work, mainly explaining the directions over and over.”
- “I spend my time settling disagreements because students don’t know how to work with each

other.”

- “The strongest students just end up doing all the work.”
- “My students always want me to help them right away if they think they’re stuck – and they want to check with me all the time to see if they’re doing it right. They just don’t know how to be independent.”

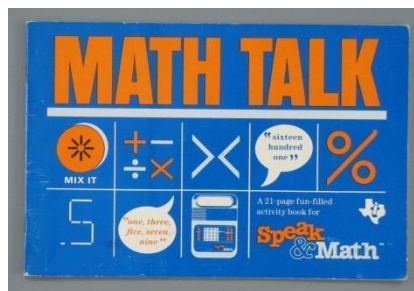
The key to productive small-group work, say Ghouseini, Lord, and Cardon, is how teachers launch the lesson before students begin working in groups:



➤ Modeling good collaboration

– Many students are inexperienced at sharing their thinking in clear ways and negotiating solutions to problems with their peers, so it’s helpful for the teacher to demonstrate a possible scenario. For example, a teacher preparing students to work in pairs skip-counting by fives and tens acts out the back-and-forth with a student and makes a deliberate error, saying 58 instead of 60. What should her partner do now? she asks the class, and guides them to a good coaching response: “Take another look at your skip-counting chart. So far, all the numbers we’ve said have ended in five or zero, and fifty-eight ends in an eight.” Teaching a lesson on fractions, she might say, “When you throw out your idea, you don’t want people to say, ‘Oh, you’re wrong! You did that wrong! You’re not good at fractions.’ You don’t want people to feel that way about fractions.”

➤ Providing opportunities for guided mathematical talk – During the lesson launch, the teacher can walk students through the kind of thinking they’ll be asked to do in groups. For example, a teacher introducing a small-group activity on





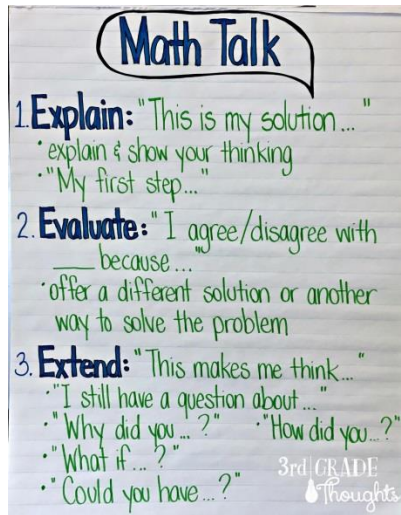
comparing fractions elicits several different ways of expressing equivalence – *How do you know that this drawing of $\frac{1}{6}$ is the same as that one?* “Her requests for multiple explanations engaged students in different ways of articulating their thinking and reasoning,” say Ghouseini, Lord, and Cardon. “This form of guided math talk during the lesson launch gives all students space to get into the habit of listening, responding to one another’s ideas, and providing explanations for mathematical concepts. It allows students with different levels of mathematical proficiency to learn skills that can support equitable participation in small-group work.” A teacher might also ask students to do a quick turn-and-talk about a specific question – for example, *How would you know how to circle multiples of three on a hundreds chart?*

➤ **Providing resources that support mathematical talk** – In the lesson launch, the teacher can draw students’ attention to manipulatives, visuals, or props that support high-quality math talk in groups. For example, with the 5-10 skip-counting activity, the teacher might say, “I would make sure I had my skip-counting chart in front of me. If you don’t need to use it, don’t use it. It’s there just in case you ever get stuck on a number.” A teacher could also remind students of vocabulary they’d learned, perhaps referring to a word wall or an anchor chart.

Then, while students work in pairs or small groups, the teacher circulates, monitors, and

intervenes as necessary, watching for insights or misconceptions to bring up when the class comes back together.

“Supporting Math Talk in Small Groups” by Hala Ghouseini, Sarah Lord, and Aimee Cardon in *Teaching Children Mathematics*, March 2017 (Vol. 23, #7, p. 422-428), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2nfy3e>; the authors can be reached at ghouseini@wisc.edu, mtslord@gmail.com, and cardon@wisc.edu.



The Continuum from Teacher-Controlled to Student-Centered Learning

(Originally titled “Orchestrating the Move to Student-Driven Learning”)

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Bena Kallick (Institute for Habits of Mind) and Allison Zmuda (a curriculum consultant) say that teachers who want to personalize instruction must manipulate seven variables in the same way an audio technician uses a sound board. “For each component,” say Kallick and Zmuda, “the teacher can turn the volume up or down, amplifying or reducing the amount of student agency as the teacher and students begin to feel more comfortable with student self-direction.” Key questions: *How ready are my students to take control? How much can I trust that what’s important in the subject matter will be covered if I release some control? How will I know whether the students are really learning? If I begin to release control, what is my new role with students?*

Here are the levers in the personalizing sound board, sliding from (a) teacher-generated to (b) co-created to (c) student-generated:

• Learning goals –

In a unit on extreme





weather: (a) the teacher says the objective is to understand the causes of hurricanes and tornadoes; (b) the teacher works with students to identify two locations and explore how extreme weather affects them; and (c) a student with family in Haiti studies hurricanes' impact there.

- **Inquiry and idea generation** – In a unit on drug abuse: (a) the teacher assigns students an article on the dangers of cigarettes and has them list the five worst; (b) the teacher asks, “Should smoking be banned in public places?” and students research the question; and (c) students decide on a drug to study.



- **Task and audience** – In an 8th-grade unit on argumentation: (a) the teacher has students design a print advertisement for a fundraiser; (b) the teacher offers a variety of possible tasks and presentation formats; and (c) the teacher outlines the parameters and criteria and has students apply what they've learned to advocate for a position they've chosen.

- **Evaluation** – In a mathematics unit on using data: (a) the teacher decides on the final criteria; (b) teacher and students develop performance criteria together; and (c) students consult with the teacher on scoring the task, considering growth from previous performances.

- **Feedback** – In a unit on renewable energy: (a) the teacher offers suggestions on the thesis statement of a student's research paper; (b) the teacher orchestrates opportunities for students to network with each other or outside experts for feedback; and (c) students are responsible for independently seeking and using feedback.



- **Instructional plan** – In a 10th-grade ELA unit on coming-of-age literary fiction: (a) the teacher guides students through reading and discussing *The Catcher in the Rye*, culminating in a final paper; (b) students choose from three novels, form book groups, discuss central questions, and decide how to share ideas with the whole class; and (c) each student chooses a text from an extensive list and develops a plan to gain a deep understanding of the book.



- **Cumulative demonstration of learning** – (a) Students follow the teacher's directions and collect pieces of work documenting their learning according to the teacher's criteria; (b) students identify artifacts to demonstrate their learning; and (c) students are the stewards of their work portfolios or exhibitions, recognizing strengths and weaknesses and reflecting on whether the work meets standards and is something they're proud of.

“Orchestrating the Move to Student-Driven Learning” by Bena Kallick and Allison Zmuda in *Educational Leadership*, March 2017 (Vol. 74, #6, p. 53-57), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2nmReNu>; the authors can be reached at kallick.bena@gmail.com and Allison.g.zmuda@gmail.com.

Personalizing Homework

(Originally titled “One-Size-Doesn’t-Fit-All Homework”) In this *Educational Leadership* article, Cathy Vatterott (University of Missouri/St. Louis) describes how five teachers in a suburban Massachusetts elementary school experimented with customized homework. “In my 23 years of teaching, I have never seen a group of students get this excited about homework,” said one





teacher. Working from teacher suggestions and expectations, curriculum standards, unit big ideas, and individual needs, students decided on weekly projects and took increasing responsibility for monitoring their own progress. Some examples:

- *Creating a song with lyrics on multiplication facts;*
- *Writing detailed descriptions of characters and plotlines in books read;*
- *Writing word problems based on real-world situations;*
- *Preparing a class presentation to build self-confidence and speaking skills;*
- *Writing reports on airplanes, snakes, 3-D structures, and other interests.*



(usually Monday). “They didn’t know what to do when given a voice in directing their own learning,” says Vatterott, “and most of them had no experience with self-assessing their strengths and weaknesses.” Teachers found it took a lot of modeling and “gentle guidance” to bring these students up to speed – including a sheet with suggestions and weekly all-class discussions to generate ideas. Some students struggled with procrastination – Sunday night syndrome – and learned (with varying degrees of teacher support) how to pace themselves through the week. “The experience provided students with helpful insights into their work habits,” says Vatterott. “Without this opportunity, they may not have learned these lessons until much later in their education.”

How has homework compliance compared to the traditional model? On balance, more students are doing their homework. “They are motivated and interested to complete what is assigned,” said one teacher. “It is meaningful to them, so they do it – it’s as simple as that!”

“One-Size-Doesn’t-Fit-All Homework” by Cathy Vatterott in *Educational Leadership*, March 2017 (Vol. 74, #6, p. 34-39), <http://bit.ly/2mAIUdz>; Vatterott is at vatterott@umsl.edu.

Distinguishing Personalization, Differentiation, and Individualization

In this chart, Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey (Personalize Learning) identify key differences among three closely related concepts:

- **Personalization** – Learners drive their learning; connect learning with their interests, talents, passions, and aspirations; actively participate in the design of

Teachers told Vatterott that the element of choice and the wide range of options changed the hum-drum homework routine. “The assignments were generally longer, had more depth, and were much more creative when compared to traditional homework I had assigned,” said one. There’s definitely more work for teachers to monitor and evaluate multiple projects, but they say the payoff in student engagement makes

it worthwhile. Some parents were skeptical at first, but became converts when they saw their children’s engagement and motivation.



Of course

some students had difficulty with the responsibility of choosing a topic or project, staying on track, and completing the week’s homework by the deadline





their learning; own and are responsible for their learning, including their voice and choice of how and what they learn; identify goals for their learning plan and benchmarks as they progress along their learning path with guidance from the teacher; acquire the skills to select and use the appropriate technology and



resources to support and enhance their learning; build a network of peers, experts, and teachers to guide and support their learning; demonstrate

mastery of content in a competency-based system; become self-directed, expert learners who monitor progress and reflect on learning based on mastery of content and skills.

• **Differentiation** – The teacher provides instruction to groups of learners; adjusts instruction for the needs of different groups of learners; identifies the same objectives for different groups of learners; selects technology and resources to support the learning needs of different groups of learners; monitors learning based on Carnegie unit (seat time) and grade level; uses data and assessments to modify instruction for groups of learners and provides feedback to individual learners to advance learning.

• **Individualization** – The teacher provides instruction for an individual learner; accommodates learning needs for the individual learner; customizes instruction based on the individual's learning needs; identifies the same objectives for all learners with specific objectives for individuals who need one-on-one support; selects technology and resources to support individual learning needs; understands the individual learner is dependent on them to support their learning; monitors learning based on Carnegie unit (seat time) and grade level; uses data and assessments to measure individual

progress and decide next steps.

"Updated Personalization vs. Differentiation vs. Individualization Chart" by Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey,

<https://www.slideshare.net/barbarabray1/pdi-v3-2>

High-Impact Strategies to Provide Access to All Students

Kristina J. Doubet and Jessica A. Hockett

In architecture, universal design refers to "an orientation to design based on the following premises:

- ❖ Disability is not a special condition of a few;
- ❖ It is ordinary and affects most of us for some part of our lives; and
- ❖ If a design works well for people with disabilities, it works better for everyone" (from Adaptive Environments, cited by [The Center for an Accessible Society](#)).

These same ideas hold true for instruction. Teachers who embrace Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a research-based framework for providing a wider range of learning options in classrooms, aim to provide all students access to important learning experiences. UDL regards difference as the norm rather than the exception and embraces variance with the goal of improving the quality of instruction for the entire class. The following UDL strategies have the potential to engage, support, and challenge students with a wide range of learning needs.

Using Audio Recordings for Prewriting

Often, students experience a disconnect between their *thinking* and their readiness for *writing* those thoughts. This is especially true for students who are learning English, students who have dyslexia, or students who struggle to maintain attention. To capture the ideas running through students' heads and "save" them for writing, teachers can ask students to first record themselves telling a story, explaining a process,





proving a point, etc. As students listen to their own voices, they can capture—and even refine—their thinking as they type, write, or solve. This technique highlights what students *can* do and uses it to help them accomplish what they perceive they *cannot* do. Along the way, it builds both confidence and capacity for new learning.

Targeted Classroom Talk

There are students in every classroom who think deeply, broadly, and creatively about content but seldom—if ever—contribute to a class discussion. It may be that these students need to filter their thoughts through several language layers before they speak or lack confidence in their ability to speak the target language clearly. Some students have such creative imaginations that their thoughts spiral into unusual avenues that can be considered "off topic." Others may just need a bit more time to process than their peers. Rather than regarding these students with labels (such as English language learners or students with ADHD or autism or disengaged) and giving them a "pass" during discussion, teachers can invite all students into the conversation by using strategies such as the following:

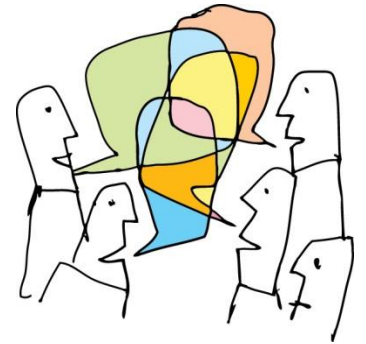


□ **Think-Pair-Share:** This strategy may be as old as the hills, but teachers often misuse or overlook it. "Think" time gives students a chance to process, translate, and record thoughts to be ready to contribute. The "pair" phase gives students who lack confidence a chance to practice their answers with a peer—a rehearsal that will increase their self-assurance in the "share" phase. If the "share" phase is implemented with Popsicle sticks or a digital communication tool like Class Dojo, all students know they are accountable for their answers and will invest more heavily in the "think" and "pair" stages. Further, if students know they can share their partner's answer rather than their own (giving credit where credit is due), they are more likely to both speak and listen while pairing. Questions with many possible

answers provide the best fodder for think-pair-shares and give all students the opportunity, and the *expectation*, to showcase critical thinking. Those types of questions are best planned in advance.

□ **Talking Chips:** The teacher may distribute two or three talking chips (poker chips or some other token) to each student with the expectation that they use all their chips during a discussion. Once students spend all of their chips, they are "out" of opportunities to contribute. This strategy operationalizes the expectation that all classmates *speak* and all classmates *listen*. It helps students who struggle with impulsivity—for any number of reasons, labeled or not—to exercise self-control. This, in turn, provides more opportunities for reticent students to speak without having to compete for a chance to do so. The number of talking chips can be adjusted for different students and can be negotiated between the teacher and student to heighten comfort level and investment.

□ **Role Cards:** Assigning specific roles to students during whole-class or small-group discussions gives each student partial responsibility for the success of that discussion. Roles such as *Director*, *Includer*, *Questioner*, and *Pacer*—along with their respective responsibilities and sample "soundbites" (Doubet & Hockett, in press)—encourage unique contributions from each student and provide scaffolding to do so. Teachers can assign roles strategically, or students can choose their roles. It's best to allow students to "try on" several roles throughout the semester or year to find those that provide both support and challenge.



Providing Choice

Unfortunately, teachers often give the fewest choices





to students who learn differently. In attempting to "cure" students of their learning "ills," teachers sometimes "prescribe" courses of study with few opportunities for student feedback on how to take in, process, or demonstrate their learning. This adversely affects students' motivations and, in turn, their performances.

Although choice empowers students, it may overwhelm teachers. It doesn't have to! Some choices,



such as product options (for example, show what you learned through a blog post, a podcast, or an instructional video) require advanced planning, while others can be low

prep. Teachers can give simple choices such as providing a variety of contexts for a story problem or several different audiences for a writing prompt. They may allow students to work alone with white noise in their headphones or in silence, or with peers. Simply letting students determine the order in which they will complete tasks can go a long way toward reducing resistance. The more students have a say in what and how they learn, the more likely they are to invest in tasks.

Each of these UDL approaches allows students to bolster their weaknesses by capitalizing on their strengths—while teachers honor the unique traits of every learner in the classroom, regardless of label (or lack thereof). In using such strategies, teachers provide all students access to worthwhile experiences, build self-efficacy, and foster a sense of belonging.

References

The Center for an Accessible Society. (n.d.). "Universal Design for Learning." From <http://www.accessiblesociety.org/topics/universaldesign/>

Doubet, K. J., & Hockett, J. A. (in press). *Differentiation in the elementary grades: Strategies to engage and equip all learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Accommodations, Modifications, and Interventions

In this article in *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, Greg Conderman, Lisa Liberty, and Stephanie DeSpain (Northern Illinois University) say that well-intentioned educators are sometimes unclear about the distinction between accommodations, modifications, and interventions and how they are used to meet students' needs. They note some common problems:

- ✓ **Over-accommodating students;**
- ✓ **For high-stakes testing, not preparing accommodation materials in advance;**
- ✓ **Identifying interventions that are really accommodations;**
- ✓ **Believing that accommodations necessarily lower standards for students.**

Here are the authors' definitions:

• Accommodations –

"Accommodations are small changes in how teachers present content or how the student demonstrates knowledge," say Conderman, Liberty, and DeSpain.

"Accommodations do not alter learning outcomes for students, and they do not teach students new skills, but rather they provide students access to the curriculum or assessments. In other words, accommodations even the playing field and offset or correct for the disability." They come in several flavors:

- **Presentation accommodations – Helping students access material by presenting it in a format that accommodates their**



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disability – for example, large print or digital text;

- *Response accommodation – Allowing students to demonstrate knowledge or skill in a different way – for example, typing or dictating responses;*
- *Setting accommodations – Providing an alternative location or equipment for*



completing an assignment or assessment – for example, having a student work alone to avoid distractions;

- *Timing and scheduling accommodations – Stretching the time allowed to complete an assignment or assessment, or breaking the time into small segments with breaks.*

A key consideration with accommodations is that the intellectual difficulty of the task doesn't change, only the way it's handled with the student. Thus, it's inappropriate to allow accommodations when what's being assessed is fluency or rate, or to give clues to answers through voice intonation, allow peers to read test items to a student, or not provide adequate supervision in an alternative setting. It's also important to work with students so that accommodations can be tapered off over time when possible by teaching the skills involved in being successful in regular settings.

- **Modifications** – These involve substantial



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adjustments in the difficulty level of the content being learned (to below or above grade-level expectations) because of a student's disability. "Because modifications often lower standards, they should be used sparingly, especially for students who take state or district assessments," say Conderman, Liberty, and DeSpain. "Students with disabilities should receive a different curriculum than students without disabilities only when it is unrealistic for them to benefit from the general education curriculum." Students who are above level might get above-grade-level acceleration or enrichment activities. In any case, teachers should prepare a menu of instructional activities and assessments to ensure that students with disabilities get meaningful support that's not just cobbled together on the fly. Some possible modifications:

- *Changing the task from recall to recognition;*
- *Allowing students to answer only main idea questions;*
- *Including fewer options in multiple-choice questions;*
- *Testing only big ideas;*
- *Testing students above or below grade level.*

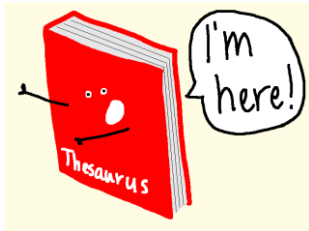


Teachers should decide on modifications as early in a curriculum unit as possible, use the smallest modification

needed to help students work toward their goals, communicate modifications to parents, and ensure that the modification is associated with the same skill area or instructional topic.



The distinction between accommodations and modifications is important. For example, if the outcome of a unit is for students to write an essay, allowing the student to type rather than hand-write the final assessment is an accommodation, but allowing the student to dictate answers is a modification.



• **Interventions** –

These are the “how to” of supporting students to reach

their learning goals – for example, providing clear and explicit instruction; modeling a new skill; teaching metacognitive skills and appropriate social behaviors; providing enough practice time; giving feedback; organizing peer tutoring; and providing frequent review. Some key considerations: Implementing interventions with fidelity; allowing enough time for an intervention to work; reflecting on the effectiveness of an intervention for future reference; and, when possible, getting students involved in collecting data on what’s working and what isn’t, graphing their individual progress toward their learning goals.

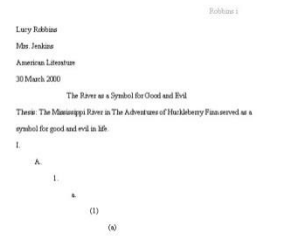
Here’s an example of the three layers – accommodation, modification, and intervention – for a class learning to write a persuasive essay with at least three reasons for a position:



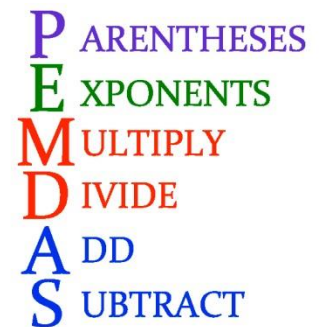
- **Accommodation:** Allow the use of a thesaurus; allow the use of adaptive devices such as pencil grips, special pen holders, erasable pen, color-coded lined paper; allowing extra time.



- **Modification:** Allow outlining instead of writing; provide multiple-choice questions or fill-in-the-blanks; change the number of reasons required.



- **Interventions:** Teach a mnemonic to remember the components of a persuasive essay; have students use a writer’s notebook; model brainstorming to break the “idea”



logjam; have students self-monitor and graph results to increase writing fluency.

“Understanding Accommodations, Modifications, and Interventions” by Greg Conderman, Lisa Liberty, and Stephanie DeSpain in *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, April-June 2017 (Vol. 53, #2, p. 70-75), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2qoMisW>; the authors can be reached at gconderman@niu.edu, lliberty@niu.edu, and sdespain@niu.edu.

