Co-Teaching Students with Complex Support Needs

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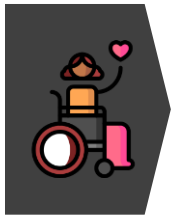


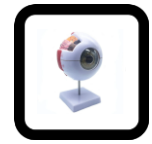
Are roles different for teachers when we support students with extensive/complex support needs?

These situations may require:

- more flexibility
- more variety
- more creativity

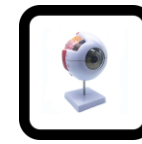
expand the team

- occupational therapists
- speech therapists/pathologists
- physical therapists
- social workers/counselors
- vision itinerants
- mobility instructors



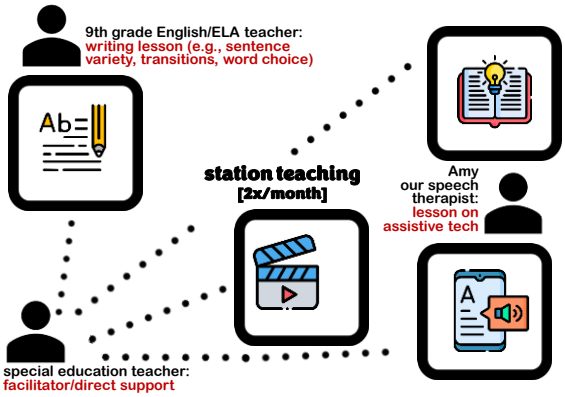
2nd grade teacher

Debbie: our vision itinerant

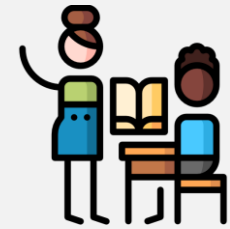


parallel teaching
[1 lesson/month]

- use of slant board
- magnifiers
- large print text



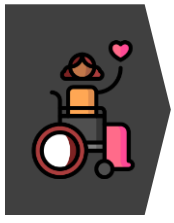
adapt the structures



What types of adjustments might you make?

- one teach/one float or support: float with a purpose
- parallel teaching: uneven group sizes & keep some groups the same
- stations: be creative with student support (e.g., station repetition) & have a "Plan B" for adult roles

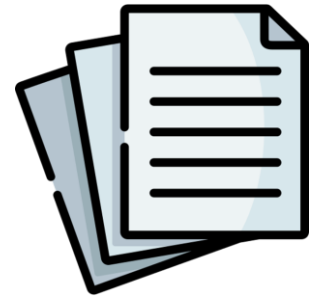
design for all



Are there different considerations for planning when we support students with complex support needs?

These ideas are relevant for all, however, they may be especially important for learners with communication, social, and mobility goals.

get it "off the page"



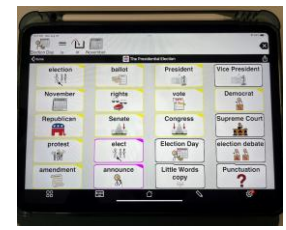
- creates entry points for all
- often easier with two

be clear about standards/targets

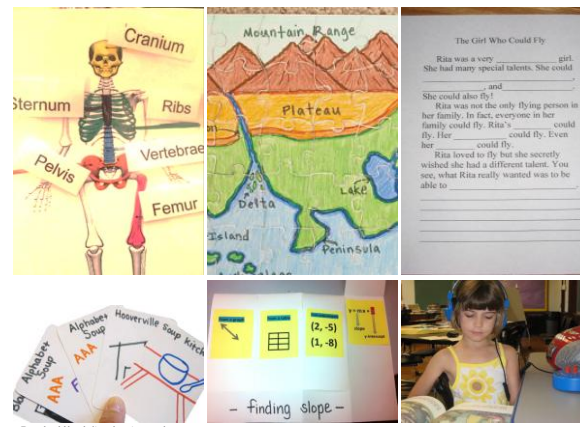
"Evaluate the power and responsibilities of citizens, political parties, interest groups, and the media."

vs.

"Identify 1 or 2 political parties."
&
"Initiate a response to a T question using AAC."



differentiate demands



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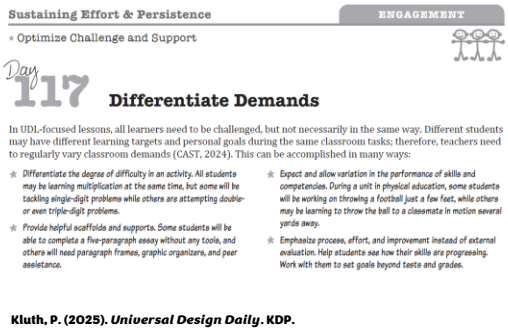

Sustaining Effort & Persistence

ENGAGEMENT

• Optimize Challenge and Support

Day 117

Differentiate Demands

In UDL-focused lessons, all learners need to be challenged, but not necessarily in the same way. Different students may have different learning targets and personal goals during the same classroom tasks; therefore, teachers need to regularly vary classroom demands (CAST, 2024). This can be accomplished in many ways:

- *Differentiate the degree of difficulty in an activity. All students may be learning multiplication at the same time, but some will be tackling single-digit problems while others are attempting double- or even triple-digit problems.*
- *Provide helpful scaffolds and supports. Some students will be able to complete a five-paragraph essay without any tools, and others will need paragraph frames, graphic organizers, and peer assistance.*
- *Expect and allow variation in the performance of skills and competencies. During a unit in physical education, some students will be working on throwing a football just a few feet, while others may be learning to throw the ball to a classmate in motion several yards away.*
- *Emphasize process, effort, and improvement instead of external evaluation. Help students see how their skills are progressing. Work with them to set goals beyond tests and grades.*

Kluth, P. (2025). *Universal Design Daily*. KDP.