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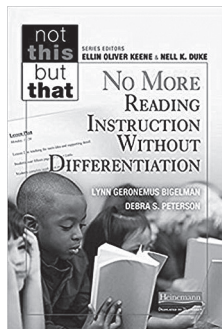
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No More Reading Instruction without Differentiation

by Kathleen Plond

Bigelman, L. G. & Peterson, D. S. (2017). *No more reading instruction without differentiation*. N. K. Duke & E. O. Keene (Series Eds). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishers. ISBN 978-0-325-07435-1



In *No More Reading Instruction Without Differentiation*, authors Lynn Geronemus Bigelman and Debra S. Peterson take on differentiated instruction. The book is divided into three sections: sections one and three are written by Bigelman, section two by Peterson. The first section clarifies why instruction without differentiation is not an effective approach. The last two sections provide readers with concrete and effective strategies for differentiating instruction.

In section one, entitled “Not This,” Bigelman compares a “one size fits all” tag on a sweater at the shopping mall to how we often see classroom instruction. She describes a couple of students and how the one size fits all instruction will not fit them. She argues that activities such as a whole-class reading the same novel does not meet the needs of all the students in the classroom. Instead, Bigelman suggests that we need an instructional framework that will help to provide a variety of scaffolds so that all children can meet the same goals.

In section two, Peterson talks about this instructional framework, which provides a structure that allows the teacher to work with small groups while the other students remain engaged in reading and writing activities. She explains that effective teachers differentiate their instruction, and provides a table describing the research-based practices that they employ. Also in this chapter, Peterson explains how rigor, motivation, and engagement increase when students are involved in the types of higher-order thinking advocated for in the



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practices described in this chapter. Additionally, she stresses that observation and assessment should be used to inform differentiation and grouping because grouping patterns affect learning. Peterson ends the section with encouraging readers to consider how they are currently differentiating instruction by responding to a series of reflective questions.

In the final section, Bigelman discusses some of the many ways in which teachers can differentiate their instruction, with particular attention to the role of formative assessment. She also discusses learning targets and states that when students know what the learning target for a lesson is, they are much more likely to be successful. This discussion is supported with examples of how the teachers she works with use learning targets to differentiate instruction. In addition, she gives examples of how students may self-assess and share their learning related to those targets. To support the latter, she provides a table that shows different ways to scaffold student talk.

Although differentiation is important and beneficial regardless of the curriculum in place, Bigelman suggests that both reading workshop and project-based learning lend themselves particularly well to differentiated learning. As she explains, reading workshop provides a structure to the day, opportunities for independent student work, and time for the teacher to work with small groups. Project-based learning provides for authentic learning and supports literacy development. This type of learning leads to a deeper understanding of the topic

Must Read Texts

being studied and students often can choose what they are studying and if they are working independently or in a small group. The final section concludes with a clear description of how to coordinate whole- and small-group lessons and independent learning.

Finally, the book concludes with two appendices. The first details ways to think about a book in the context of writing instruction, including ways to share thinking about a book in writing and orally; the second gives readers a template to use for project-based learning. This template allows the planner to think in advance about texts being used, whole group lessons, small-group, partner and individual work, how the class will wrap-up for the session, and which standards are being addressed.

I recommend this book if you have been wanting to include more differentiation in your reading instruction but aren't sure where to start.

Author Biography

Kathleen Plond is a District Literacy Coach for Cornerstone Education Group and a doctoral student in Reading, Language, and Literature at Wayne State University. She has presented at several area conferences including MRA, MiAEYC, and MCTE. When not working or studying, Kathleen enjoys spending time with her family. She can be reached at kathleen.plond@wayne.edu.

