

Differentiation Songs & Dances

Danny has written three songs (one with accompanying dance movements) that have been a huge hit with students and teachers alike. Try teaching these songs to emphasize the importance of differentiating instruction.

The Differentiation Diddy

(to the tune of “Do Wah Diddy Diddy,” lyrics by Danny Brassell © copyright 2007)

There I was just about to teach my class,
Singin’, “Do what I say. I’m the teacher. Yes, indeed.”
Then my students looked at me en mass,
Askin’, “Do what you say? Are you kiddin’? We can’t read.”
They looked stressed (looked stressed),
They looked bored (looked bored),
They looked stressed. They looked bored...
They were not a happy hoard.
I had kids of all sizes. They were different, every one,
Singin’, “Do you want to teach a standard or me?”
They asked, “Why is school always work and no fun?”
Sing this: “That is not the way that school has to be!”
I said, “Yes!” (said yes)
“You’re all right” (all right)
I said, “Yes! You’re all right”
Now our future’s lookin’ bright.
Our class is now happy, and we learn a lot more.
’Cause we each are different, and we learn differently.
When others critique us, we just shut our door.
And we play. And we sing. And we think critically. Yeah!

Compare and Contrast

TS, TT, and TW connections are all forms of compare and contrast that are helpful in moving students to deeper levels of comprehension, well beyond literal comprehension. There are other forms of compare and contrast. Indeed, teachers often use compare and contrast as a teaching tool. How often have you used the word *like* to explain something to your students? Teachers will often teach something new by describing how the new concept is *like* and unlike something they know from their own previous experiences. Through that discussion and shared analysis, students gain an understanding of the new concept the teacher had intended to present.

Graphic organizers or visual displays are particularly effective devices for helping students make compare and contrast analyses between two or more reading passages, other events, concepts, or ideas that a teacher may want students to analyze. Compare-and-contrast grids are one of the most effective ways to promote compare-and-contrast analysis.

In a compare-and-contrast grid, the passages or elements within one or more passages (e.g., characters) are horizontally in the top row of cells. Along the left-hand column are the questions or prompts for analyzing the elements on the top row. Elements in both the top row and left column can either be selected in advance by answering the teacher questions or brainstormed by the student or group of students. Once the top row and left column are complete, students engage in analyzing elements in the top row by the questions in the left column. Students' responses are written in the appropriate cell. An example of a compare-and-contrast grid is provided on the following page.

Figure 9.1: Compare-and-Contrast Grid of Significant American Poets

	Shel Silverstein	Walt Whitman	Emily Dickinson	Robert Frost
Topics of the poet's work?				
Poetic and literary devices used?				
Poet's intent or purpose for writing?				
Main audience for the poet's work?				
Significance of the poet's work today? for yourself and your friends? in the future? Why do you think so?				

Students would need to think deeply in order to provide a reasonable response to the questions for the various poets listed. Moreover, not all students' responses would be the same. The questions posed are more inferential and critical than literal. Students are asked to give their own reasoned opinions about the poets, not simply provide literal information that can be lifted directly from the work of the poets themselves.

Once the grid is complete, students can use the grid as a guide for a rich and authentic conversation about the poets with classmates. They can also use the guide for writing detailed summaries, analyses, and essays on the poets presented in the grid. In all cases, the grid itself helps to move students into deeper levels of meaning after they have read several works by the poets mentioned.