

Meeting the Diverse Learning Needs of All Students

Every teacher can increase the likelihood of success for all learners by ensuring instruction and support meet the diversity of student abilities and needs. Many of the activities in the critical challenges activities in the online guide are open-ended and flexible so they can be adjusted to meet a range of student learning needs. Three principles for meeting diverse learning needs are:

- present ideas related to key learning outcomes in various media e.g., visual, oral, electronic, concrete
- use different methods to engage students' preferences and interests and to match their skill levels e.g., use multi-sensory techniques, provide options for assignment completion, allow for choice of topic
- create opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning using multiple means of expression e.g., mind map, computer-based presentation, role play, poem, recipe.

The following list offers more specific ways of ensuring instruction and resources meet a range of learner needs. This can be done by adjusting for the *complexity* of the materials or the *volume* or *rate* at which students process information or create products.

Sample Strategies	
Complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-teach key vocabulary. • Provide alternate representations of essential concepts e.g., hands-on/concrete materials, re-enactments, models. • Provide visual supports e.g., videos, images, highlighted text, photocopies of key words/notes. • Read text aloud e.g., pair students, provide oral reading time in class, use scan and read software. • Use graphic organizers to assist students in making their thinking visible. • Make sample completed products available so students can plan with the “end in mind”. • Colour-code handouts/text for ease of organization and/or to focus attention on various purposes or use sticky notes to mark important sections of text. • Provide text sets i.e., a variety of parallel texts on the same topic with a range of reading levels to accommodate multiple reading levels. • Teach new skills employing a scaffolding process i.e., teacher demonstration/modelling with the teacher “thinking aloud”, guided practice where students and the teacher work through examples together, independent student application with individual teacher feedback. • Use simple directions i.e., one step at a time, then clarify and monitor.

Volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chunk text and tasks into smaller, manageable sections. • Break long-term assignments into smaller steps, with clear due dates and frequent feedback. • Use conversation structures such as “Think-Pair-Share” or “Paired Partner talk” to process information before writing. • Provide checklists to help students manage multi-step tasks or post daily assignment requirements. • Use graphic organizers for collecting and organizing information. • Create opportunities for students to “show what they know” in multiple ways e.g., visual representations, performances, oral presentations. • Present information visually with webs i.e., using key images and words to represent the central topic and its related categories and sub-categories or a concept map i.e., a hierarchical word map that shows relationships between key ideas and the specific concept. • Keep limits in mind regarding the length of teacher talk i.e., primary 5-7 minutes; intermediate 7-12 minutes; secondary 12-15 minutes. • Reduce writing and reading requirements.
Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide photocopies of notes/handouts/outlines. • Encourage use of word processors, laptops/portable keyboards or voice recognition software to produce assignments/notes. • Allow extra time for reading/assignment completion. • Encourage students to pre-read materials before lesson at school/home.

This document was created for Alberta Education by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²).