

**Swiss Group of International Schools
International School of Basel
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Making Inclusion Happen: Differentiation

Facilitated by:

William Powell and Ochan Kusuma-Powell

Education Across Frontiers Sdn.Bhd.

Apt A2-1, Desa U Thant,

14 Jalan Taman U Thant,

55000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

powell@eduxfrontiers.org

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Four Keys to Differentiation

- 1. Knowing our students**
- 2. Knowing our curriculum**
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TEACHER SELF-ASSESSMENT

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR DIFFERENTIATION

*This self-assessment is designed to help teachers identify specific targets for growth in areas that would further support their efforts towards differentiating instruction in the classroom. The results do not need to be shared with others, and are meant to serve as a planning guide to teachers. Please rank your responses to the following questions with ⑤ signifying **Strong Agreement**, and ① signifying **Strong Disagreement**.*

	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree	
	⑤	④	③	②	①
I. KNOWING YOUR STUDENT					
1. I understand the relationship between developing a deep knowledge of my students as learners and differentiating instruction.	⑤	④	③	②	①
2. I regularly read student files to learn about their previous educational history.	⑤	④	③	②	①
3. I am comfortable using Cognitive Coaching as a way of reflecting on my students as learners.	⑤	④	③	②	①
4. I am confident in using clinical observations as a way of gathering data on my students.	⑤	④	③	②	①
5. I regularly use surveys, questionnaires and interviews to find out about my students' interests and learning preferences.	⑤	④	③	②	①
6. I use student work as a diagnostic tool to help me understand what they know and how they learn.	⑤	④	③	②	①
7. I can recognize the behavioral indicators of second language learners, students with learning disabilities, and students with specific academic talents.	⑤	④	③	②	①
8. I am comfortable meeting the needs of exceptional students in my classroom.	⑤	④	③	②	①
9. I know how to apply my deep knowledge of my students as learners in my lesson and unit planning.	⑤	④	③	②	①
10. I am aware of my own teaching and learning styles and balance these with the needs of my students.	⑤	④	③	②	①
II. KNOWING YOUR CURRICULUM					
1. I understand the relationship between teaching at a conceptual level and differentiating instruction.	⑤	④	③	②	①
2. I know what <i>can</i> and <i>can't</i> be differentiated.	⑤	④	③	②	①
3. I identify the big ideas, enduring understandings or key concepts in my instructional planning.	⑤	④	③	②	①

4. I state clearly what students need to know, understand and do in order to develop the key concepts from instructional units.	⑤	④	③	②	①
5. I use mediative questions to support student learning.	⑤	④	③	②	①
6. I explicitly teach students to ask their own mediative questions.	⑤	④	③	②	①
7. I plan instruction with both student learning profiles and curricular demands in mind.	⑤	④	③	②	①
8. I design performance tasks to match instruction and to assess student learning	⑤	④	③	②	①
III. DEVELOPING A REPERTOIRE OF STRATEGIES					
	Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree		
1. I know a range of strategies that will support student learning in whole class, small group and individual learning settings.	⑤	④	③	②	①
2. I am comfortable using a variety of flexible grouping patterns in class to support different kinds of learning experiences for my students.	⑤	④	③	②	①
3. I know the research base, theoretical foundation, and rationale behind these strategies and explain them to students.	⑤	④	③	②	①
4. I select strategies with learner needs (readiness, interests and learning profile) and curricular or instructional demands (content, process or product) in mind.	⑤	④	③	②	①
5. I review management strategies to ensure smooth transitions between one activity to another.	⑤	④	③	②	①
6. I carefully review oral and written instructions to ensure clarity of purpose and expectations in my use of language.	⑤	④	③	②	①
IV. COLLABORATION					
1. <i>I understand how collaboration at all levels can support student learning.</i>	⑤	④	③	②	①
2. <i>I am comfortable collaborating with adults to help me obtain clarity in my planning and instructional delivery.</i>	⑤	④	③	②	①
3. <i>I orchestrate a variety of collaborative learning opportunities for my students.</i>	⑤	④	③	②	①
4. <i>I consciously teach group learning skills and behaviors.</i>	⑤	④	③	②	①
5. <i>I ensure opportunities for structured reflection so that my students understand the effect of their participation on the work of the group.</i>	⑤	④	③	②	①
6. <i>I regularly engage in structured reflection on my own teaching and pedagogy.</i>	⑤	④	③	②	①

REFLECTION

After reviewing your responses to the self-assessment, identify two or three specific learning goals that you would like to focus on during the course. This reflection will serve as the basis of a discussion with your learning partner.

SETTING CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING: 'META-STRATEGIES' THAT PROMOTE DIFFERENTIATION TEACHER SELF-ASSESSMENT

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	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree	
	⑤	④	③	②	①
I. CREATE A CONSTRUCTIVE LEARNING COMMUNITY					
11. I teach cooperative learning strategies explicitly.	⑤	④	③	②	①
12. I teach the norms of collaboration.	⑤	④	③	②	①
13. I practice active and reflective listening.	⑤	④	③	②	①
14. I frequently provide students opportunities for structured reflection on the effect of their participation on group work.	⑤	④	③	②	①
15. I am comfortable collaborating with adults in order to help me obtain clarity in my planning and instructional delivery.	⑤	④	③	②	①
16. I am aware of my own teaching and learning preferences and balance these with the needs of my students.	⑤	④	③	②	①
17. I regularly engage in structured reflection on my own teaching and learning.	⑤	④	③	②	①
II. PROMOTE SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING					
9. I select instructional strategies with learner needs (readiness, interests and learning profile) and curricular demands (content, process and product) in mind.	⑤	④	③	②	①
10. I know the research base, theoretical foundation and rationale behind the instructional strategies I use and I explain these to students.	⑤	④	③	②	①
11. I carefully review oral and written instructions to insure clarity of purpose and expectation in my use of language.	⑤	④	③	②	①
12. I provide students with assessment models and evaluation criteria (e.g. I explicitly teach assessment rubrics) prior to the actual assessment of student achievement.	⑤	④	③	②	①

13. I infuse self-assessment and personal goal-setting throughout the learning process.	⑤	④	③	②	①
14. I am comfortable using a variety of flexible grouping patterns in class to support different kinds of learning experiences for my students.	⑤	④	③	②	①

III. MEDIATE STUDENT THINKING	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree	
7. I identify the big ideas, enduring understandings or key concepts in my instructional planning.	⑤	④	③	②	①
8. I communicate clearly what students need to know, understand and be able to do in order to achieve the targeted learning.	⑤	④	③	②	①
9. I craft meditative questions that are invitational, with a specific cognitive focus.	⑤	④	③	②	①
10. I explicitly teach students to ask their own meditative questions.	⑤	④	③	②	①
11. I provide “wait time” for student thinking.	⑤	④	③	②	①
12. I frequently use mediational paraphrasing.	⑤	④	③	②	①
13. I model metacognitive reflection.	⑤	④	③	②	①
14. I use strategies that “uncover” student thinking so that it is explicit and can be used to plan future instruction.	⑤	④	③	②	①
IV. PURPOSEFUL USE OF NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOR					
7. I use silence appropriately.	⑤	④	③	②	①
8. I frequently adjust lesson pacing to learner needs.	⑤	④	③	②	①
9. I use space purposefully.	⑤	④	③	②	①
10. I use predictable “routines” that maximize instructional time on task.	⑤	④	③	②	①
11. I use the approachable and credible voices appropriately.	⑤	④	③	②	①
12. I demonstrate congruence between my verbal and nonverbal behaviors.	⑤	④	③	②	①
V. THOUGHTFUL USE OF STUDENT RESPONSES					
1. I frequently use student work as a diagnostic tool to help me understand what they know and how they learn.	⑤	④	③	②	①
2. I know how to apply my deep knowledge of my students as learners in my lesson and unit planning.	⑤	④	③	②	①
3. I align my instructional planning with standards and benchmarks based upon student need.	⑤	④	③	②	①
4. I align my record keeping of student achievement with curriculum and performance standards.	⑤	④	③	②	①
5. I frequently participate in the collaborative analysis of common assessments, the results of which inform my future instruction.	⑤	④	③	②	①
6. I regularly provide students with structured opportunities to give feedback on their learning and on my teaching.	⑤	④	③	②	①

REFLECTION

After reviewing your responses to the self-assessment, identify two or three specific learning goals that you would like to focus on during the course. This reflection will serve as the basis of a discussion with your learning partner.

Korean lab clones dogs	US backs India's bid to join UN Security Council	Pope Francis outlines new priorities	Iran threatens to close Straits of Hormuz
Researchers question whether speed of light is maximum velocity possible	Honda makes first hydrogen cars	Fossilized snake as long as a bus	Obama claims Assad used chemical weapons in Syria
China breaks world record for longest traffic jam	Snowden gets asylum in Russia	International Journal of Astrobiology reports at least 361 intelligent civilizations in our galaxy.	Champion golfer, Tiger Woods back on top.
Dubai considers country-wide ban on Blackberries.	MIT initiates on-line master's degree	Scottish farmers blame re-introduction of sea eagles on lamb deaths.	Egypt again in political turmoil.
Turkish truck drivers kidnapped in Lebanon.	German economy sees record growth	ILO states that 1.1 billion unemployed worldwide	Religious violence breaks out in Myanmar
FAO warns of crisis as world food prices rise	Finland and South Korea have top scoring students on international exam.	Sharp rise in HIV in Australia	Malaysia bans gay festival

Case Study One: The Renaissance by the End of the Semester

"We said we would get to the Renaissance by the end of the semester!" Maryanne snapped. She was the team's taskmaster. Set an objective and you could count on Maryanne to keep it clearly in focus.

"Maryanne's right, but I have a problem just plowing ahead with content when we know that the kids aren't picking up the skills they need." Gill pulled her bifocals down to the end of her nose and crinkled her brow.

"*Some* of the kids aren't picking up the skills," Maryanne retorted.

"I suppose that's my point," Gill conceded. "Teaching writing isn't my strong suit and sometimes I think I just expect that the kids will pick up good writing through osmosis. I mean do we *teach* writing or do we just *mark* it?"

There was a long silence as the other two teachers digested Gill's question.

"It sounds as if you'd like us to look critically at how we teach writing," Carl added.

"I was disappointed in the last bunch of essays."

"But," Maryanne cut in, "is it right to hold the entire Eighth Grade back because a few students..."

"Let's look at the data." Carl suggested. The three of them had marked the last batch of essays collectively. He flipped through his mark book until he came to the page he was looking for. He ran his fingers down the column of marks. "Almost a third of the Eighth Grade can't write a thesis statement, more than half weren't able to construct a well organized paragraph structure, and only fifteen percent had recognizable conclusions. Maryanne, I think we have our work cut out for us."

Maryanne took the mark book from Carl's hands. She ran her eyes down the scores that had been taken directly from the writing rubric. It was hard to argue with the data.

"I agree that the kids need more work on writing – particularly on organization. I just don't want us to fall behind in content. The kids will need to know something about the Renaissance in the Ninth Grade."

"Does it have to be an either/or situation?" Gill asked. "Couldn't we do both?"

"You mean use the Renaissance as the content for a unit on essay writing?"

"Exactly. Let's play to our strengths by combining our classes. Maryanne and Gill could focus on the content and I could explicitly teach the kids how to organize their essays."

"Could I come into your class when you teach organization?" Gill asked.

"Of course."

"But we would need to mark the essays together," Gill added, "Like we did last time. We could then compare to see if the specific instruction had improved the organization of their writing."

"What are we going to do with the kids who already know how to organize an essay?" Carl asked. "It seems a waste of time to put them through it again."

"I'd like to see those kids research some of the Renaissance artists," Maryanne said.

"We could give them a special project -- a choice of who they wanted to study."

"The research project could involve technology, maybe even something using multi-media?"

"It could be an individual learning contract," Gill added.

"We know multi-media is high interest for the kids," Carl added. "Why don't we do it for all the kids?"

"Hang on," Maryanne interjected. "I thought our focus was writing."

“You’re right. We need to stay focused. I’ll prepare a lesson plan on essay organization.”

“I’ll come up with list of Renaissance artists and writers for them to choose from. Maybe I could think about a role play activity. The kids would enjoy that.”

“But what’s the primary concept we’d be teaching?” Maryanne paused to think. There was silence in the room for a long period. “I’d like our students to understand what a ‘renaissance’ means – how it affected the way we think about culture, religion, art, education and even how we define our self as a species. Let me think about it. I’ll come up with something.”

The bell rang.

“Let’s get our stuff together and meet again tomorrow,” Carl announced.

Case Study Two:

Moths and Monkeys, Cabbages and Kings

“I think it’s important for teachers to select topics to teach that they are enthusiastic about.” Grace spoke for the first time during the meeting of Second Grade teachers. Grace was the special needs learning specialist assigned to Grade Two.

“But we can’t seem to agree on what topics we are going to cover in science,” Adam repeated unnecessarily. Adam was the frustrated peacemaker. “I still think that there is room for compromise. I can think of some great activities dealing with moths...”

“We have always done green plants early in the second term.” Melody Sykes argued. She had been at the school for fifteen years. “The children look forward to it. Anyway, I’ve already purchased the seeds and the paper cups. Why change just for the sake of change?”

“I don’t think moths or green plants are the issue at all,” Marvel Brumby murmured. She had spoken louder earlier in the meeting, but had been interrupted by Melody. “I don’t care if we teach cabbages or kings.”

“I don’t think that’s a very positive attitude,” Melody grumbled. “Why are you always so negative?”

“I’m not negative.” Marvel protested. “But topics don’t matter. What matters are the reasons behind our selection.”

“You may not think you’re negative,” Melody announced. “But just look at the effect on the rest of us. Every time we sit down to collaborate together, you come up with some obstacle to our work together.”

“Do we all have to teach the same topics?” Adam asked. Anything to stop the bickering, anything to avoid conflict.

“The children like green plants,” Melody repeated herself. “They get really excited about watching the seeds sprout. We even have growing races between the beans. I award a blue ribbon to the fastest growing bean.”

"I think it's only fair if I'm given equal time for moths," Ryan Crumble announced. "Frankly I don't think there is any comparison in terms of student interest. Think of the dynamic life cycle of a moth."

"Grace could design some beautiful bulletin boards about moths," Mildred Bucklesford added.

"We'd be playing to our strengths as a team," Adam contributed. "Grace does brilliant bulletin boards."

"I vote for monkeys," Marvel Brumby announced fiercely.

"Why monkeys? We haven't been talking about monkeys! Why would anyone want to study monkeys?"

"Exactly!" Marvel announced and grinned at the puzzled faces that surrounded her. "Why would anyone want to study monkeys or moths or green plants?"

"Why won't you join the team, Marvel? Why are you always so contrary?"

"If we shortened the units a little, we could do both green plants and moths." Adam suggested. "There's nothing to stop us from compromising."

"Grace could do alternate bulletin boards."

"It could be a win/win situation." Adam concluded.

"Everyone wins..."

"Except the kids," Marvel said under her breath.

Case Study Three: Streamlining the Discussion

The Department Meeting hadn't started yet. Holding a cup of steaming black coffee, Craig Watson fluttered around the coffee machine. His long pointed nose dipped periodically into the cup. He was like one of those toy birds – the ones that swing back and forth for hours dipping their beaks into a glass of water.

Craig Watson watched who was going to sit where.

Myra had positioned herself nearest to the door and was busy exhibiting the contents of a large Tupperware box. The scene could have been from a raid on a terrorist cell with the police laying out captured weaponry for newspapers to photograph. But here the grenades, rocket launchers and Kalashnikovs were replaced by pieces of fried bean curd, sharpened carrot and celery sticks and miniature bludgeons of broccoli.

"Healthy food is so important for effective meetings. I think it takes the edge off people's tempers," Myra announced as she uncovered a bowl of blue cheese dip that smelled as though it were the grand prize in a sea sickness competition.

Lilly Mayhall entered and seated herself at the head of the table. In his mind's ear, Craig could hear the drum roll of approaching royalty.

"My watch has three o'clock sharp. Shall we start?" Lilly phrased it as a question, but everyone recognized it as a statement of intention. Lilly Mayhall was the Chairperson of the English Department. Derek Blumberg and Craig Watson took seats as far as possible from the blue cheese dip. Wendy Williams drew up a chair next to Myra. "The first item of business is the selection of the short stories for the Ninth Grade unit. In order to streamline our discussion, I've made a list of stories I considered appropriate." Lilly distributed copies of the list to the other English teachers.

"How thoughtful of you," Wendy Williams commented. Craig listened for sarcasm, but failed to hear any. Myra started the fried bean curd and blue cheese dip around the table.

"Your experience is so valuable," Myra added, starting the broccoli bludgeons in a counter clockwise rotation around the table.

"Of course, nothing is set in stone. The input of professional colleagues is always valued. Comments?"

"There are some great stories on this list, Lilly," Derek spoke tentatively. "Hardy and Joyce are always great choices, but I wonder if our ESL students will find them accessible?"

"What do you think, Craig?" Lilly asked. "You have read the stories on the list, haven't you?"

Craig had just deposited a broccoli bludgeon in his mouth and had some difficulty responding. Finally he swallowed the broccoli flower whole and blurted out:

"We do seem to have inherited quite a number of ESL students."

"I'm sorry. Perhaps I have misunderstood," Lilly began in a tone that clearly indicated that the chances of her misunderstanding were roughly the same as the survival of an ice popsicle in a forest fire. "I thought the only students in the regular Ninth Grade English classes were those who had graduated from ESL at the end of the Eighth Grade?"

Craig and Derek nodded.

"So you don't actually have any bonafide ESL students in your classes." The blue cheese dip arrived between Craig and Derek.

"Not in so many words," Derek agreed. "But the level of English among the recent ESL graduates is pretty low."

"Are these students not ready for mainstream English?" Lilly asked. "Have our brothers and sisters in the ESL department not been doing their jobs properly?"

"My Gawd! What on earth is this?" Derek demanded, pushing the cheese dip as far as possible away from him.

"It's genuine Roquefort. Made from pasteurized sheep's milk!" Myra stared daggers at Derek.

"It smells like the crap I feed my roses!"

Craig attempted to refocus the team.

"It's not that they aren't ready for the mainstream," Craig murmured through masticated bean curd. "It's just the choice of materials. Maybe one size doesn't fit all."

"A clothing metaphor," Lilly grinned at Craig. "A little trite perhaps, but not nearly as crude as Derek's simile. But I'm afraid I don't agree," Lilly announced. "These students have two years in which to prepare for the International Baccalaureate program. We will be doing them an enormous disservice if we permit a watering down of the curriculum. Rigor, Mr. Watson, academic rigor is the mainstay of this department. Don't you agree, Derek?"

"Yes, of course. I wouldn't want to see a watering down of the..."

"Good. Our Headmaster and the Board of Directors certainly don't want to see a fall in our examination results. Now, the next item on the agenda..."

Case Study Four: “The Silence of the Lambs”

“I think I’m just feeling overwhelmed,” Sarah Murray responded to Harrison Cooligan’s question. The fifth grade team had been meeting for about twenty minutes and Sarah hadn’t joined in the discussion. This was entirely out of character for Sarah.

“I got two more new students today. One of them has minimal English and the other has a learning disability.” Tears were welling up in Sarah’s eyes.

“Wow,” Bruce Dorado spoke softly. “That’s hard. You must be feeling pretty frustrated. You had a really diverse group to begin with.”

“Actually it isn’t frustration so much as it is...” Sarah paused to think about what exactly she was feeling. “I suppose I’m wondering if I’m really adequate for the job.”

“Of course you’re adequate,” Bruce cut in quickly. “You’re one of the best teachers in the Elementary School.”

“Hold on a second Bruce, I think you cut Sarah off,” Harrison Cooligan suggested. “Sarah, what is it specifically that you’re wondering about?”

“I just don’t see how I can meet the needs of all the students. My class is up to twenty-four students and a full third are ESL kids. I’m all for inclusion in theory, but in practice it can be overwhelming.”

“I know how you feel,” Bruce added. “I don’t understand why the administration just keeps admitting problem kids.”

“Sarah,” Harrison spoke slowly and seriously, commanding all of her attention. “Please tell me what your class would look like if you were meeting the educational needs of all your students.”

Sarah didn’t respond immediately, but both Harrison and Bruce respected her thought process and remained silent.

“That’s a hard question. What will my class look like when I’m meeting the educational needs of all my students?” Sarah repeated the question and held her index finger to her forehead in a frozen gesture. “I guess I’d like to see all the kids on task with their assignments. And for the most part they

are. We've got really good kids." Sarah used a handkerchief to dab the moist corners of her eyes. "I've been giving the ESL kids modified assignments. I'm not sure it's the right thing to do, but I didn't think they would be able to cope..." Sarah stopped mid sentence. Again Bruce and Harrison respected her silence.

"You know what is really difficult," Sarah announced slowly. "It's when the new ESL kids don't say anything. I don't have any idea how much they understand. I don't have any idea if I'm actually teaching them anything. Sometimes I think we're just there wasting each other's time."

"You're worried about wasting valuable learning time."

"I am. I don't know if they're learning anything."

"You not sure what the silence of the new ESL students means and it worries you."

"It does worry me. I'm not a trained ESL teacher."

"If you were to put yourself in the place of a new ESL student, what would be your hunch about their silence?"

"I guess I'd be quiet too. I mean I know that receptive language has to develop before expressive language. Maybe there are some other ways for them to show me that they have understood a lesson."

"What have you in mind?"

"Maybe I could use more non-verbal activities with them. Maybe I could develop some visual cues or symbols."

"A simple sign language?"

"Exactly. Maybe I could take the ESL kids as a group for a short meeting and we could develop a secret sign language so that they could let me know when they don't understand without any embarrassment."

"I'd be happy to take your non ESL kids while you have the meeting," Bruce volunteered.

"I suspect the ESL kids would really appreciate your concern for them," Harrison added, noting Sarah's eyes were now dry and rather bright.

Case Study Five:

Ready for the Teachable Moment!

As the new teacher on the Sixth Grade Team, Malcolm Rigby remained quiet and watched the interaction between the veteran members of the team.

"Shall we start out with some general comments on how the unit went?" Michelle Gallsworthy called the meeting together with an invitation. She was in her second year as team leader and wanted to bring greater collaboration to the group. Last year had been fractious and she was determined to avoid a re-play. Having Malcolm on board might help, she thought.

"I thought it went fairly well," Judy Ramikan announced. "I especially liked how Malcolm had the entire sixth grade simulate the circulatory system using colored ribbon and paper plates. Now that's what I call teacher creativity. It was too bad neither of you two were present to see it. The kids loved it."

"Yes," Michelle responded. "I was sorry to have missed the simulation. I'm sure some excellent learning went on. Are there other comments?"

"I thought the text book chapter on respiration was too difficult for most of my kids," Rhonda Scott announced. "They couldn't answer the questions at the end of the chapter. I had some miserable quiz scores."

"You used the questions at the end of the chapter as a quiz?" Judy asked. Her question skillfully managed to combine seeming surprise with "what-on-earth-did-you-expect?" dismissal. "Personally, I don't use textbooks. I find they inhibit teacher creativity. I don't like lock step lesson planning. One needs to be open and ready for the teachable moment."

"But we have to assess if students actually learned the material," Rhonda countered. "The textbook allows me to be sure I've covered all the material."

“Coverage vs. understanding. The age-old debate,” Judy commented.

“Assessment is important,” Michelle interjected.

“Of course it is, but we’re not limited to just pencil and paper tasks.” Judy was gathering a full head of steam. “Haven’t you heard about authentic assessment and real-life performance tasks?”

The rhetorical question hung in the air like the memory of last year’s discord.

“Shall we review our specific learning objectives?” Michelle attempted to re-focus her team. “What knowledge did we want our students to understand and what skills did we want them to acquire?”

“Critical and creative thinking was high on my list,” Judy announced.

“Can we call critical and creative thinking specific learning objectives?” Michelle asked. There was silence for a moment.

“I wanted to differentiate for kids with different learning styles,” Rhonda murmured.

“An important goal, but is it a specific learning objective?” Michelle turned to Malcolm. “What were some of the learning objectives that you had, Malcolm?”

“I wanted kids to understand something about the various systems that are at work in the human body. And I guess I wanted them to appreciate how complex an organism we really are.”

“Wonderment,” Judy cut in. “You wanted to nurture wonderment!”

“I wanted to introduce the structure of the written lab report,” Rhonda added.

“Hands-on activities are what motivate kids,” Judy muttered.

“But activities aren’t objectives,” Malcolm suggested gently. “To be honest, I didn’t do very much with the structure of the lab report. I ran out of time.”

"Maybe we're trying to achieve too many objectives," Michelle suggested.

"Perhaps we weren't clear enough," Rhonda murmured.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again, I don't like the rigidity of the lab report structure. I think children need the freedom to organize knowledge in a way that is personally meaningful to them."

"I agree," Malcolm responded. "But is the organization of a lab report the kind of knowledge that we would want students to acquire through discovery learning?"

Silence fell on the science lab. Michelle repressed a smile.

Case Study Six:

LD or L2? That is the Question

“I just don’t think we have enough information,” Lee Rawlings announced to the other members of the Child Study Team. There was a very audible edge of impatience to her voice. “I feel we are talking in circles. I’m sorry, but I do. We all want to do what is best for Uta. So, why can’t we just get on with it and test her?”

“What kind of testing are you suggesting?” Brenda Fellows, the school psychologist, asked gently.

“The usual kind. You know, the WISC whatever-it-is. The one that gives you a cognitive IQ. I mean, how do we begin to know Uta’s potential without knowing how bright she is? We need the results of a cognitive test.”

“But with the language issue and the cultural bias of the test itself . . .” Sam Littlewood interjected.

Rene Mylar noted the irritation in Lee’s voice and decided it was time for her, as chair, to intervene. “Let me try to summarize where we are. Uta is a fifth grade student who entered this school about four months ago. Originally Uta is from Latvia, but her mother tongue is Russian, which she speaks at home with Mom and Dad . . .”

“But she’s not ESL,” Bernadette Shetty announced. “Virtually all her previous schooling has been in English.”

“That’s correct,” Rene conceded with a smile. “Prior to her admission to this school, Uta was enrolled in the Interfaith Christian Academy in Kanu, Northern Nigeria. The instruction was in English, but we don’t know the quality of English.

“Were most of the teachers Nigerian?” Sam asked.

“What’s your point?” Bernadette directed her question to Rene.

“Uta may not be ESL as defined by our policy, but she may still be struggling with English.”

"There could also be a learning disability," Bernadette suggested and Sam nodded.

"I agree with Lee," Brenda Fellows commented, which actually surprised the rest of the Child Study Team members because since only moments before she had been arguing against testing Uta. "I agree with Lee that we don't have enough information about Uta. I think that's the topic we should be focusing on – the collection of useful information.

Rene smiled at her colleagues around the table. She seized the moment.

"Can we all agree with Brenda's suggestion that the collection of useful data should be our primary focus?" Heads around the table nodded in assent. "Does anyone have a suggestion for how this might take place?"

"We know she's having trouble in reading and writing. Would it be helpful to give her an achievement test in reading?" Sam asked. "We could also look at a sample of her writing and try to identify areas of weakness."

"Good suggestions," Rene murmured.

"I would also be in favor of some clinical observations," Brenda added.

"Clinical observations? That sounds scary." Lee suppressed a chuckle.

"I would go into a classroom and observe Uta with some specific questions in mind."

"What kind of questions?"

"For example, how does Uta function in English with her peers? In what settings does she function best? In large groups, small groups or with individual work? I would try to develop a learning profile for Uta."

"We could also probably get some useful information from the parents," Bernadette suggested. "We could ask them about Uta's functioning in Russian."

Rene held up her hands to call for silence. It was a sign well known to all of them.

“I think we should pause here for a moment. We have three excellent suggestions on the table: achievement testing in reading and the diagnostic assessment of a writing sample; clinical observations in the classroom setting; and a carefully structured parent interview. Sam, could you conduct the reading test?” Sam nodded. “Perhaps Bernadette and Lee could look at a sample of Uta’s writing. Brenda, I assume you would be prepared to undertake some clinical observations?” Brenda nodded. “I will invite the parents in for a conference. Is there anyone who would like to help me plan the interview with Mom and Dad?”

Lee raised her hand.

“Great. Thank you, Lee. So we have an initial data collection plan. I suggest we place Uta on our agenda for two weeks time. At that time we can share our reports and analyze the data. Thank you all.”

Synthesis Statement

“We are learning....”