AN ANALYSIS OF SPECIALIZED READING INSTRUCTION IN HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES INCLUDED IN GENERAL EDUCATION

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AN ANALYSIS OF SPECIALIZED READING INSTRUCTION IN HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES INCLUDED IN GENERAL EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Table of Contents

List of figures vii
List of Tables vii
Abstract iv
Chapter I: Introduction 1
   Background and History 1
   Differentiated Instruction 3
   Statement of the Problem 5
   Purpose of the Study 5
   Research Questions 6
   Operational Definitions 6
Chapter II: Review of Literature 8
   Introduction 8
   Legislation: IDEIA 9
   Legislation: NCLB 11
   Inclusion 13
   Co-Teaching 15
   The Achievement Gap 16
   Differentiated Instruction 17
   Reading Instruction for Students with Disabilities 24
Differentiation at the High School Level.................................................................................. 26

CHAPTER III: Methodology ........................................................................................................ 27

Research Design ...................................................................................................................... 28

Site ........................................................................................................................................... 29

Population and Subjects .......................................................................................................... 31

Research Procedures .............................................................................................................. 32

Data Analysis .......................................................................................................................... 35

Limitations ............................................................................................................................... 36

Researcher’s Perspective ......................................................................................................... 37

CHAPTER IV: Findings ................................................................................................................. 38

Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 38

Descriptions of Participants ................................................................................................... 38

Team 1 .................................................................................................................................... 40

Team 2 .................................................................................................................................... 40

Team 3 .................................................................................................................................... 41

Team 4 .................................................................................................................................... 41

Team 5 .................................................................................................................................... 42

Summary of each team’s profile ............................................................................................ 43

The Observation Process ....................................................................................................... 45

Participants’ Definitions of Differentiation ........................................................................... 46

Information Participants Need to Know for Lesson Planning ............................................. 48

Teacher Training for Differentiation ..................................................................................... 51

Planning and Assessment ..................................................................................................... 53
Readiness

Student Interests

Student Learning Profiles

Implementation of Instruction

Content

Process

Product

Analysis of Data Across Teams

Analysis of the teams' definitions of differentiation

A Comparison of teams' definitions and observation rankings

A holistic view of the teams

Summary of cross team analysis

Emerging Themes

The importance of the reading specialist

The importance of administrative support

The vitality of the collaborative model

The importance of the team's ownership of all students

Summary

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Differentiating the content, process and product

Accessing the data

Data driven instruction
Themes 

Implications for Educators

Implications for central office administrators

Implications for Building Administrators

Implications for Teachers

Limitations

Recommendations for Further Research

Expansion to other division high schools

Examination of building level administrative staff

Expansion to other content areas

Expansion to a longitudinal study

Summary

List of References

Appendix A Research Subject and Consent Form

Appendix B Teacher Information Letter

Appendix C Classroom Observation Guide

Appendix D Interview Protocol

Appendix E Table of Specification for Observation Guide

Appendix F Table of Specification for the Interview Protocol
List of Figures

Figure 1: A differentiation graphic. 98
List of Tables

Table 1: *End of Course Reading/English SOL Pass Rates for Site High School* 30
Table 2: *Pass rates for 2007-2008 End of Course Reading/English SOL* 31
Table 3: *Summary of Team Profiles* 44
Table 4: *Team Rankings on the Classroom Observation Guide* 45
Table 5: *Components of Differentiation Incorporated into Teacher Definitions* 48
Table 6: *Information Participants Need to Know to Plan Lessons* 51
Table 7: *Data Used by Teachers to Determine Student Readiness* 55
Table 8: *How Teachers Designed Lessons to Meet the Readiness Levels of Students* 58
Table 9: *Data Used by Teachers to Determine Student Interests* 61
Table 10: *Data Used to Determine Student Learning Profiles* 64
Table 11: *Differentiated Content Observed by Researchers* 70
Table 12: *Differentiated Process Observed by Researchers* 74
Table 13: *Differentiated Products Observed by Researchers* 77
Table 14: *A Comparison of Teams’ Definitions and Observation Rankings* 79
Table 15: *Summary of Data Used by Each Team* 102
Abstract

An Analysis of Specialized Reading Instruction in High School English Classes for Students with Disabilities Included In General Education

By Kathy Rosvold Beasley, M.Ed.

A dissertation submitted in partial in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2010.

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Associate Professor, School of Education

This study is a qualitative case study that examined and analyzed the instructional strategies implemented by high school English teachers when teaching reading to students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Ten teachers who teach high school English on collaborative teams made up of a general and a special educator participated in the study. The participants taught at a comprehensive high school that is one of ten high schools in a large school division. Two observations of each team were carried out to examine how teachers differentiate instruction. Team interviews were conducted to gain information about how teachers use data on student readiness, interests, and learning profiles to plan, implement, and assess the learning of their students.

More students with disabilities are receiving their education in inclusive settings so that they have greater access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment.
Differentiating instruction is being implemented by teachers so that they can meet the unique needs of their students. Results of previous studies have found that students have had more opportunities for success on general education expectations when teachers implemented elements of differentiation. These studies focused on examining single elements of differentiation including student readiness, interests, learning profiles, content, process, or products. This study focused on how teachers plan for, implement, and assess their students by implementing the differentiation framework in inclusive high school English classes.

The results of this study suggest that teaching teams made up of a general and special educator can work collaboratively together to provide instruction to all of their students including those with disabilities. Teachers use data to determine their students’ levels of readiness, interest, and learning profiles to design lessons that meet the unique needs of their learners. The participants planned their instruction in their collaborative English classes using student readiness, interest, and learning profile data, but emphasized the beneficial aspects of planning instruction based on students’ interest. Teachers said that students were highly motivated to participate in class and complete assignments when activities were based upon student interest.

The study’s results also indicate that the role of building level administrators was vital in the collaborative process. The participants discussed how the principal’s leadership paved the way for teachers to access data on their students and allowed for teams to have joint planning periods, focused special educators on teaching one content area of instruction, provided opportunities for teams to have input in their longevity, and encouraged teacher participation in personnel decisions regarding changes in team membership.