Investigation on Teaching Approaches

Grade level: Middle/High School

Career field: Family and Consumer Sciences (Nutrition&Foods)

In Universal Design (UN), teachers are able to create an environment accessible for all individual learners. This includes academically gifted, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners (ELL) from diverse ethnic groups. Many legislations have been passed to ensure all students receive an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Educators often use the term "inclusion" to describe LRE, which mandates that students be educated with their peers to the max. extent that is possible.

Universal Design is an important component for FCS educators, since the curriculum instills family building through teaching others to make wise decisions while utilizing available resources. Another concept that goes hand-in-hand with the Universal Design Learning approach is differentiated instruction. The authors in the article "Universal Design: Ensuring Success for All FCS Students", Melinda Swafford and Kristen Giordano explain how using both processes help to facilitate learning that is universal and meets the various needs of diverse students in FCS classrooms. They outline 4 steps in achieving this goal: Step #1-Know Your Students, Step #2-Planning, Step #3-Differentiation During Process, and Step #4-Assessements.

In the first step, they suggest a series of steps in getting to know your students. For IEP and ELL students, you should attend their meetings but if you are not able to then you should locate their files and review them. It is also recommended to administer a learning styles inventory on the first day of class. This can be done simply by having them fill out a sheet describing their learning preferences. Also, you should find out about things that are not school related and that are done outside of school time. Finding out more about interest and activities will help you build a curriculum based on their interests and encourage motivation.

In the next step, you should plan class time wisely. Using pre-test will help determine what students already know. This prevents class time from being used on content that is already known. You should also plan to use one or two concepts that can be taught at different levels of complexity. The use of cooperative learning groups,

and heterogeneous grouping will allow students to use different strengths. In heterogeneous groups, low-level achieving students are paired with high-level achieving student. I find this beneficial and believe it is mutually beneficial since students needing additional assistance can gain insight from their peers, while the higher-level students are able to reinforce their knowledge by teaching other students.

The third step, encourages the use of differentiated instruction and a multifaceted approach to reach a wide range of diverse learners. There are three areas that stood out in this section. One is using "task analysis" to break down chunks into smaller sections. I found this strategy enlightening, because it not only applies to specific learning content, but could be used with one of my favorite teaching strategies- jigsaw method. In this method students could work in small groups of 3 to 4 students to focus on one specific content, then teach the material to the other students. Task analysis and jigsaw method are similar because they both provide an opportunity to learn specific content and focus on a certain topic. Students could also have various options for presenting the material, so they can choose the best learning style that works for their specific need. Examples could include writing: about a topic(kinesthetic), presenting (verbal), or making a video over the topic (kinesthetic), or create a drawing (visual).

Finally, the fourth step demonstrates different ways of assessing a student including multiple choice, t/f, and matching. My only concern with the authors example if that it may not be differentiated enough. I would also include non-standardized methods to assessment choices. This could include a project-based assessment in place of a standard test. With project-based learning, students are offered a project alternative such as creating a five-day menu cycle including all the food groups with correct portion sizes in replacement of a traditional test.

Source:

Swafford, M., & Giordano, K. (2017). Universal Design: Ensuring Success for All FCS Students. Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences, 109(4), 47-52). DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.14307/JFCS109.4.47Links to an external site.