

Instructional Strategies: Definitions and Resources

<http://www.floridahotteachers.org/strategies.htm>

Alternative Assessments: (Low or High Prep)

- Wide variety of possibilities, including use of different rubrics or assessments/tests for different students.
- **Low Prep Version:** Include as part of the assessment several questions of varying complexity or focused on different aspects of the concept, allowing students to make some choices about which ones they answer. (Example: Students are required to answer question 1 but can choose from questions 2-4 for their second response.)

Anchor Activities (or Sponge Activities): (High Prep)

- Beneficial for classroom management as well as instruction
- Designed for students to work on either immediately at the beginning of class time or after their class work has been completed, so that their instructional time is maximized
- Intended to extend or deepen understanding of a concept or skill, not just to be busy work
- [Resources, Examples and More Information](#)

Appointment Clocks: (High Prep)

- Used to quickly put students in pairs or small groups
- Make a copy of the clock for each student. The name of another student goes at each hour mark around the clock so that asking students to find their "1 o'clock" partner puts the students in pairs (or groups of 3-4).
- Purposefully fill in some of the student names so that you know, for example, that 2 o'clock partners are mixed ability, 4 o'clock partners have similar interests, or that 7 o'clock partners were chosen by the students.
- Materials/Resources: [Clock Template \(pdf\)](#)

Centers (or Stations): (High Prep)

- Centers can be used to arrange various activities and assignments by level of difficulty or complexity or by interest.

Ideas:

- **By Readiness:** Set up 3-4 experiments that deal with the same concept, but that vary in complexity. Lower-level students may work on the experiment with fewer steps while higher-level students work on a more complicated task.

- **By Learning Style:** Set up stations focused on the same concept but designed for different modalities. Auditory learners may listen to a recording of text while visual learners examine maps and posters and kinesthetic learners use manipulatives.
- **By Interest:** Set up stations focusing that provide additional information about and enrichment of specific components of the concepts being studied. Allow students to choose which component they spend their time working on.

Materials/Resources:

- ["K-6 Learning Centers"](#) from I Love that Teaching Idea
- ["Setting Up Your Classroom"](#) (for learning centers) from EduPlace
- [Centers based on Multiple Intelligences](#) from New Horizons

Cubing: (Low or High Prep)

- Six commands or questions, written on the sides of a cube. Students roll the cube and respond. Cubes may be used to differentiate by readiness or interest.
- Idea: Each side of the cube may represent a level of Bloom's Taxonomy
- **Low Prep Version:** Write the six commands/questions on the board, numbered 1-6. Have the students roll a dice to determine which one to respond to.
- Materials/Resources: [Cube Template \(PowerPoint\)](#) or [Cube Template \(pdf\)](#)

Curriculum Compacting: (High Prep)

- Used for individual or small groups of students with advanced knowledge of the concepts or skills to be studied
- Identify the skills or aspects of the concepts with which the students are already proficient. Spend less time on those parts of the curriculum, allowing the students to focus on what they really need to learn and understand.

Homework Options: (Low or High Prep)

- Assign homework based on a student's level of readiness. All students may be working on the same concept or skill, but are assigned homework of varying level of difficulty. Or students may be given assignments focusing on different skills, based on their individual needs.
- Materials/Resources: The [Curriculum Ladders](#) may be helpful in identifying what skills each student or group of students

Jigsaw: (Low Prep)

- Works well with small groups needing to cover large amounts of material
- Divide the material to be covered in 3-5 parts. Put the same number of students in each small group. One student in each group is assigned to cover one of the parts of the materials. The student's job is to become the "expert" on their portion of the material so that they can then share what they've learned with the rest of their group.

1. Students read their assigned material independently

2. Students meet with those from other groups that read the same material to discuss what was most important and what needs to be taught to their groups. (optional)
3. Students meet with their small groups and to share what they've learned with each other. Follow with whole group discussion of the most important points.

KWL Charts: (Low Prep)

- Columns: "What I Know," "What I Want to Know," and "What I Learned"
- Can be used at the beginning of a unit to assess students' background knowledge and interest in the topic, or it can be used at various points throughout the unit to assess student progress
- Materials/Resources: [KWL Chart \(Word\)](#) or [KWL Chart \(pdf\)](#)

Learning Contracts: (High Prep)

- Works well with individual students
- Detailed list of directions and assignments for the student to complete within a set period of time. Teacher and student work together to establish contract requirements and due dates. Can be effectively used to develop goal-setting.
- Materials/Resources: [General Learning Contract \(Word\)](#)

Literature Circles: (Average Prep)

- Small groups of students, arranged by readiness level or interest, reading a novel together
- Idea: The whole class may be reading novels by the same author or that have similar themes, but each literature group has a novel that is specifically appropriate for them. This allows for whole group discussion as well as small group work.
- Materials/Resources: The [Lexile Framework](#) is a great resource for identifying appropriate novels for each group.

Menus (or Agendas): (Low Prep)

- List of assignments, activities, or projects a student will work on during a set amount of time (ie. one class period, one week, one unit). Students may choose the order which they complete the work.

Menu Format:

- "Main Course" Items – those assignments that the student is required to complete
- "Side Dish" Items – Students choose 2-3 assignments from a list of options
- "Dessert" Items – Optional items that students may choose to do for additional enrichment or practice
- Agenda format may be structured more loosely, such as the low-prep example below
- Materials/Resources: [Reading Agenda - Novel Study \(Word\)](#)

Orbitals (Independent Study Projects): (High Prep)

- 3-4 week independent study projects intended to provide enrichment
- Effective for use with individual students who have already mastered the concepts the class will be working on. Provides an opportunity for them to focus on a part of the concept or separate topic of particular interest to the student (possibility something he or she is passionate about). Allow the student to share with the class what he or she has learned at the conclusion of the project.

Question Choices: (Low Prep)

- During whole group discussions, include questions that everyone in the class is able to answer, as well as more complex questions that only a few students may be able to answer. Adjust the difficulty of the questions depending on which student will be called on to respond.
- Also see [Alternative Assessment Lo-Prep Version](#)
- Materials/Resources: [Bloom's Taxonomy Guiding Words \(pdf\)](#)
- [Novel Study Questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy](#)

Reading Buddies: (Low Prep)

- Pair each student with another of a different reading level (low with medium, medium with high) for partner reading and discussion
- Also, pairing upper grade students with lower grade students, such as having a fourth grade class buddy up with a first grade class, provides reading practice for all students and can be motivating for both groups.

Reflection and Response: (Low Prep)

- Provide opportunity for students to respond and reflect on day's learning. Helps you to know where they stand for planning next lessons.
- Materials/Resources: [3 Minute Buzz \(pdf\)](#), [Reflecting on Bright Ideas \(pdf\)](#), [Reflection Pyramid \(pdf\)](#)

Scaffolding: (High Prep)

- Works well with individuals and small groups when working on instruction of specific skills
- Identify specific levels of complexity within the development of a particular skill. Match students, by ability, with the appropriate level of skill. The goal is to have each student move up at least one level.
- Materials/Resources: The [Curriculum Ladders](#) may be helpful in identifying the continuum of skills.

Think-Tac-Toe: (High Prep)

- Nine commands or questions, arranged like a tic-tac-toe board. Students choose three to complete, creating a row vertically, horizontally, or diagonally.

- Student choice allows for differentiation by interest and/or learning style. Think-tac-toe boards for different levels of readiness can also be created and given to different groups of students.
- Materials/Resources: [Think-Tac-Toe for middle grade novel study - 2 Levels \(Word\)](#)

Think-Pair-Share: (Low Prep)

- Great for providing opportunities for all students to respond during whole group discussion
1. Ask a question or propose a problem
 2. Students first think of an answer or idea on their own (2-3 minutes)
 3. Next, students share, and possibly revise, their responses by sharing with a partner.
 4. Then open discussion to the whole group to share and compare answers and ideas.

Tiered Activities: (Low or High Prep)

- 3-4 different activities of different levels of complexity and difficulty, but with a common goal or end result. For example, different groups of students may be working on science experiments of different levels of difficulty, but all with the intention of learning about electric circuits.
 - 1st - Begin by planning the mid-level activity, what you might normally plan for your whole class.
 - 2nd - Then add a level of difficulty or complexity to make the same lesson more challenging for higher-level students.
 - 3rd - Simplify or add resources to the original activity to better meet the needs and fill in any learning gaps for lower-level students.
- Tiered activities can lead to effective whole group discussion and comparison of results.

Tiered Rubrics: (High Prep)

- 2-3 rubrics are developed for one project, and given to students based on readiness. This provides all students with appropriate skills to focus on and a chance to be successful.
- Materials/Resources: [Rubrics](#)

Varied Organizers: (High Prep)

- Provide 2-3 organizers of differing complexity.
- For example, students needing more guidance may be given an organizer with blanks for them to fill in. Students ready for more independence may be given an incomplete organizer that requires them to fill in blanks as well as adding detail. More advanced students may be given only a basic framework for the organizer which they complete on their own.

Varied Products: (Low Prep)

- Possibly the easiest way to differentiate

- Allow students to make choices about how they demonstrate what they've learned, whether they write an essay, make a poster, or act out a scene.
- Be clear about your expectations, possibly using a rubric; then allow them to meet the requirements in their own way.
- This also works well when you have limited resources because not all students need to same materials and equipment at the same time.
- Materials/Resources: [Ways to Show What You Know \(pdf\)](#)

Varied Texts: (Average Prep)

- Provide resources of a variety of reading levels that provide students with information about the skill or concept being studied
- Materials/Resources: The [Lexile Framework](#) is a great resource for identifying text at varying reading levels.