



Various Styles, Similar Outcomes

Differentiated Instruction Ensures Success for All Learners

Differentiated instruction is a key component of the education program across the Herricks Public Schools, as it supports the various ways of learning that are found within each classroom. Teachers use varied strategies of differentiation, many of which have been standard practice in Herricks for years and are making their way into even more areas of curriculum and instruction.

The district has brought in several professional development opportunities to further expand practices. Most recently, Dr. Nanci Smith conducted an in-house, two-day turnkey training program for approximately 30 teachers and administrators ranging from K-12. The sessions covered techniques, lessons, prompts, tasks and more. Dr. Smith stressed the importance of “voice and choice” for motivation, meaning that the more teachers offer choice, the more students will perceive the content as being relevant.

Herricks teachers offer a great deal of student choice. Middle school math teacher Josephine Bruno presents it through regular Flex and Stretch activities, which allow students to choose questions that they want to do following a lesson. They can “flex” their brain and practice at the standard level, or “stretch” themselves to take on challenges on a difficulty scale of mild, medium or spicy.

“They really take ownership of their learning and are so excited about math,” Ms. Bruno said. “They want to finish and stay in class.”

Inclusion Algebra teachers Danielle Valentini and Carrie-Ann Wallad often give students options to select the types of learning approaches they will partake in. They can work at their seat individually, as a pair or in a group; engage in hands-on activities through which they can practice focusing; spend time with a teacher for re-teaching or pre-teaching or practice skills and catch up on assignments. Ms. Valentini and Ms. Wallad also make sure to keep learning fun and appealing for different types of learners by incorporating a weekly activity such as a scavenger hunt, interactive game or puzzle that prompts students to contribute their strengths to the task at hand.

Students are often encouraged to take different approaches to problem-solving, using methods that best fit their learning styles. They explain their answers and justify their strategies, seeing how people can arrive at the same answer in multiple ways. They also get involved in the creation of visual cues and organizers.

At the elementary level, Searingtown School

Continued on page 2...



Various Styles, Similar Outcomes

Differentiated Instruction Ensures Success for All Learners

teachers Lisa Palladino and Teri Soriento open the floor to students for input in developing classroom charts and posters. Ms. Bruno and other middle school teachers use foldables, hands-on study guides that students enjoy making themselves. Ms. Valentini and Ms. Wallad's students make use of study guides and interactive notebooks, which provide an easy-to-read format. The majority of all these materials incorporate scaffolding, color coding and sets of instructions and supports that help students connect concepts.

The primary goal of differentiated instruction is to make curriculum accessible to all learners, ensuring that advanced students are challenged, while those that require more support receive it. Different forms of pre-assessments determine where students stand at the start of a unit to help teachers map out the lesson for the day. Just

a few questions can provide a quick snapshot of students' understanding of the topic at hand, and is useful for grouping as well.

For all instruction in which grouping is used, groups are created based on students' needs, content knowledge or learning styles. It is not always split based on performance levels -- sometimes it is a combination of students that share similar ways of learning.

"Some learn from listening, some from reading and listening, and some by reading to themselves," Ms. Soriento said. "They are learning, in their way."

Teachers may partner students, switching up the pairs depending on activities and lessons. Other times small groups are formed, all of which get time with the teacher, and in certain cases co-taught classes are split in half for parallel teaching, in which each group works with a teacher simultaneously. A lot of

differentiation happens on the spot as well, and teachers will make grouping adjustments based on their observations.

Learning station work is a popular approach used for certain lessons. Ms. Palladino and Ms. Soriento find it specifically beneficial in math instruction and follow a plan that features three stations. Every group gets to each station, but where they begin is based on the students' needs. A teacher station provides support and attention to students that need it, while presenting more advanced enrichment opportunities to those that have a strong grasp of the content. A practice station, also led by a teacher, is a combination of workbook assignments and some re-teaching. A review station entails independent work, which may be a computer exercise or IXL program.

Flipped classroom is another widely used instructional style. Students receive an introductory preview of the upcoming classroom lesson in the form of an interactive tool. They can pause, rewind and re-watch at home, working at their own pace. It helps to make class time more efficient and aids in preassessment.

Flexible seating is a form of differentiation that is expanding throughout the



district. In many of the elementary buildings' classrooms, an assortment of seating options can be found. These include high and low stools, standing desks, ball seats, chair cushions, chairs with/without arms, banded seats and floor desks. Some students find a seat for the day while others change depending on the subject and lesson.

"Students are typically very honest with us and themselves, and they will find a seat that works for them," Ms. Palladino said.

Alexandra Moshen's sixth-grade classroom features floor chairs and cushions that students enjoy for reading, writing, certain lessons and group work. The middle school will bring in more flexible seating options next year. Additionally, some classrooms have standard desks, but give students the option to sit where they prefer -- the rule being that they are working and learning.

"It is our mission to educate the whole child and support each of our students," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Fino Celano. "As educators, we are always investigating instructional best practices that will engage all students and ensure that everyone is learning and progressing."

Green Initiatives Grow in Herricks

Herricks is ahead of the curve in environmental care, having taken numerous "green" steps. Throughout the district, efforts have been made to shift toward more environmentally friendly products as well as increase awareness of them.

Districtwide, empty ink and toner cartridges are sent to specified locations to be recycled. This school year, the Food Services Department switched to purchasing corn starch sporks that are only 10 percent plastic, in place of entirely plastic utensils. Herricks is one of only two districts on Long Island that made the shift to biodegradable trays, and next school year, will be changing to paper straws from plastic.

Additionally, Food Services Director Shakia Hall represents Herricks as a member of the Long Island Food Co-op, which includes approximately 50 other districts. This improves ordering and greatly reduces waste, as constituents can put items on the bid and avoid having leftover products.

Students have also proven to be heavily invested in protecting the environment and preserving resources. Paper, cardboard, metal and plastic are recycled at each building. All three elementary schools have bins for paper and plastic in classrooms, which students actively help to manage and empty. The middle and high schools have recycling containers for all to use in general locations, and students recycle in their classrooms as well.

The high school has an active school garden that the Garden Club maintains, initiated in 2010 as a Girl Scout project. Students built five raised beds over time and won a grant to build a greenhouse. Since then, more students have jumped on board and added another five beds, fruit trees and more. Quest students contributed birdhouses, and an irrigation system was installed through a Boy Scout effort. The garden beds are made from untreated wood and are mulched to keep the amount of watering down.

Grants from the Herricks Community Fund have allowed for the purchase of seeds and other resources. Vocational Independence Program students and peer



"We have to protect the future and help any way we can,"

— Environmental Club president Richard Lee

leaders also work together in the garden, and during the summer, students throughout the district come in to weed and complete other tasks.

The high school administration has collaborated with the cafeteria staff to determine which types of produce would be of the greatest benefit. They grow potatoes, garlic, cabbage and kale, all of which have an extensive shelf/freezer life and last well into the school year.

The high school also has an Environmental Club that encourages students to recycle. The group is coordinating a Bottles for Battle competition, which will result in a donation to an environmental cause in addition to thousands of recycled bottles. The club conducts Earth Day cleanups each year and volunteers to help clean up the pond across the street from the school. Last year, science research students got involved, putting an aeration device in the pond to help oxygenate the water and help fish to thrive.

"We have to protect the future and help any way we can," Environmental Club president Richard Lee said.



HERRICKS UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
999B Herricks Road
New Hyde Park, NY 11040

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
PAID
FLUSHING, NY
PERMIT NO. 1491

Board of Education:

Juleigh Chin, President
Brian Hassan, Vice President
Trustees:
Nancy Feinstein
Jim Gounaris
Henry Zanetti

Dr. Fino M. Celano
Superintendent of Schools
Elizabeth Guercin
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Lisa Rutkoske, CPA
Assistant Superintendent for Business

Visit www.herricks.org for more district news and information!



Ten National Merit Finalists

Ten Herricks High School students have been recognized as National Merit finalists by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. Congratulations to Hannah Chu, Ankit Jain, Christina Kim, Simon Liu, Eish Maheshwari, Mariana Mohsen, Cayla Moy, Nicole Park, Uttav Patel and Sahith Vadada, who are among approximately 15,000 students across the country to have achieved this feat.

LEADING the Way!

Center Street, Denton Avenue and Searingtown Schools have all been recognized as Project Lead the Way Distinguished Schools. They are among only 214 elementary schools across the country to receive this designation by offering at least two PLTW Launch modules at each grade level and having more than 75 percent of the student body participate during the 2017-18 school year. PLTW is a STEM-based curriculum used in grades K-5 and middle school.

