Differentiation Strategies Through Reading Centers

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Research Question
How can I differentiate the teaching of language arts in first grade?

Literature Review
- There is currently no diagnostic test to measure students’ intelligences that is proven to be stronger than the others (McClellan and Conti, 2008).
- According to Parsons (2013) to differentiate, teachers must be reflective on-action and in-action.
- Collaboration among teachers and the incorporation of student choice motivate students and enrich the differentiated curriculum (Servilio, 2009).

Methodology
- Participants: 23 first grade students from a rural elementary school (9 girls, 14 boys).
- Data Sources: Connell’s Questionnaires, student observation notes, lesson plans, video transcripts, and samples of student work.
- Differentiated reading centers were designed based on Gardner’s Theory.

Results
- Strategies for Determining Students’ Intelligences:
  - Employ multiple data sets when determining students’ intelligences to increase validity of the results.
  - Depending on their distribution among the class, some students with similar intelligences must be blended into one group.
- Strategies for Planning Differentiated Instruction:
  - Consult fellow teachers and staff as resources for ideas and support.
  - Incorporating student choice students power in differentiating their own education.
- Strategies for Teaching Differentiated Lessons:
  - Even differentiated lesson plans catered to a particular group will need to be adjusted in response to the needs of each student in the midst of instruction.
  - The heterogeneous groups produced by Gardner’s Theory-led reading centers create an environment conducive to peer tutoring and collaboration.

Conclusions
- Throughout the differentiation process, it is essential to be responsive to students in the midst of instruction.
- It is important to include colleagues in the process of differentiation to design a dynamic curriculum.
- Further research is needed to determine which strategies for differentiation are most effective in the first grade language arts classroom.

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