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Process Differentiation: The Key to Student Learning and Engagement

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Process Differentiation: Key to Student Learning and Engagement
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Research Question
How can I differentiate instruction when teaching sight word literacy and how do students respond to these differentiation approaches?

Literature Review
• The process in which students learn is an essential component of differentiation (Watts-Taffe, Laster, Broach, Marinak & Walker-Dalhouse, 2013).
• According to Sullivan, Konrad, Joseph, and Luu (2015) student engagement plays a vital role in sight word acquisition.
• Jasmine and Schiesl (2009) argue that DI strategies involving movement dramatically aid sight word recognition.

Methodology
• 19 second grade students from a diverse urban school served as participants.
• Students engaged in three DI strategies during sight word practice in small groups.
• Tomlinson’s (2000) conceptualization of DI was used as theoretical framework for the study.

Results and Data Analysis
• Videos and photographs showed student engagement in the DI strategies through body language (Figure 1 and 2).
• Ninety-five percent of the students read all of their sight words correctly in the post assessment.
• Students identified Name Mix Up and Sight Word Charades as the most beneficial to their learning.
• Analysis of data supports the finding that student engagement plays a major role in sight word learning (Sullivan, Konrad, Joseph, & Luu, 2015).

Conclusion
• Differentiated instruction involving movement both engages students and aids in their learning.
• Movement provides another avenue for students to learn and acquire sight word fluency.
• Teachers need to adapt these DI strategies to best fit their students and environment. All strategies may not aid all students.
• Future research should study the effects of tactile DI strategies on sight word learning.

Figure 1. Sight Word Charades aided the quietest students in the class in participating and becoming engaged in sight word practice.

Figure 2. Musical Sight Words received mixed reactions from students. Some students did not believe this DI strategy aided them in their sight word acquisition.