DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

All of us have different strengths and weaknesses in our learning. Historically, however, schools have approached student learning with a one-size-fits-all mentality and have struggled to adapt to changing student needs. These resources will expand your knowledge related to learning differences, provide actionable strategies to impact the learning experience of your students, and cultivate positive habits of mind.

Embracing New Habits of Mind

*How Learning Profiles Can Strengthen Your Teaching*—Learning profiles enable us to know the various ways that each of our students makes sense of content. Learn how to start using your students’ learner profiles in your lesson planning to provide multiple entry points to learning for all students.

*Faces of Learning: Your Learner Sketch*—This interactive online tool generates a learner profile report outlining the user’s strengths and challenges, along with strategies to improve learning. It has been developed using the All Kinds of Minds Learning Framework, which is comprised of eight constructs which represent different facets of learning.

*Meeting the Needs of All Students: A First Step*—In this Edutopia article, some tips and suggestions are provided on how to approach situations where students might have specific needs in the classroom.

*Neuroscience and the Classroom: Making Connections*—This engaging, multimodal resource from Annenberg Learner helps teachers further understand their students’ learning differences through the lens of neuroscience.

Working Memory

*Working Memory Quiz*—This quiz allows participants to gauge their working memory.

*Understanding Working Memory: A Classroom Guide*—This reading offers a guide to working memory in the classroom with techniques on how to identify, support, and develop working memory in students through case study examples and strategies for intervention.

*How Your Working Memory Makes Sense of the World*—In this funny, enlightening talk, educational psychologist Peter Doolittle details the importance — and limitations — of your working memory, the part of the brain that allows us to make sense of that’s happening now.

Project-Based Learning

*Project-Based Learning: Building Motivation*—True project-based learning enables students to take ownership of their learning and be driven by their own interests and intrinsic motivation. This online tool generates checklists to support project-based learning and evaluation.
Project-Based Learning: Success Start to Finish -- This video captures insights from leaders, educators, and students at Manor New Technology High School, a school that transformed their student’s education by implementing an entirely project-based curriculum. The video includes samples of projects and student products.

26 Keys to Student Engagement—Angela Maiers provides an “alphabet” of 26 keys to student engagement.

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic: The Challenge of Motivation—Intrinsic motivation occurs when the student pursues learning due to their interest in a specific topic. While boosting motivation is often a challenging task for teachers, the rewards of having students who are interested and eager to learn make the hard work worth the effort. By combining intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, teachers can help students learn the subject at hand as well as valuable life skills.

Turn Genius Hour Into Genius Year—Learn more about Genius Hour, an exciting innovation in education where students are encouraged start engaging in self-directed projects. Genius Hour projects are great ways to better tap into your students’ hopes, dreams, and life goals.

Executive Function

Executive Function 101—There are many components of executive function: impulse control, emotional control, planning/prioritizing, flexibility, working memory, self-monitoring, task initiation, and organization. Understanding which of these components is at the root of the problem is critical in supporting struggling students.

Getting Organized & Good Work Habits—This website provides a number of strategies to help students manage time and effort, organize materials and work space, and develop study skills.

At a Glance: 8 Key Executive Functions—Executive functions enable people to plan, organize and complete tasks. Here’s a closer look at this important set of skills—and how executive functioning issues can affect your student’s everyday life.

Three Brain-Based Teaching Strategies to Build Executive Function in Students—Building executive function requires more than rote memorization. This Edutopia article offers teaching strategies to help students actively recognize relationships to their prior knowledge and apply new learning to new situations.

Strategies for Supporting the Whole Student

All Kinds of Minds—In this activity, you will have the opportunity to practice being a learning scientist by reading case studies from students in elementary, middle, and high school. As you read, consider different strategies that you might use to address the learning challenges that are evidenced in these cases.

Through Your Child’s Eyes —The team at Understood has created a series of simulations of various learning difficulties, grouped by grade level. After hearing a student describe his or her experiences, you will have the opportunity to do an activity that simulates what it’s like to have a given learning difficulty.

Checklist: Know Your Child’s Strengths—When your student has learning and attention issues, it can seem as though you spend a lot of time talking about areas of weakness. But building on
students’ strengths is just as important when it comes to helping them succeed. This checklist will help your identify your students’ strengths.

3 Ways to Plan for Diverse Learners: What Teachers Do—Content, process, and product are what teachers address all the time during lesson planning and instruction. This article from Edutopia outlines the teacher’s role in differentiating content, process, and product to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Universal Design for Learning Tools

CAST Free Learning Tools: CAST offers a number of robust (and free) learning tools. These tools, designed and tested as part of CAST’s research projects, help educators, parents, and students experience the power of flexible learning environments.