Authentic, Multi-level Teaching
An Introduction

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Authentic, Multi-level Teaching

Students with mild through severe disabilities are being included in general education classes with increasing frequency and success. However, teaching children with substantial differences in academic abilities together in one classroom still requires that we learn a great deal. In this article, we describe the typical strategies that schools and teachers who are seeking to be inclusive schools use in coping with substantial differences of ability among their students and suggest that, foremost, we need ways of thinking and talking about inclusive teaching, approaches to teaching children together in tasks where students can learn at their own level, heterogeneously grouped. We call this, authentic, multi-level teaching. In the second part of this article we describe examples of authentic, multi-level teaching and assess the state of the art and needs for research, development, and teacher education approaches that will move us to the next level. First, we will discuss the strategies schools are using in dealing with ability differences as they move towards inclusion.

How do schools and teachers currently deal with the multiple levels of student ability in general education classes? In our review of the literature and results from the Whole Schooling Research Project, a qualitative study in its third and last year of funding, we have identified several strategies (Peterson, Feen, Tamor, Silagy, 2000; 2001). Some strategies foster genuinely inclusive teaching, while others, to varying degrees, encourage the separation of children with differing ability levels from their peers. We begin our discussion of the need and goals for this project by a review of these typical strategies, which can be grouped into five general approaches:

1. Pretending as if students are all on the same level.
2. Ability grouping – clustering students across classes by perceived ‘special need’ and ability grouping for instruction within a class.
3. Special education assistance: One-on-one help, delivered in a remediation or parallel curriculum mode, often at the back or side of the class.
4. Adapting curriculum Special or general education assistance to adapt a curriculum that is seen as set and above the level of a particular student.
5. Authentic, multi-level teaching: Designing instruction so that students may function at multiple levels of ability, engaging in authentic learning, receiving support, yet learning in heterogeneous groups and situations.

We argue that only #5, authentic, multi-level teaching, is ultimately conducive to effective inclusive education. We further argue that while educators understand some strategies of multi-level teaching, at present the level of knowledge, as well as the means to articulate that knowledge in ways useful to teachers, is inadequate. The success of inclusive schooling practices over the coming years, we believe, lies in the degree to which educators are successful in filling this void in research, the literature, and practice, all of which impact directly on teacher education and teacher professional development. Let us discuss these key approaches.
**Keeping students on ‘grade level’: Pretending that all students are the same.** The central approach in much of general education is teaching as if all students were on ‘grade level’, in other words, pretending that students do not vary in their academic abilities. However, we know that children vary dramatically in their ability levels, even discounting children identified as having disabilities. Over the last year, teachers in 8 schools involved in our on-going research project were asked, “What is the range of abilities of students in your class?” Every teacher stated that students crossed at least five grade levels. A second grade teacher, for example, said, “pre-kindergarten to 5th grade”. Most teachers assessed wider ranges: “First grade through eighth grade reading levels,” said one 3-5 multi-age teacher (Peterson, Feen, Tamor, Silagy, 2000; 2001). This means that dealing with issues of ability is far from being a ‘special education’ or ‘inclusion’ issue. As Richard Allington (1994) has long maintained, it challenges every teacher in every classroom. Traditionally, children at either end of this continuum have often been removed as the school tries, unsuccessfully, to maintain a ‘one size only’ curriculum. However, even when students labeled “disabled” or “gifted” are removed, a wide range of abilities remains in every general education classroom.

**Ability grouping – clustering students across and within classes by perceived ability.** The most widespread means of addressing the broad range of abilities represented in every classroom, when it is addressed at all, is by subdividing the classroom into ability groups. The traditional example is the three-reading-group scenario in place for decades in American schools. There are many reasons why routine reliance on ability grouping works against inclusive education. Most obviously, students with cognitive disabilities routinely are assigned to the “low” group, effectively being resegregated. Non-disabled students who share their grouping suffer also share the stigma of being labeled “low”. Furthermore, in a truly inclusive classroom that has natural proportions of students with “gifted” and “cognitively or learning disabled” students, the top and bottom groups may simply become miniature versions of previously segregated “special” programs. This leaves that vast range of abilities “in the middle” still grouped together. Some teachers respond to this problem by creating more ability groups. One classroom we know of had seven ability groups for math. This becomes a management nightmare for the teacher, and students get very, very little instructional time from the teacher. At the same time, ability grouping greatly decreases opportunities for students to work together and teach each other. Too often, the most interesting assignments and most innovative teaching methods are reserved for the higher groups, again replicating the documented problem that the best teaching practices are often found in segregated “gifted” programs even though they are at least as useful for other students (Nunley, 1998; Peterson, Feen, Tamor, Silagy, 2000; 2001; Tomlinson, 1999).

**Special education assistance: One-on-one help, often at the back or side of the class.** Our observations of this approach confirm the fear that any connection between classroom activities and the work of the student-assistant team is quickly lost. In effect, the student or students receiving assistance at the back of the class are learning in a separate classroom, walled off very effectively by an invisible bubble. The classroom teacher turns all responsibility for those students over to the assistant (whether a teacher or a paraprofessional aide) and the other students stop considering the “special” students to be regular members of the class. At best, they are
sharing space; at worst, they become invisible (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli. & MacFarland, 1997; Peterson, Feen, Tamor, Silagy, 2000; 2001).

‘Adapting curriculum’: **Special or general education assistance to adapt a curriculum that is seen as set and above the level of a particular student.** Curriculum adaptation can make sense in some cases. For example, students may use large print materials, audiotapes, and word processors instead of handwriting and standard texts. However, curriculum adaptations that alter curriculum content, rather than just the manner in which students interact with that content, have the effect of perpetuating the misconception that all the other students in the class are academically identical, with only the student with a disability needing curriculum adjustments. Thus, this approach works against having teachers introduce sufficient planning and flexibility to meet the full range of needs and abilities in any given classroom. At the same time, curriculum adaptations may make it difficult for students receiving the adaptations to work with classmates, or even to feel part of the class. Too often, the adaptations themselves consist merely of watering down, without any serious attempt to address the specific learning needs of the students for whom the adaptations are made. Frequently, the adaptations are made by marginally trained paraprofessionals, or by special educators who are unfamiliar with the overall goals and climate of the classroom since they rarely see that classroom in action (Deschenes, Ebeling, & Sprague, 1994; Janey & Snell, 2000; Roth, Bartlinski & Courson, 1994; Peterson, Feen, Tamor, Silagy, 2000; 2001; Wood, 1998).

**Authentic, multi-level teaching: A necessary philosophy and set of strategies for inclusive schooling.** Increasingly, as we look at best practices in general education, it becomes clear that we can design instruction from the beginning so that students may function at different levels, each being challenged and obtaining support at his or her own level of ability. We call this multi-level instruction. Such instructional approaches have great promise because they make teaching students with diverse ability levels simply part of the teaching process, rather than a special ‘add-on’. Multi-level instruction is most powerful and most possible, it appears to date, when it is implemented in the context of **authentic learning**: activities built around meaning and connected to the real lives of students. Specifically, multi-level teaching involves designing instruction around projects and tasks in such a way that the individual needs of all students are taken into account (Biklen, Straut, Kluth, 1999; Jorgensen, 1994; Oyler, 1995, 1999; Oyler & Hamre, n.d.; Oyler, in press; Peterson, LeRoy, Field, Wood, 1992; Peterson, 1994). This is a very different way of thinking than trying to build a lesson from the bottom up by starting with discrete target skills and then attempting to address those targets while taking into consideration the individual characteristics of each student. One starts from a holistic, global view and incorporates specific needs. The other starts from specifics and tries to build an overall framework from this. While starting from specifics is possible, most people get lost in the overwhelming plethora of details in such an approach.

**An example** from our observations at Hillside Elementary School in Farmington Hills, Michigan, illustrates these points. The 5th grade teacher, a gentle but strong male teacher, is teaching a literacy lesson:

> The kids are using an anthology and read a short article about the health benefits of laughter. The reading passage is quite short, and then the teacher uses the topic as a lead-in,
tying it first to a community service project involving visiting nursing homes. He talks about remembering the value of humor when they visit and kids talk briefly about ideas. He then . . . gets a book of limericks (from the library) and reads several to the class, asking them to figure out the rhyme scheme. The kids start writing their own limericks while the teacher circulates assisting. Kids also help each other. This is a highly motivating assignment and the kids get very involved. Some have trouble stopping when it’s time to go to gym.

Later, the teacher described his allocation of certain classroom management tasks to student committees:

_The teacher has 3 committees to help with classroom activities this year: birthday, PR, and community service. The committees meet on Thursdays. Birthday is in charge of celebrating each student’s birthday (birthday sucker on desk, card, decorated locker) and the birthdays of key school staff (specials teachers, principal, etc.) The kids take it seriously and never forget a birthday, whereas he used to slip up when he did it himself._

_The PR committee writes articles for the school paper, will handle a big picnic at the end of the year for their first grade buddies, does publicity for class activities, etc._

_The community service committee plans and coordinates service projects. Four this year (planned so far): fundraising for a family that lost everything in a house fire (with kids at another elementary school), something that benefits the class itself, a relationship with a senior center or nursing home (in planning stages with parent involvement), and assisting one of the student’s grandfather who serves food to homeless people around the Detroit bus station on Saturdays. For the homeless food project, kids work together to make sandwiches._

This teacher is also about to set up a new set of committees in the classroom in response to a student request to have classroom animals.

_He is setting up a number of habitats in the classroom. Just set up an ant farm yesterday – kids are fascinated. He will also be set up an aquarium, a terrarium, mealy worms, and he’s looking for a mammal– has offers pending of a gerbil and a hamster. Each habitat has a student committee that is fully responsible and must handle care over school breaks, Including summer vacation. [This is a class that seems to invite everyone in.] (Field notes, Whole Schooling Research Project, November 10, 2000.)_  

_These examples show a teacher involving students in real activities – not the pseudo-tasks of school learning, or the too typical ‘functional’ activities built around lists of life skills that aim to be authentic but often are someone else’s view of what a student should learn to be able to function in the world. In the first example, the teacher connects an academic task, limericks, with the function of humor in the lives of the students, connects this to their experiences with older people, and combines a complex language arts activity and writing workshop with a genuine community service project. In the next examples, he has committees, which have both responsibility and authority for handling important events related to the classroom community. In every case, the task has potential for students to be successful functioning at their own level of_
ability, while at the same time being challenged to move to the next level. The various committee assignments offer a rich range of opportunities to work on traditional academic skills, as well as the many other “life skills” that tends to receive ample lip service but little substantive attention in traditional classrooms.

This teacher has two students whose reading disabilities are significant: pre-kindergarten to kindergarten level. Until this year, they have been in separate special education classes. In analyzing these two passages, we see multiple opportunities where these students can be involved in rich learning opportunities, yet perform at their own level of ability, while getting positive support, encouragement, and instruction to move to the next level, illustrating some of the best examples of Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development.

We can contrast this with other examples from our research, one drawn from a school seeking to be inclusive, but not quite there yet.

> In this 3rd grade class we see a general education teacher, special education teacher, and paraprofessional. As we enter the room the kids are all milling around and country music is playing. The teacher explains she does this during 5 minutes of transition time. “Sometime,” she says, “They do a dance to the music”. The kids here her say this and quickly form a circle doing a kick dance to the music. Kids with and without disabilities are engaged. The teacher explains how she tries to incorporate multiple intelligences into her teaching. [I am thinking this is a very interesting class to watch.] However, after this break time, the teacher announces that it is reading time and before my eyes I watch kids cluster in clear ability groups. Nick, a child with mental retardation, is with his paraprofessional in the corner of the room, working on a worksheet. I notice that Nick’s typical desk is also in the corner whereas the rest of the class sits at tables formed in a U shape in the middle of the room.

> One group is with the special education teacher using Direct Instruction to repeat letters and sounds over and over as she follows a scripted lesson where she is told exactly what to say. One kid comments, “I hate school”. The other group, clearly the highest level of ability, are out in the hall where they are reading a book together aloud with the general education teacher. She has asked them to write a story from the perspective of one of the characters in the story. [I am struck. Some kids are involved in very rote work. One child totally separate from the class. I came from a school observing yesterday where all the kids, at very different levels of ability, were involved together in a rich story experience. Why not here?] (Field notes, Whole Schooling Research Project, April, 2000.)

Here we see ability grouping and one-to-one special education assistance that creates a classroom culture that clearly separates kids into obvious groups. Tellingly, this is occurring in a classroom where the teacher is thinking consciously of approaches and strategies aimed at differentiating instruction. Unfortunately, the strategies of ability grouping and one-on-one instruction seem to be at the top of her repertoire. It’s clear that the students are well aware of these ability groupings.

Richard Allington (1994) has described the ‘second school system’, made up of all the separate and special programs, of which special education is only one, that in total have allocated as many resources as does general education. This approach, he and others believe, has served to weaken instruction for all students. To explore how teachers in separate special education classes in a large urban school district think about dealing with ability differences in classes, we
observed in their classes and conducted interviews. We talked with them about implementing inclusive education in their schools, moving students with disabilities into regular classes. Here are notes from these conversations (Field Notes, Whole Schooling Research Project, April 11, 2000).

*As I talk with Mrs. Flores about having her mentally retarded students in the general education class, she says, ‘They can’t keep up’. She has difficulty envisioning how this would work. However, when I describe how some teachers instruct so that children are allowed to work at their own level, she seems amazed and thoughtful, ‘That might work’, she says. I talked with the other six special education teachers in a luncheon meeting. They said the same thing though had never heard of anyone doing this.*

Both of these examples, one drawn from a school thought of as successful and positive, the other from a school considered to be failing many of its children, have common elements. Both use strategies that separate children, largely because the instruction itself targets a narrow range of abilities and does not allow the flexibility and support of children at their own level.

*What do we know? What do we need to know?* Once we pay attention to the vast differences in all classrooms in schools, multi-level teaching begins to be very obvious as a needed framework and set of strategies. However, we find that both the general and special education literature is not at all explicit in strategies for how to plan and manage students with vastly diverse abilities.

**Special education literature.** The special education literature related to inclusive education has largely, with some minor deviations, approached the instruction of students with disabilities in the general classroom from the perspective of making individualized curriculum adaptations and modifications. One exception is the work on including students with severe disabilities that has tended to assume classrooms, which conform to the Whole Schooling Framework, even though such classrooms are rare (Calculator & Jorgenson, 1994; Ryndak & Alper, 1996 for example). However, this work has been limited in the degree to which it approaches instruction from the perspective of the general education instructor planning for a whole class, has assumed greater availability of such teaching styles than is actually extant, and has not provided operational details regarding exactly how multi-level teaching actually works.

The larger body of special education literature has tended to focus on students with mild disabilities and has *assumed* that instruction in the existing general education curriculum is unmovable, unchangeable, not to be questioned. There is little discussion in the inclusive education literature regarding how *best teaching practices* can accommodate all children learning together by design from the beginning, thus minimizing the need for individualized adaptations and modifications and increasing the degree to which students with differing abilities are simply part of the student body rather than ‘special’ add-ons that require treatment outside the typical norm. Virtually all of the many textbooks aimed at university ‘mainstreaming’ courses fall into this category (e.g., Friend & Bursick, 1999; Lewis & Doorlag, 1999; Smith, 1998; Wood, 1998).

A few writers and researchers have begun important work that begins to fill this gap. These have tended to come from people with roots in either inclusion of people with disabilities or work with ‘gifted and talented’ students. Writers whose work has begun from the perspective of
inclusion of students with disabilities have provided an important foundation on which to build. Mara Sapon Shevin has written numerous publications where she links practices such as cooperative and project-based learning, issues of social justice and care, to inclusive schooling of students with significant disabilities.

Paula Kluth and colleagues in Syracuse (Biklen, Straut, & Kluth, 1999; Kluth, 2001) are exploring ways that general education teachers use multi-level teaching strategies to include students with disabilities. From these studies they have identified several important ideas: (1) teacher beliefs and understandings that their role is to teach (in reference to a teacher of an ‘inclusive choir’) as opposed to compete; (2) expansion of the meaning of literacy to focus on multiple methods of understanding and communicating meaning; (3) the importance of creating a supportive, caring context for learning; (4) attention to the multiple ways in which students learn and teachers must teach.

Celia Oyler in New York studied the perceptions of teacher education students learning to engage in inclusive, multi-level teaching. She identified three approaches of such new teachers: (1) individual needs (building from a disability diagnosis and organizing the class as a collection of individual student programs; (2) group activities (emphasis on the social nature of learning and organizing activities that allowed students to function at different levels); (3) curriculum – beginning with the interests and lives of the students to engage the curriculum, allowing for projects and thematic work that provides opportunities for multi-level engagement (Oyler and Manre, n.d.) These categories begin to provide a more detailed understanding of approaches that stimulate effective inclusive teaching. From this study and other work (Oyler, in press), she identified what she called ‘key tenets of accessible instruction’: (1) searching for strengths in all learners; (2) expanding beyond the whole class uniform lesson format; (3) utilizing flexible grouping strategies; and (4) fostering collaborative problem solving. Oyler (2000) also has developed a description of elements often seen in effective multi-level classrooms (See Appendix A).

**General education literature.** The work of Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999) on ‘differentiated instruction’ has been influential and comes from the foundation of her work with ‘gifted and talented’ students. Other literature on gifted education explores methods for challenging these students, sometimes in the context of a general education class. This literature provides many good suggestions and ideas. The problem, however, as described above, is that this literature often reverts to in-class ability grouping. Sorting out of strategies that promote effective learning for all at their level and those that reproduce segregation and potential stigmatization within the general education classroom has not yet taken place in the context of this work.

The vast literature on authentic instructional strategies – reading and writing workshop, constructivist approaches to math and science, thematic instruction that links multiple subjects, project-based learning, multiple intelligences, social studies as a thematic organizer centered in the interests of students – provides many clues to multi-level teaching strategies. For example, in reading workshop, children select ‘just right’ books at their own level and read individually or in pairs. In inquiry projects conducted by cooperative groups, students may take many roles at different levels of ability (E.g., Burke-Hengen & Gillespie, 1995; Caulkins, 1994; Cole, 1995; Daniels, 1994; Fisher, 1995; Glover, 1997; Goodman, 1986; Kohn, 1999; Kovalik, 1994; Manley & O’Neill, 1997; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1991; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993; Weaver, 1994; Schwartz & Pollishuke, 1990; Zimmelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998).
Despite this rich literature, however, books and articles that describe these strategies and their impact on learning, are not at all explicit about how these can be intentionally used with learners of highly different ability levels, ranging from severe cognitive disabilities to highly gifted students. In most books, a small chapter is devoted to ‘students with special needs’, rather than integrating such thinking into the overall text. The result is that most teachers and university faculty members have little awareness or understanding of the strategies and nuances in working across widely different ability levels in the classroom.

In the midst of this important gap of information and literature, a great debate is in process in general education between proponents of more ‘skill-based’ and ‘child-based’ learning approaches. Research regarding effective practices for all learners in the context of general education is particularly important so that the structure of general education will be shaped by practices that support all children learning together rather than supporting strategies that, by their very nature, sort, classify, and segregate students. To date, rich, authentic instructional strategies have most often been used with children identified as ‘gifted and talented’, and more often in schools that serve children from high socio-economic backgrounds. However, our review of the literature and research holds the thesis that these strategies are the richest for all students at all levels of ability. For students with mild to severe disabilities, research for many years has described the importance of ‘functional’ skills (what the general education literature calls ‘authentic’) where students learn through real activities in the actual locations in which such skills will be used (Brolin, 1993; Falvey, 1988). While this approach has often been used to create regimented ‘community-based training’ that is only for students with disabilities, the underlying ideas are highly consistent with best practices in general education – authentic, project-based, workshop.

Zimelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1998) synthesized the recent work of many educational disciplines in developing best practice standards for teaching and learning. Across content areas and ages, these document consistently indicated a need for less of whole class, teacher-directed instruction involving passive students where instruction is based largely on lectures, textbooks, worksheets, and assessment based on multiple choice or true / false exams, all centering on a memorization of facts rather than an engagement with the subject leading to deep thinking and understanding. In such classrooms, students who cannot ‘keep up’ are sent to special classes. Zimelman and his colleagues instead propose standards for teaching and learning that call for more experiential, hands-on, active learning, deep study of a smaller number of topics, use of real, authentic materials centered in the real lives of students, student choices and democratic involvement, and heterogeneously grouped classes of diverse students.

**We need to understand more deeply and develop strategies for communicating what we know.** Despite these generalizations, there is much more to learn. We need to understand what the proposed strategies really mean in much greater detail and specificity. We need to understand the complex nuances with which teachers engage in multi-level teaching. It is one thing to have a list of strategies that facilitate multi-level teaching. It is another to have a comprehensive picture of how teachers plan and implement instruction on a daily basis, basing their entire teaching process on multi-level teaching strategies. Further, this information has yet to be established solidly in the literature in a way that is clear and that can be used to communicate effectively to students in teacher education programs and to practicing teachers as part of professional development.
TOWARDS AUTHENTIC-MULTI-LEVEL TEACHING

In this section, we describe some beginning work in understanding and articulating how to plan and implement multi-level teaching. Out of these studies and literature review, we have articulated a process that describes the interactions of designing multi-level teaching and adaptations in three dimensions in which teachers spend most of their time – academic, emotional-behavioral, and sensory-physical. The chart above illustrates this framework. In the schools we have studied, and in a broader range of literature, we find that the more that teachers use authentic instructional strategies and intentionally build into these multi-level learning opportunities, the richer the learning environment, the greater progress of the student, the less specialized adaptations are needed, and the more time and energy the teacher has for supporting student learning.

INTERACTIONS OF AUTHENTIC, MULTI-LEVEL LEARNING
AND INDIVIDUALIZED ADAPTATIONS

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<tr>
<th>AUTHENTIC, MULTI-LEVEL LEARNING</th>
<th>ACADEMIC</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIORAL</th>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Authentic instruction</td>
<td>Build community</td>
<td>Heterogeneous grouping.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project learning</td>
<td>Promote caring</td>
<td>Space for wheelchairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Micro-society</td>
<td>Encourage friendships.</td>
<td>Use multiple learning modalities</td>
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<td>Multiple intelligences</td>
<td>Teach social skills and “emotional intelligence”</td>
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<th>ADAPTING</th>
<th>Incorporate drama and art in all subjects.</th>
<th>Identify interests.</th>
<th>Talking computer for a blind student.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced projects</td>
<td>Use drama to teach social studies.</td>
<td>Understand needs &amp; communication.</td>
<td>Rearrange books so student in wheelchair can reach them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use drama to teach social studies.</td>
<td>Provide additional help and support.</td>
<td>Provide positive alternatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide additional help and support.</td>
<td>Read stories to students with reading difficulties.</td>
<td>Peer support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read stories to students with reading difficulties.</td>
<td>Identify interests.</td>
<td>Circles of friends.</td>
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<th>EVALUATE &amp; REVISE</th>
<th>Use circles of friends to build community.</th>
<th>Use talking computers for all students.</th>
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Since 1997, the Whole Schooling Consortium has served to unite teachers, administrators, parents, and university faculty in pursuing child, family, and community centered schooling practices. The Whole Schooling Research Project was funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) from 1998 to 2001. We are in the third and last year of this project. In this study, we have observed in classrooms and interacted with students, teachers, principals, and parents in 16 inclusive schools in Michigan and Wisconsin, seeking to understand the interaction of inclusion with effective instruction and other school practices using the lens of the Five Principles of Whole Schooling.

One of the key findings of this study has been that a complex, dynamic relationship exists between (1) the characteristics of the student; (2) support strategies – ranging from co-teaching

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with general education teachers to peer supports in class and building wide support teams of specialists of various sorts; and (3) authentic, multi-level teaching philosophies and strategies that allow students to function at various levels while learning together. This project has allowed us to see with clarity the importance of multi-level teaching, document initial understandings of strategies useful in multi-level teaching, and field test a framework that organizes complex contextual variables in learning. We have found that this framework, both simple in its basic framework but allowing systematic study of complex interactions, has been very effective in organizing the key variables to help us understand best practices in schooling, teaching, and learning. Consequently, we will use the Whole Schooling framework to guide this project to document and understand contextual variables in the personal lives of children, the community, and the culture of the school and class (Peterson, 2000).

Putting inclusive teaching in context: The Whole Schooling framework. Teaching exists in a context that either supports or hinders effective practice. Understanding the multiple, interactive practices that make up the culture and social milieu of a school are critical if we are to support successful learning of children with substantial ability differences together.

In 1997, faculty and school personnel from Michigan and Wisconsin developed a new framework for school renewal that provides such a holistic look at an effective school for all children, where inclusion of students with special needs is at the center rather than the periphery of the model. Whole Schooling is based on the following FIVE PRINCIPLES (Peterson, Beloin & Gibson, 1997).

1. **Empowerment of citizens in a democracy**: The goal of education is to help students learn to function as effective citizens in a democracy.
2. **Inclusion of all**: All children learn together across culture, ethnicity, language, ability, gender, and age.
3. **Authentic, multi-level teaching**: Teachers design instruction for diverse learners that engages them in active learning in meaningful, real-world activities at multiple levels of ability, providing scaffolds and adaptations as needed.
4. **Building community & supporting learning**: The school uses specialized school and community resources (special education, Title I, gifted education) to build support for students, parents, and teachers; to build community and mutual support within the classroom and school; and to provide proactive supports for students with behavioral challenges.
5. **Partnership**: Educators build genuine collaboration within the school and with families and the community. They engage the school in strengthening the community; and provide guidance to engage students, parents, teachers, and others in decision-making and setting the direction of learning and school activities.

**Strategies for planning multi-level teaching.**

Multi-level teaching involves a set of strategies in which we challenge students at their own level of ability while working with other students of other abilities. When we base our teaching on brain-based learning and thematic, interdisciplinary instruction, our classes provide many opportunities for students to learn at multiple levels. However, we must intentionally design our
instruction to take advantage of these opportunities. (Harris and Graham, 1994; Hopfenberg, Levin, et al, 1993; Tomlinson, 1999).

Teaching at multiple levels simultaneously is a critical part of best practices for several reasons. First, the challenge of working with people of truly diverse abilities is an important ‘complex experience’ all by itself. At an inclusive middle school, we once met with several eighth graders who had been a circle of friends for May, a student with Down syndrome. As these young people shared their experiences with May in class, we were amazed at their critical thinking and problem solving skills. Working with May had provided them with an authentic course of study in critical thinking, management, and social issues, not to mention an opportunity for deep learning and growth.

Second, since students vary dramatically in their abilities, if we do not teach in a way that supports students at their own levels and allows them to grow, we will continue the tradition of excluding students from our class who cannot “keep up.” School becomes a place of competition, winning and losing, a place to fear being excluded, rather than a place of support and refuge. As the brain based research states, learning is literally shifted downward, and the emotional reactions of fear, anger, and attack build. So multi-level teaching is a critical piece of helping all students learn at the highest levels. It is also a critical foundation for including all students together in the classroom (Caine and Caine, 1995).

Vygotsky (1978), the renowned Russian educational theorist and researcher, described an important concept for multi-level teaching, the zone of proximal development—the range of tasks just beyond a student’s present level of ability that she cannot yet perform independently but can perform with the help and guidance of others. This means we take students where they are, provide support and assistance for tasks they could not accomplish on their own, and challenge them always to go to the next level. Thus, teaching where students function at multiple levels of ability does not mean that some have it “easy” and others must work “harder.” Rather, we work to understand each student’s ability and challenge and support them to go to the next, proximal level of development. In Vygotsky’s theory, when students are provided assistance in functioning in that next level, they learn it, moving ahead faster and at higher levels of skill than they could do alone. We will discuss this support, most often called scaffolding, below.

Now contrast this scenario with what is more typical. Traditional schooling has all children learning at the same level, the same pace, and the same material. In such schools, we hear people saying things like: “He just can’t do 8th grade work. I think he should be referred to special education.” In that same class, you would also observe some students who never study at all and yet always get As’. The first student daily feels the message “I cannot learn” and probably believes that by now. The other student thinks “I am so smart I don’t have to work.” These messages will haunt both in later life.

Learning goals and activities.
We find it helpful to think about levels of instruction in three components:
(1) learning goals,
(2) learning activities,
(3) demonstration of learning.

As we plan instruction, we naturally think interactively about learning goals and activities. We are typically asked to first identify learning goals. What are we seeking to help students learn? What are their interests? What are the goals outlined in the school district curriculum.
guide? Are there IEP goals to incorporate? We will develop broad learning goals from our student interests in a particular subject and the school curriculum guide. This gives us a broad starting place.

Following, we suggest a simple process to guide the development of multi-level teaching units and lessons. We suggest using three levels of learning goals and roles in learning activities as a way of outlining ranges of learning and different tasks or roles in the learning process. We can use this process very formally, actually completing the forms, or you can use this process to stimulate your thinking, even simply jotting a few notes to follow. Figure 6-6 illustrates a group learning activity with differing levels of leaning goals, roles or tasks to be performed in the group, and a list of related individual learning activities that can, again, occur at differing ability levels.

**Step one: Identify the learning goals** for a unit that you can reasonably expect of your highest ability student while bearing in mind the interest, characteristics, and even IEP goals of your lower ability students.

**Step two: Design learning activities** that help your highest ability students reach this learning goal by either allowing students to (a) work in groups on meaningful tasks taking roles where they can function at different levels of ability or (b) work alone or in pairs on related tasks at differing levels of ability. Note, we want to be careful, as always, not to create different groups with students having similar levels of ability, ability grouping.

**Step three: Develop additional multi-level learning goals and related tasks / roles** in the learning activity. These additional levels are only approximate, but they help us think about ways we can have students functioning at different levels. If we already know our students, we can think about specific students as we identify these.

**Step four: Consider individual students with special needs.** We will want to check our initial ideas out with the reality of our students. Looking at a student’s IEP using the Curriculum Matrix in Chapter 4, for example, we identify ways the IEP goals can be incorporated into the activity. After awhile, of course, we do this almost automatically. We also think more carefully about our two highest ability students in the class. Thinking of a few students who represent differing ability levels will help us make any needed revisions in our plans to insure the activities work for these students. Sometimes the learning activity simply won’t work well. When this happens, we back up and start over. Gradually, we will begin to understand activities that work that we can modify many different types of ways.

A level one learning goal, designed for students whose abilities are the most limited, would involve the simplest type of learning associated with a concept. Theoretically, there is no bottom level. However, we will most often target the lowest functioning students in our class as we develop these goals, noting that we can always adjust the levels as needed. We examine the amount of reading and writing required, as well as simplify the concepts and complexity. A level two goal focuses on the writing, reading, and reasoning skills achievable by most students in the class. A level three activity extends opportunities for deeper engagement, using more complex activities, thought processes, and concept extensions. However, all levels are related to the same
learning activity and can be done together, without separating students, as illustrated in Figure 6-7.

MULTIPLE LEVELS OF TEACHING GOALS
Example from “Going to the Extremes” – Jason Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIT THEME: Science: Human beings living in extreme conditions – space and deep in the ocean.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING ACTIVITY: small groups conduct a hydroponic experiment (growing plants without soil as scientists are doing in space), record multiple data, and compare results of data from two different sources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Goals</th>
<th>Multi-level roles in the learning activity</th>
<th>Integrated learning Language arts, art, physical education.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teamwork and leadership skills</td>
<td>Methods to record multiple data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>Methods to record multiple data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methods to record multiple data</td>
<td>Compare results of data from two different sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop an analysis report.</td>
<td>Develop an analysis report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2.</td>
<td>Level 2. Plant seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn how to work as a team, plant seeds,</td>
<td>Record plant growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>record growth, and write simple conclusions.</td>
<td>Describe conclusions in journal.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 1.</td>
<td>Level 1. Help set up materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help set up materials, work in a team, and</td>
<td>Draw picture of plant each day.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do basic recording of the responses of the plant.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Read books about plants.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Read chapter books about children in science fairs.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Write scientific reports in writers workshop to share progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Create artwork to demonstrate the growth of the plant.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Create a play acting out the life of a plant.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Explore what people use plants for and how we care for them.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Write songs to familiar tunes about plants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart illustrates levels of learning goals and activities of an interactive science unit through the Jason Project. The chart also illustrates how different subjects may be tied together. (Hittie, 1999).

Many teaching approaches, learning goals, and activities can be used to structure learning at differing levels, in ways that also respond to differing student learning styles, interests, or area of skill development (e.g. art, writing, drama, movement). Structuring the class so that we automatically teach to multiple abilities involves knowing our students’ individual capabilities and strengthening them.

For example, in writing workshop (See Chapter 8), we develop an understanding of the present knowledge of children and increase their writing skills by having them write pieces that are meaningful to them – journals about their daily life, a letter to a parent, or a story about a character in a book. Students learn multiple skills at one time. The teacher keeps good informal notes, and knows that Bobby is working on capital letters and periods and can create stories that
are a few sentences long with a lot of perseverance and effort. In the same classroom, Julie writes nicely edited stories, but needs to tap her creative and descriptive skills. Both students can help the other with editing. Bobby listens for ideas to add to Julie’s story and she helps him edit for spelling (Calkins, 1994).

### Strategies For Multi-Level Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LITERACY</th>
<th>SCIENCE</th>
<th>MATH</th>
<th>SOCIAL STUDIES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choice of books at different levels.</td>
<td>Experiments with different group roles identified.</td>
<td>Math games</td>
<td>Projects that allow students different roles.</td>
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<td>Buddy reading.</td>
<td>Notetaking by graphic organizers like webbing (see Chapter 8)</td>
<td>Learning groups based on student interest and readiness.</td>
<td>Dramatic role play of social and historical situations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read-alouds.</td>
<td>Informational reading at many levels.</td>
<td>Math projects with multiple types of tasks and levels to choose from.</td>
<td>Write songs, poems, stories etc. that show learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual writing goals.</td>
<td>Heterogeneous work groups help each other with assignments</td>
<td>Whole class interest related community projects.</td>
<td>Involve local people with interviews, visits, and projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stick-figure drawing to write a story line</td>
<td>Art to convey meaning.</td>
<td>Heterogeneous practice groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual spelling lists.</td>
<td>Choice of inquiry project at differing ability levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing poetry</td>
<td>Partial participation in learning activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperative learning groups (with differing levels of activities to contribute to the total group).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The same idea works with *reading workshop*. This teacher knows what is a “Just Right” book for each student, what is too easy, and what is too hard. The key to making this work, is that she teaches her students strategies to make appropriate choices. They do not depend on her to decide for them. In reading, they follow the five finger rule. If you want to read a book, read the first page. Put one finger up every time you miss a word. If you miss 2-4 it is just right. More than four is too hard right now (maybe later) and missing none is too easy. Children can learn how to pick work that is challenging and yet lets them feel successful if they are given parameters. With the classroom’s diverse abilities, the teacher does not have time to choose for
them, and so they learn a needed skill. Do they get specific instruction on strategies and skills? Of course. They learn them in small groups or individual conferences in the context of real work.

**TRACKING INDIVIDUAL CHOICE PROJECTS**

- Large board/poster with sections representing different choices. The sections can be the steps of a research project, an experiment, the writing process etc...Each student has a clothespin with their name on it that they put by the section they are working on. Teacher can tell at a glance who is working on what.
- Student writes choices on sticky note or label sticker that teacher attaches to board or in student section in a notebook. Teacher keeps own notes on stickies/labels as walk around and interact with groups to add later.
- Teacher has table with different steps of project listed and each student’s name in a row. Teacher checks off, highlights, or makes short notations in each box as student completes.
- Large binder for each subject or one large project binder where each student has a section. This section contains pretests, posttests, project plans, reading contracts on when individual books will be completed, contracts for the amount of work for the whole cardmarking in a subject, contracts in writing pieces, and copies of graded rubrics on these projects.
- Binders can also be organized by subjects, with tables for each project/assignment being kept in the appropriate section.

Other multi-level teaching strategies include:

- **Conduct individual reading, writing, and spelling conferences** during workshop time. This keeps the teacher focused on what students are learning, helps group children for mini-lessons on specific skills, and allows time for notetaking about students’ progress, strategies, and interests (Graves, 1994; Tomlinson, 1999; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998).

- **Have children keep journals** in which they record their thinking about books and school topics. Use this writing to facilitate discussion groups. This provides insight into their learning and helps them think about what they are reading.

- **Give homework projects** related to what the children are learning and that can be done at multiple levels. For example, students may interview a parent about their childhood and write a report about it to share in class.

- **Foster a community where children are expected to help each other.** They begin to understand that in a real community they both increase their own skills and encourage everyone to do well. (See Chapter 11 for a further exploration of how to do this.)

- **Regularly have students choose a question to research** about the current topic. Teach them to find material at their level and use it to answer their questions. This type of learning can be done all together at many levels.

- **Group students in many different ways** for lessons so that they do not know when you are grouping by ability (topics, count off, particular skill, guided reading group). *Group heterogeneously* most of the time.

- **Gear read alouds to higher reading levels**, while having students share novels with one following words with their finger.
• *Students meet in groups to share* what they are reading about. This invites conversation no matter what their reading level.

• *Teach topics in themes* so that different children can choose different parts on which to work. Therefore they are all working on a related topic at their own level.

• *Teach students to use mind-mapping* to organize information and take notes. Mind-mapping is like webbing, only it uses mostly colorful pictures and a few key words. Since we know color stimulates the brain, students remember information better. Each child can do this at their own level.

**Demonstrating Learning.**

When we look at ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding, it again helps to structure choices in several levels. While it is important for students to work at appropriate levels, it is also important that they choose how they will participate or demonstrate their knowledge. In Chapter 8 we will discuss a range of strategies for demonstrating learning. What is important to understand here is that simply giving the traditional multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or true-false test is ineffective assessment for *any* student (Herman, Aschbacher & Winters, 1992; Tomlinson, 1999; Wolf, 1989; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998). Such tests may assess short-term memorization of facts but cannot demonstrate meaningful understanding of concepts, issues, or ideas. Rather, most effective assessment is based on the student’s production of authentic learning activities – reading real books at his or her own level, producing a range of materials (drawing, building a model, writing a song or reflective poem) that demonstrate deep understanding of content, writing real stories, or participating in a student developed play about a historical event. All these authentic assessment strategies allow students to demonstrate learning at their level without creating different tests for every child in our class (Armstrong, 1995; Neill, Bursh, Schaeffer, Thall, Yohe & Zappardino, 1995; Tomlinson, 1999; Wolf, 1989; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998).

Learning to set limits is a process that every person must be taught. While students choose, they need us as teachers to follow up. Many teachers have systems for tracking student choices for different activities or projects. One teacher showed us a notebook with a tab for each child. In their section, a contract would be filled out for each book, writing assignment, or project on when and how it would be completed. Other systems we have seen teachers using are listed above.

When teaching using multiple levels, we must assess students continually, so we know if they are being challenged at their level of success (Armstrong, 1995). If we do not know that all students are being challenged, then we do not know if they are all learning. When students are making a choice that is too easy or too hard, we discuss it with them. Does it stretch their abilities? Are they finishing too quickly? If they decide a new choice is in order, then we commend them for thinking it through. Given the proper support, students often make good choices.

**Avoiding Pitfalls.**

We need to be careful to avoid several traps we see evident as teachers work towards multi-level teaching. These problems include: creating levels that lock students in, limiting the variety
of abilities that can be included in a lesson, or creating ability-based structures that re-create stigma and segregation within the classroom.

Let’s first talk about problems we’ve seen in which students have been locked rigidly into specific ability levels. Any level planning is simply a template that changes as students grow and we better understand their abilities. It is also vital that we teach children to choose their own developmentally appropriate work that stretches their thinking. When we provide different levels of an activity, we do not pre-select and assign them to an ability level. They will make mistakes that we will need to discuss, but that is all part of the learning process.

Some teachers do, in fact, lock students in and limit their abilities, even while they are seeking to teach at multiple levels, creating elaborate leveling and management systems for different subject areas. One teacher codes books by a colored sticker and assigns students their color to read. Another teacher uses blocks with different activities on each face, and assigns children a particular face (Kronberg, 1999). One teacher gives her children three choices of activities, the A group, B group, and C group. Each represents the highest grade that child could get, even if the work was at their appropriate level (Nunley, 1998). In all of these activities, the student has no knowledge of how to choose appropriate work when the teacher is unavailable, nor do they have strategies for completing work that is more difficult by relying on those around them.

Another common mistake that we have seen, particularly in math, is to define providing multiple levels as simply giving more or fewer problems on the same worksheet. It is important to remember that different quantities of the same work is not necessarily multi-level teaching. Schum, Vaughn, & Leavell, (1994) suggest a pyramid for three levels of planning: (1) what all students should learn; (2) most but not all students will learn, and (3) what some students will learn (the highest level and the top of the pyramid). This approach helps us differentiate learning for students with higher abilities. However, use of this strategy may be problematic for inclusive teaching with students with severe disabilities depending upon how what “all” students should learn is defined. If, for example, teachers routinely identify learning targets that are far beyond the capabilities of a student with severe disabilities, what is to be done? At worst, this could easily result in the general education classroom being seen as inappropriate for this student. At best, the process simply provides no guidance with this student. You will notice that in our Multi-level Lesson Planning approach (Figure 6-6), we too identify 3 levels. However, instead of specifying the lowest level as what all students will learn, we suggest simply that this is the lowest level of ability for which we are targeting the lesson, a level which can be adjusted as we need.

As we design multi-level instruction (and adaptations), we also must be careful not to develop automatic and stereotypical approaches based on disability categories – or any other label applied to people. There is no formula. Each student is truly unique and our planning multi-level instructional adaptations will be unique for each student. One teacher described her thinking about this process in the following way:

The children in my class are individuals and I treat them as such. Because I have a limited time, I teach them the topics we are covering as a group. Where does the individualization come in? In letting those who master a topic explore it to the next level, in letting them teach and challenge each other. For children who struggle with a particular topic, it comes in spending more time one-on-one. The children in my class have different learning styles.
Some oral, some visual, some kinesthetic. I try to gear my lessons to the styles of different learners. The children possess different types of intelligence. I try to make use of those too (Seaman, 1999).

The Meaning of Fair.

How do we handle the situation when we have different expectations for different students, when one student may get an “A” for work that is clearly not as sophisticated as the work that earns a “C” for another student? How do we respond when some students turn in very sophisticated and complex projects and another student only turns in a simple drawing? What about when one student reads three large chapter books and another three simple picture books? How do we explain this to students and parents? Some people will say that this is not fair.

We’d like to illustrate a point with a story. We go to the playground and watch the children playing baseball. To our surprise we see a student in a wheelchair at the batters box. We’ve heard of students with disabilities being involved with typical children in sports and are interested in seeing how they handle this. He hits the ball over first base and begins wheeling as fast as he can go. He manages to get to first base before the ball is thrown. Yet the umpire shouts “Out!!” The crowd yells in anger. The umpire explains, “He is supposed to run to first base. He used a wheelchair. That is not fair.”

This is obviously not a true story. Yet we think it illustrates the point. Using his wheelchair was not unfair at all. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The wheelchair helped this child perform more equally. We can state a simple guiding principle about fairness: Fairness is not about providing the same thing but about providing what each student needs. We can think of other obvious examples. When people who are blind use braille, tape recorders, or readers, they are engaging in a task in a different way, that helps equalize their opportunity; similarly when people who are deaf use sign language interpreters, or when Juan, a student who speaks Spanish, has texts in Spanish to read in class.

In fact, if we provide the same curriculum and expectations to all people despite their different intelligences, learning styles, and ability levels, this is unfair (Tomlinson, 1999; Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998). However, this concept has to be taught to students. They have to be shown how they all have different strengths, discuss how they learn things at different rates, and know that fair means getting what they need. One teacher that we talked with explained that she grades her 6–8 graders on two things: 1. How much effort did they put into their work? 2. Can they show growth in their learning? (Schiller, 1998). This formula allows students to work together successfully, while being graded at their abilities. However, this cannot be something that is hidden from students. It must be discussed and understood by all.

Multi-level teaching: Implications and next steps.

In this document we have attempted to review the state-of-the-art related to the need for and art of multi-level teaching, providing some beginning suggestions to move us ahead. Schools have for so long functioned as one-level fits all institutions that making this shift towards supporting children learning together at different levels has many challenges, and many opportunities. The greatest possibilities are from teachers who already are engaging in multi-level teaching without necessarily calling it that. We need to learn from them, better articulate
how this is done, better integrate multi-level teaching strategies into many locations – school improvement planning, teacher education, district accountability processes, school accreditation. Many of the greatest challenges relate to present efforts to measure all learning at literally one level based on standardized testing, a push spurred by the recent passage of the amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We hope that this paper provides us a beginning conceptual and philosophical foundation to be able to teach all children well, beginning at what they know, providing support to move to the next level of learning, insuring that all children are included in the learning community and that no child has to leave because they don’t “fit”.
SEEING MULTI-LEVEL INSTRUCTION
IN THE CLASSROOM

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Authentic, Multi-Level Teaching: Understanding Best Practices for All

Seeing Multi-Level Instruction
In The Classroom
Celia Oyler

Directions: Following is a set of behaviors and strategies often observed in effective multi-level classrooms. You might use these descriptors to help you think about your own teaching or as a guide to observing in another teacher’s classroom.

Theories for Multilevel Instruction  Multilevel curriculum selection, curriculum overlapping, differentiating instruction, culturally relevant pedagogy, multiple intelligences theory.

Classroom Marker # 1 There are participation structures outside the IRE
- Teacher Initiates
- Student Responds
- Teacher Evaluates

Classroom Marker # 2 Students are doing:
- Different things at the same time or
- The same thing at the same time, but are meeting different goals

Classroom Marker # 3 Skills instruction is targeted, not scatter-shot
- Customized skill groups within the same content area
- Assessment is on-going
- Grouping membership shifts in relation to assessment

Classroom Marker # 4 Students have visible ownership and investment in classroom processes. They:
- Have choices
- Make decisions
- Expand the task
- Extend the task
- Demonstrate deliberateness

Classroom Marker # 5 Classroom content connects with students’ lives. Students:
- Bring in outside resources
- See themselves reflected in the pictures, in the stories, and in the problems

Classroom Marker # 6 Students interact directly with each other. They:
- Talk to each other without going through the teacher
- Give each other ideas about the content
- Give each other feedback about the process

Classroom Marker # 7 There are multiple ways to gain knowledge.
- Written materials are at a variety of levels
- There are materials with visual cues related to the content
- There are opportunities to move and perform
Classroom Marker # 8 There are multiple ways to demonstrate and express knowledge.

- Visual
- Performative
- Linguistic
- Musical

Classroom Marker # 9 Students bring in their prior knowledge and direct experience when teachers . . .

- Students are learning content that relates to and deals with real-life issues
- First elicit what students’ prior knowledge is
- Build a collective classroom knowledge base using these varied prior experiences

Classroom Marker # 10 Students are working on real-life tasks.

- Students are learning genres that are used in the real world
- Teachers ask authentic questions, not pseudo-questions

Classroom Marker # 11 Students are in flexible groups.

- Interest groups
- Friendship groups
- Random groups
- Readiness groups
- Learning profile groups
- Partners

Classroom Marker # 12 Membership in these flexible groups changes regularly. Membership changes in relation to . . .

- Task
- Content
- Group process

Classroom Marker # 13 There is much interaction between the classroom and the community

- People from the community share their knowledge, talents, questions, and skills with students in the classroom
- Students journey into the community to investigate

Classroom Marker # 14 Students are asking lots of questions and investigating the answers.

- Lessons start with students’ questions
- Students’ work displays their collective answers to their questions

Classroom Marker # 15 Students play a major role in documenting their learning. Students . . .

- Keep track of materials
- Keep track of their progress on tasks
- Evaluate their own work
- Set goals for themselves which they share publicly
DIRECTIONS:
1. Identify a thematic lesson that can integrate various disciplines (math, language, reading, physical education, art, etc.). Brainstorm key learning goals. Indicate differing levels of learning related to the unit.
2. List a series of learning activities that would seem to be fun, engaging ways to learn.
3. Check how the multiple intelligences are addressed across activities. Revise your activities if the coverage is not good.
4. Note how each activity will allow students to function at their own level of ability challenge.

THEMATIC UNIT

LEARNING GOALS FOR THE UNIT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall theme and goal</th>
<th>Level 1 (Highest)</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3 (Lowest)</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

LEARNING ACTIVITIES and Multi-level / Multiple intelligences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>MULTI-LEVEL STRATEGIES</th>
<th>Ling</th>
<th>Log-mth</th>
<th>Spatia l</th>
<th>Bod-Kin</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Inter-persnl</th>
<th>Intra-persnl</th>
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Authentic, Multi-Level Teaching: Understanding Best Practices for All
### ADAPTING FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Student:</th>
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Network for Inclusive Schooling

Creating positive change towards inclusive education for All.

http://www.coe.wayne.edu/WSC.html
REFERENCES


Authentic, Multi-Level Teaching: Understanding Best Practices for All  Page 25
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Seamann, B. (1999). Personal communication. MALKaraki@prodigy.net


Teaching a multilevel ESL class is no picnic. How can you get everyone involved in your lessons, doing activities and learning English at once? Try this method! The Struggles of Multilevel ESL Classes. If you have ever been assigned an all-levels class, you already know that teaching beginners, advanced students and everyone in between at the same time is a challenge. You can teach to the middle, like many teachers do, but your advanced students will be bored while your beginners will be completely lost. Finding activities that appeal to students all along the skill spectrum is challenging no matter what. Looking for a one-stop shop for authentic videos for all levels of ESL students? Then you’ll love FluentU!