

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated the experiences of incorporating differentiated instruction into an inclusive high school Chemistry classroom. The study was completed in a high school containing approximately 1000 students in the northeastern United States. Seventeen students in grades ten and eleven participated in the study. Some of the students were classified and had Individualized Education Plans. Methods of gathering data included teacher observation, student surveys, informal and formal student interviews, and student work. The students participated in activities that were primarily differentiated according to their learning profile and readiness. Findings suggest that scaffolding is an essential part of classroom instruction for all students. Furthermore, students are likely to have a positive affect when teachers create a positive and caring learning environment. Differentiating instruction according to student profile may also increase academic achievement. Teachers may need to use multiple resources at their disposal, however, to become familiar with all learners in the classroom. Input from students may lead to changes in classroom practice that result in greater student success. Assessing student readiness is clearly crucial when designing meaningful instruction, and a strong collaborative partnership between classroom teacher and special educator is essential to provide support for all learners. Such support may increase student interest in a topic, and, in turn, student engagement.