

LESSON VARIATIONS THAT INCREASE CHALLENGE

Adapted from 40 Lesson Variations that Increase Challenge
(KINGORE, 2007, *REACHING ALL LEARNERS: MAKING DIFFERENTIATION WORK*)

To ensure that all students experience continuous learning, teachers must figure out ways for advanced students to integrate targeted skills and concepts with greater depth and complexity. Consider this list of variations for students who would benefit from an increased level of challenge. Assume the role of coach and facilitator more than the dispenser of knowledge and ensure that all students experience feedback, encouragement, and respect from a teacher and peers.

- 1.** Use strategies geared to the instructional needs of advanced and gifted students, including curriculum compacting, tiering, complex content, and appropriate rate of learning. To accommodate how advanced students learn best, proceed at a faster pace of instruction with minimum guided practice and repetition. Use Quick Sketch and Think Alouds to assess students' learning process during instruction.
- 2.** Use Process Letters and A & E Cards to efficiently assess and document understanding after instruction.
- 3.** Use a Socratic Seminar approach that guides students to examine opinions or ideas logically through open-ended and probing questions that elicit students' perceptions and substantiation of their thinking.
- 4.** Provide frequent opportunities for students to explore authentic text, such as researching related historical speeches instead of just reading an overview of a historical event. Use biographies and autobiographies as life models of eminent people in students' fields of interest.
- 5.** Adapt the content through themes or what Erickson (2007) refers to as conceptual lenses to engage students' personal intellect, extend their thinking, and deepen understanding. Sample conceptual lenses include *patterns, conflict, change, power, influences, origins, and interactions*. To promote a deeper, conceptual level of understanding, a teacher might switch from asking students to analyze the actions of the antagonist in the novel to asking: *How is change both a cause and an effect in fiction and nonfiction?*
- 6.** Immerse students in advanced levels of vocabulary and word study that incorporate academic vocabulary in specific contexts. Use affixes and roots in meaningful contexts to exponentially increase vocabulary. Use the Topic Talk and Word Associations strategies to engage vocabulary applications.
- 7.** Use rubrics that specify abstract thinking, complexity, and depth beyond grade-level skills so students envision how to continue learning and have specific targets that stimulate advance responses. Demonstrate examples of superior work in order to provide concrete models of advanced products and challenge students to ever-increasing levels of excellence.
- 8.** Require students to complete a rubric self-assessing their work before turning it in for a teacher's evaluation. Self-assessment encourages students to accept greater responsibility for their learning and may motivate higher achievement.
- 9.** Encourage student record-keeping. Ensure that students maintain records of their progress and personal changes as learners rather than gauge their results through comparisons with grade-level peers. Provide product captions that students complete to document advanced achievement and complex thinking.
- 10.** Organize buddies of intellectual peers to pursue advanced content in similar interests. Allow intellectual peers to work together on advanced level products, such as creating summaries of a concept but omitting three-six key words or phrases. Student pairs exchange and complete the summaries to review key ideas through the perception of others.