

Every day, teachers are faced with a number of different challenges in their classrooms—how do you think you will handle meeting the needs of all your students? What will you do specifically to support them?

On the day when  
the weight deadens  
on your shoulders  
and you stumble,  
may the clay dance  
to balance you.  
-- John O'Donohue

The situation in each classroom is different. Although there exist similarities between many, there are no general rules applicable to all educational environments. Being a teacher is HARD. Whether you're just starting or have taught for decades, teachers everywhere in the world are faced with similar challenges. The obstacles you as a teacher encounter can arise from many directions: with students, parents, administrators, or with the many roles and responsibilities you have to maintain. Schools share the mission of helping every student reach his or her full potential. However, teachers often find students in a class showing much diversity in their needs and interests. Students differ a lot in their motivation, prior knowledge and skills, learning styles, multiple intelligences, interests and backgrounds. To tap each student's potential, teachers need to value each student as an individual capable of making progress. Embracing learner diversity is therefore an important direction in curriculum development.

Meeting the needs of all students starts with making an awareness of who we make Other -- who we see as fundamentally different from us, who we've closed off our hearts to. For some, those others might be members of a specific ethnic or racial group; they might be recent immigrants who don't speak English, or they might be transgender children or homeless children or extremely high energy boys. Meeting the needs of all students starts with having hard conversations with ourselves about our own biases.

In order to respond to the needs of each student, it's necessary to take into account the learning capacities, social situations, and differences in culture, linguistics, and physical and mental health. The concept of attention to diversity is very broad and addresses the activities of the entire educational system, the functioning of schools, even the most concrete interventions of teachers in their classrooms. Therefore, it is necessary to attend to the needs of each individual, which can be a rather difficult and laborious task when you're teaching an entire group. Also it is very common to fall into the trap of focusing your efforts only on the students whose needs are the most visible or whose demands are directly related to the attention to the teacher. This allows shy, introverted, or more conservative students to go unnoticed.

As a teacher, one should strive to shift from teacher-as-lecturer to teacher-as-facilitator which will help in using the classroom time in a better way, and student-teacher interactions. Students can feel as though the teacher is really present in the teaching, and not just imparting test answers. Students can also have a pride of achievement in each goal met, because they helped to set those goals in the first place. The students learn better when they engage with material in multiple ways: Lessons that involve writing, speaking, drawing, and listening, for example, give students four opportunities to deepen their understanding of the work. As Lee S. Shulman, rightly said, "teachers need to understand subject matter deeply and flexibly so that they can help students create useful cognitive maps, relate ideas to one another, and address misconceptions. Teachers need to see how ideas connect across fields and to everyday life."

To handle the needs of the students and differences, there is no one-size-fits-all approach and strategy but one of the important strategy is to plan lessons that are accessible to a wide range of students and that utilize language-focused instruction. The next important thing is teachers' instructions, to be able to provide 'Quality instruction' and to respond appropriately and flexibly to students' different needs. To be able to adjust teaching strategies to support individual students' learning. The diverse needs can be met through strategic curriculum planning, quality instruction and appropriate assessments. The different teaching strategies which are flexibly used based on students' specific needs like, explicit teaching of language skills, teachers' quality demonstrations, use of graphic organisers (e.g. story map, five senses), adjusting the level of difficulty of input in a progressive manner, multi-sensory teaching, use of interesting content to engage unmotivated students, experiential learning, differentiated language tasks, assigning different roles to students with different needs in activities, thinking aloud to understand the thinking process in reading, etc. The assessments like the use of success criteria, alternative assessments, differentiated internal examination papers, etc. It all depends on the teachers on how they can help each student make improvement through assessment for learning.

Different strategies to handle the needs of the students are as follows:

1. Giving students an active role in the pre-reading stage to promote active engagement.	2. Explicit teaching of reading strategies and strategy training.
3. Guiding students to think when reading through sentences.	4. Making meaningful and explicit connections between reading and writing to facilitate learning.
5. Employing a wide range of activities to cater for multiple intelligences, different learning styles and specific learning needs.	6. Careful selection and sequence of learning activities to provide better platform through backward planning.
7. Using assessment data to inform teaching and learning.	8. Make use of experiential learning to maximise different students' potential.
9. Design differentiated classroom tasks to meet the needs of students with different starting points.	10. Include differentiation in the examination papers by designing easy and difficult parts as options for students with different language abilities.
11. Provide different success criteria for assessing different students' performance.	12. Effective use of assignments can enhance and consolidate classroom learning and teaching (develop knowledge, skills and attitudes, foster students' ability and self-discipline to work independently).

Successful teaching requires two elements: students' understanding and engagement and to conclude, "The good teacher communicates a deep regard for students' lives, a regard infused with unblinking attention, respect, even awe. An engaged teacher begins with the belief that each student is unique, each the one and only who will ever trod the earth, each worthy of a certain reverence. Regard extends, importantly, to an insistence that students have access to the tools with which to negotiate and transform the world. Love for students just as they are—without any drive or advance toward a future—is false love, enervating and disabling (Ayres, Klonsky, & Lyon, 2000, pp. 2–3)"

Always remember that what works for one student may not work for another and what worked at one point in time may lose its effectiveness over time. This is why it is so significant to evaluate your teaching and your students' learning continually. Proper evaluations will help you know whether your accommodations and modifications are valid or not. During this evaluation, it's necessary to solicit and consider students feedback. It's also great to use colleagues as the valuable resources they are. Keep in mind, the ultimate goal of the instructional accommodations is to make the learning process more comfortable for the students. Put forth the time and effort necessary to carefully select effective accommodations, and one will observe how these small changes can make a world of difference! "Motivation, self-concept, and socioeconomic skills can make learning easier or impossible."