

GIVE OPTIONS RATHER THAN A SET OUTCOME

By providing your students with a rubric and the freedom to produce their own end product, they will surprise you with how creative they can be! This approach prepares our students for life in the real-world office place where projects are more open-ended with professional freedom.

ALLOW FOR WAIT TIME

One of the most difficult aspects of supervising an arts integrated lesson is providing additional wait time, allowing students to productively struggle, and ignoring the instinct to suggest a given strategy. When this happens, remind your students of the tools that they have around the classroom. Encourage them to communicate their ideas or questions to a partner. However, try to avoid jumping in with guided assistance or additional prompting the moment your students begin to struggle. Having a discussion with your class afterwards about the challenges they faced and what they liked about this type of lesson can help them process it as they may be new to this arts integrated approach.

MAKE IT CONCRETE, NOT ABSTRACT

Many students with disabilities, especially those with autism, tend to struggle with figurative language. For example, when reading lyrics to a song, several of the students may be confused by figurative phrases like “he was as slow as a turtle”. Try to preview abstract concepts and figurative language in the lessons prior to using them with your students.

EXPERIMENT WITH USING THINKING MAPS

During the initial planning stage of a project, many students need to organize their thoughts, arrange their reading notes, and visualize the bigger picture. This is especially true for students who have a difficult time with inferential reasoning. Thinking maps and graphic organizers can help bridge this divide. A flow map (similar to the step by step boxes of a cartoon) can help students recognize or plan out the steps to an experiment or research project.

ALIGN STUDENT IEP's & ACCOMMODATIONS WITH YOUR LESSONS

The students' IEPs (Individualized Education Plan) may have goals in math, reading foundational skills, reading comprehension, written language, behavior/self management, and social/emotional (among others) that could provide useful information for student groupings and the focus of your lesson. For instance, you may need to pre-teach vocabulary, scaffold and model any writing, integrate a math or ELA strategy, purposefully group students for self-management, and/or differentiate any articles based on reading level or provide a text-to-speech option on the computer for students who are reading significantly below grade level. Check with the special educator if you need a copy of any student's IEP, have any questions, and/or would like to collaborate on planning an upcoming lesson.