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Kathy Beasley  
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AN ANALYSIS OF SPECIALIZED READING INSTRUCTION IN HIGH SCHOOL  
ENGLISH CLASSES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES INCLUDED IN GENERAL  
EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy, at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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## Abstract

An Analysis of Specialized Reading Instruction in High School English Classes for Students with Disabilities Included In General Education

By Kathy Rosvold Beasley, M.Ed.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2010.

Major Director: Dr. Whitney H. Sherman  
Associate Professor, School of Education

This study is a qualitative case study that examined and analyzed the instructional strategies implemented by high school English teachers when teaching reading to students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Ten teachers who teach high school English on collaborative teams made up of a general and a special educator participated in the study. The participants taught at a comprehensive high school that is one of ten high schools in a large school division. Two observations of each team were carried out to examine how teachers differentiate instruction. Team interviews were conducted to gain information about how teachers use data on student readiness, interests, and learning profiles to plan, implement, and assess the learning of their students.

More students with disabilities are receiving their education in inclusive settings so that they have greater access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment.

Differentiating instruction is being implemented by teachers so that they can meet the unique needs of their students. Results of previous studies have found that students have had more opportunities for success on general education expectations when teachers implemented elements of differentiation. These studies focused on examining single elements of differentiation including student readiness, interests, learning profiles, content, process, or products. This study focused on how teachers plan for, implement, and assess their students by implementing the differentiation framework in inclusive high school English classes.

The results of this study suggest that teaching teams made up of a general and special educator can work collaboratively together to provide instruction to all of their students including those with disabilities. Teachers use data to determine their students' levels of readiness, interest, and learning profiles to design lessons that meet the unique needs of their learners. The participants planned their instruction in their collaborative English classes using student readiness, interest, and learning profile data, but emphasized the beneficial aspects of planning instruction based on students' interest. Teachers said that students were highly motivated to participate in class and complete assignments when activities were based upon student interest.

The study's results also indicate that the role of building level administrators was vital in the collaborative process. The participants discussed how the principal's leadership paved the way for teachers to access data on their students and allowed for teams to have joint planning periods, focused special educators on teaching one content area of instruction, provided opportunities for teams to have input in their longevity, and encouraged teacher participation in personnel decisions regarding changes in team membership.