**2.5 Differentiation**

Candidates model and facilitate the design and implementation of technology-enhanced learning experiences making appropriate use of differentiation, including adjusting content, process, product, and learning environment based upon an analysis of learner characteristics, including readiness levels, interest, and personal goals.

Reflection

The English Language Learner (ELL) Lesson was completed to showcase my ability to a create and implement a lesson based on content, process, product, and or learning environment base on the unique characteristic of English Language Learners (ELL). The ELL artifact demonstrates the International Society for Technology in Education’s (ISTE) Essential Condition of Equitable Access- “Robust and reliable access to current and emerging technologies, digital resources, and connectivity for all students, teachers, staff, and school leaders” (Williamson an d Redish, 2009, p.12). Additionally, Student-Centered Learning- “Use of technology to facilitate engaging approaches to learning” (Williamson an d Redish, 2009, p.13) were also addressed while developing this artifact.

Standard 2.5 Differentiation outlines the criteria required to model and facilitate the design and implementation of technology-enhanced learning experiences making appropriate use of differentiation, including adjusting content, process, product, and learning environment based upon an analysis of learner characteristics, including readiness levels, interest, and personal goals. I worked with one English Language Learner over the course of five days, for one hour each day. The student I chose was Dylan (not his real name). At the time of this experience, Dylan was at a World-class Instructional design and Assessment (WIDA) Level 2 in language acquisition. Additionally, Dylan’s Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) or social language was more advance than his Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) or academic language. This is not uncommon for ELL students. Incidentally, teachers often misinterpret an ELL’s social language (BICS) development as the students instructional or academic language development (CALP). During the five days of instruction with Dylan, I incorporated the following strategies: asked questions; color coded information; gestured and pointed; nodded and smiled; provided appropriate wait time for the student’s responses and completion of tasks; used digital tools to display visuals; show videos; provide background information; and read and reread all text. Dylan liked Science and Music, so I focused on Science, specifically animals (and plants) because he showed an interest in animals earlier in the year. When given free time or student choice, Dylan usually gravitated towards activities that involved interacting with animals- especially the one that made me cringe, like reptiles and insects. Although Dylan and I had previously established a trusting rapport, I took things slowly and relied on the cues from Dylan, verbal, non-verbal, body language, affect, and overall interest in the activities.

Completing this assignment was meaningful because I needed to account for how to address the unique characteristics for a specific student population- student whose first or primary language is other than English. Dylan and his family are native Spanish speakers and they can communicate in English with appropriate wait time, artifacts, or visuals. I definitely would have liked to have included more digital tools to make the encounters with Dylan more authentic and more engaging. Students like Dylan would benefit from using technology to compensate for the language divide. It would probably also help with language fatigue that many ELL students encounter during the instructional day. Roblyer and Doering (2013) points out several challenges when working with diverse learners like Dylan who are learning English as a second or third language (p. 270). “Often when students experience literacy problems at a young age, they continue to have reading difficulties throughout their schooling” (Roblyer and Doering, 2013, p. 270). Incorporating digital tools or “a specialized word processor specially designed with features that support poor writers” or ELL students can make a world of difference for students who need consistent differentiation based on content, process, product, and or learning environment.

This experience made me more aware of students from diverse populations. When students are identified as having a disability, often educators may think (or wonder if) said students are incapable of engaging in activities that that are not affected by her or his disability. When students have a learning disability, it does not mean that those students are incapable of drawing, singing or excelling in sports. The impact on school improvement may lie in the expectations of the educators in charge of exposing students to appropriate, authentic, engaging learning experiences. We can assess school improvement based on the lessons that are designed for students with diverse or unique needs. Improved academic scores are the best indicator that students are receiving appropriate differentiation of material. Finally, providing professional development (PD) for all staff on how to increase the rigor for students in diverse learning subgroups is something that a school has control over, and administrators can assess the effectiveness of the PD through surveys and questionnaires.