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## Accommodating Diversity in Lancaster PA

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“How do you accommodate diversity in the classroom?” I was first expected to respond to this question in my Educational Diversity class as an undergraduate student at Dickinson College. At that time, I didn’t realize how often I would be asked this question, and how my approach to it would evolve. While sitting in class at Dickinson, I had no qualms about equal acceptance and opportunity for students of all backgrounds. In fact, I relished in the characteristics of students of various cultures (to some of which I had been exposed, some I had not) and enjoyed reading about what contributions these students could make to the school environment. I couldn’t wait to nurture the expression of various perspectives in my classroom. Diversity continued to be an underlying theme throughout my undergraduate experience, and once I began looking for a teaching position, I was asked that familiar question over and over again, “How do you accommodate diversity in the classroom?” Through my schooling and student teaching experiences, I had learned that diversity does not address race and culture exclusively, but it also attends to issues of multiple intelligences and the diverse ways in which students learn. As a third-year French teacher in suburban Lancaster County, PA (which, by the way, has a significant immigrant population, despite its stereotyped rural, Amish image), I find myself facing the challenges of addressing individual diversity of learning styles on a daily basis. Although I am only 8 years older than some of my students, I see a huge rift between how I was taught and how they need to be taught. This paradigm shift is undoubtedly influenced by the exponential advances in technology that have occurred since I was in high school, as students face distractions from iPods, Instant Messaging, text messaging, TiVo, etc. Because they’re accustomed to constant communication and stimulation, students need to be actively engaged in their learning. This evolution in teaching and learning has forced me to think about my personal experience as a student and to create new assessment methods that accurately reflect the diverse abilities of my students. As world language teachers, we are lucky to have so many facets of student learning to observe—speaking, writing, listening, reading, and cultural analysis. If we design our assessments to allow students of all learning styles to demonstrate their comprehension of language and culture, then we are encouraging success through diversity. When I present my syllabus and class expectations at the beginning of the year, I inform students that their major assessments will vary in form from chapter to chapter. While one chapter’s material may be tested through a tradi-

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tional pencil and paper test, the next may be through a project (either group and/or individual). The first major assessment for my level two students this year measured their ability to use reflexive verbs in the context of their morning routine (see *rubric*). I have students work in groups of four to develop a script and film a typical morning at their house. They record what happens between the time they wake up and the time they leave for school, narrating the actions along the way. Students are instructed to vary narrators/perspectives, so that all subject pronouns/verb forms are used. Students earn a group grade for the visual component (the taped skit), since it is a group effort, but are also afforded the opportunity for individual achievement through their submission of a hand-written script. I require every student to submit a hand-written copy of the script of their skit, so that I am certain that one student didn't type the script and simply print out a copy for each student. I explain to my classes that the responsibility rests on them to check for spelling, verb agreement, adjective agreement, and so on. I have found that students who prefer traditional, written assessments still enjoy this project because they have the opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills. At the same time, students who express themselves well orally (especially native speakers and heritage language learners) achieve success, as they share their oral abilities, and for some, flaunt their flare for the dramatic. Every year that I've assigned this project, I've found that the recorded skits become more and more aesthetically pleasing, as students have access to advanced editing software. I have had several students who have expressed interest in pursuing careers in filmmaking, and their talents are clearly observed through their work on this project. I recognize that informal assessments can provide as much feedback on student learning as formal assessments. As with my formal assessments, I allow for students to express themselves through diverse means of informal assessment. One activity that I enjoy monitoring is a vocabulary activity wherein I have students work in pairs to sculpt representations of their new vocabulary from Play-Doh. Students take turns molding the objects and guessing what the object being molded is. I can ascertain who is having difficulty producing words and who is achieving success. Tactile learners benefit from the hands-on nature of this activity, and oral learners can demonstrate their strengths. It is a very entertaining, amusing form of informal assessment both for students and for me!

### **A student model “un contrôle de sécurité.”**

In order to determine how well I am meeting students' diverse needs, I administer student feedback surveys throughout the course of the year. This year, I distributed the first survey a month into the school year, several days before our annual Parents' Night. I compiled the results to share with parents. I explained to parents that while the data seemed to contradict itself in terms of the types of activities that students find meaningful, it supports the theory of multiple intelligences. I described the diverse ways in which students learn and how I approach this diversity in my classroom. Parents nodded in agreement, and some even thanked me for providing so many outlets for intellectual expression. After sharing the results of the survey at Parents' Night, I presented them to my students. They were naively surprised to learn that their classmates prefer learning in ways that differ from their own! There were even friendly accusations of “You actually LIKE to take tests?!” and “Why would you

want do extra work on a project outside of class?!” After we discussed opposing viewpoints, I challenged students to do a better job at teaching diverse learning styles than I. I had to word this challenge carefully, as I didn’t want them to feel as if they were being punished for being candid in their responses, and I also didn’t want to appear as if I doubted my pedagogical abilities. I did want to portray myself as an educator who was open to new ideas to better instruct my students. I allotted a two day period to each of my classes to develop a lesson based on the material in the current chapter. I spent about 25 minutes on the first day leading them through the lesson planning process. I posted a blank lesson plan on my Moodle site for students to modify and print. Moodle is an open-source course management system that allows users to access documents and share information as well as to participate in online discussion. I required every student to hand in a lesson plan as complete as those that I produce daily (including the appropriate ACTFL standards, of course!). In planning their lessons, I encouraged students to incorporate engaging activities and effective approaches observed in their other classes. When the time came to present their lessons, few groups offered activities beyond what we normally do in my classes. Whether this was due in part to apathy or because they understand the reasoning behind the activities we do in class was debatable. To find out more, I asked students to complete a post-lesson reflection (see *below*). The data collected from this assignment supported my position on a combination of apathy and satisfaction leading to lessons similar to those I deliver. As expected, some students expressed a desire to teach again, while others demanded that I reclaim my duties as sole educator.

### **Students work in groups to plan their lessons.**

Allowing students to lead their peers through the presentation of new material allowed me to assume the role of a student, and I examined my attitude toward familiar activities from a different perspective. On a personal level, it was self-affirming to have students comment on how they gained understanding into why I present material/test in certain ways, as well as what a complex and difficult task teachers face in presence of diverse learners. Having answered the question numerous times, I turned the question on my students: “How do YOU accommodate diversity in the classroom?” And we learned together.

## **Chapitre onze: Projet**

### **(70 points)**

Instead of a test for this chapter, you will be graded on a two-part project. The first part will be done in a group; the second part is to be completed on your own. Both parts are due in class on \_\_\_\_\_. Be sure to consult the following directions and rubric as you work! You must turn in the rubric with your project.

### **I. Skit**

As a group, you will film a short skit that follows your group through its morning routine. In this routine, you must do the following:

- a. Use 9 reflexive verbs from Mots I in the present tense in complete sentences. In doing so, you must use all subject pronouns (je, tu, il/elle/on, nous, vous, ils/elles).

- b. Use 5 other verbs of your choice (in complete sentences) describing what occurs during the morning routine.
- c. Ask a question using “Qui.”

In order to meet these requirements, you may have to take turns being on and off camera (especially to ensure that all 6 subject pronouns are used).

BE CREATIVE!!!!!! 😊

**II. Script**

Each person in the group must hand in his/her OWN script of the skit, written in his/her OWN handwriting. TYPED SCRIPTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!!!  
 Requirement Points Possible Points earned Skit: 9 reflexive verbs in the present tense (which use 6 different subjects) 27 Skit: 5 other verbs 5 Skit: “Qui” question 2 Script: 9 reflexive verbs in the present tense (which use 6 different subjects) 27 Script: 5 other verbs 2 Script: “Qui” question 2 Overall performance 2

TOTAL 70

Nom: \_\_\_\_\_ Classe: \_\_\_\_\_

**Student-presented lessons**

***Please respond thoughtfully to each of the following questions:***

1. Overall, how did it feel to instruct your peers?
2. What did you consider when planning your lesson? Why did you choose the activities you did?
3. How did it feel if/when students didn’t pay attention to your lesson? How did you respond?
4. How has this assignment given you insight into the duties/responsibilities of teachers?
5. If presented with the opportunity to deliver a lesson again, what would you do differently? What would you do the same?
6. How did it feel to be instructed by your peers?
7. Other comments: