Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning: An Overview

Narrator: Welcome to this short overview of highly individualized teaching and learning. Our purpose is to help you think about the levels, or tiers, of individualization that may be appropriate for children with diverse strengths and needs. At various times in our lives, all of us have needed more individualized supports to help us learn something new. Maybe we were trying to learn a new sport or where to find things in a new neighborhood, or how to use a smartphone. Young children may also need individualized supports to help them learn.

The house is the framework used by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning to showcase the important elements of high-quality teaching and learning. The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments. The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices and ongoing child assessment. In this presentation, we focus on the roof of the house, highly individualized teaching and learning.

We use highly individualized teaching and learning practices to help children who are struggling for all sorts of reasons to learn new skills and concepts. Sometimes children who are learning a new language need extra supports. Sometimes children who have difficult or challenging behavior need extra supports. Sometimes children who have IEPs or IFSPs need extra supports. And sometimes children who are quick learners need extra supports to maintain and expand on their skills and knowledge.

The roof of the house can be broken down into three parts: curriculum modifications, embedded teaching, and intensive, individualized teaching. These educational practices represent the varying levels of support. As we move toward the peak of the roof, the practices become more intensive or specialized. Curriculum modifications are small changes or adjustments to activities and materials that help to enhance a child's participation in learning experiences.

Teacher: [In Spanish] After we did this with the hole-puncher, what do we do next?

Narrator: Embedded teaching refers to planned teaching interactions that are inserted within ongoing activities, routines, or lessons. Embedded teaching helps a child get extra practice while learning new skills and concepts.

Teacher: Uh-oh, the shark's coming around again. Go behind the shark again. Oh, there you go; you're escaping the shark!

Narrator: Intensive, individualized teaching refers to explicit or specialized teaching practices that give a child that extra help needed to learn a specific skill or concept.

Teacher: [Sounding out the letter F]

Boy: S?

Teacher: F.

Boy: F.

Teacher: Okay. Letter F.

Boy: What does F look like?

Teacher: What does a F look like? I'll show you. But I still want you to do it, okay? See that? I went around, down, across. All right, now you try. That was perfect.

Narrator: From time to time, any or all of these practices may be helpful for a child. Young children vary widely in their development and learning. Teachers support their learning by being very careful observers of children's interests, their abilities, their temperaments, and their experiences. Teachers observe and then make adjustments so that a child gets just the right level of support to keep on learning.

In this short presentation, we highlighted the importance of highly individualized teaching and learning. We briefly described three ways that teachers can individualize their teaching: by making simple modifications, by providing many embedded learning opportunities, and by using more intensive teaching practices. You can learn more in our longer in-service suites. And take a look at the tips and tools on individualizing. Thank you for listening.