SPOTLIGHT
Task Difficulty

WHAT IS IT?

Task difficulty involves adjusting the complexity and challenge level of classroom tasks to meet the diverse learning needs of students. It aims to provide an appropriately challenging, yet achievable, learning experience for all students.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Adjusting task difficulty based on assessed individual student needs.

- Providing support and guidance as needed, gradually decreasing assistance as students become more proficient.

WHY?

Many behaviour problems are the result of a mismatch between the task and a student's skills or strengths.

Adapting task difficulty ensures that all students are appropriately challenged, promoting engagement, motivation, and individualised learning.
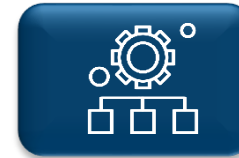
HOW?

Use differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of the class.

Adjustments can be made in 3 ways:

- Task length or timeframe allotted, i.e., shorten the task by highlighting the questions the student is to complete; provide breaks between tasks.

- The mode of task completion, i.e., using speech to text software rather than writing a response; pairing students to read.

- The extent of instruction or practise provided, i.e., use meaningful real-life examples; arrange for additional brief instructional sessions using the 'I do, We do, You do' approach.

TIPS?

- When making an adjustment to a task consider what aspect/s of the task the student finds difficult, i.e. Is the task accurately matched to the student's ability? Does the length of the task exceed the student's motivation or endurance?
- Adjust instructional strategies to the student's stage of learning (acquisition level, fluency building, mastery, or generalisation).
- When providing support and guidance to a student consider using the least intrusive prompt. The prompt hierarchy from the most intrusive to the least intrusive is physical, modeling, visual, gestural, and verbal.
- The Universal Design for Learning guidelines could be used to assist teachers to identify barriers to learning and assist with adjusting task difficulty.