

• **Figure 1.5** •  
**Lesson Variations that Increase Challenge**

To ensure all students experience continuous learning, teachers must figure out ways for advanced students to integrate targeted skills and concepts with greater depth and complexity. Consider this list of variations for students who would benefit from an increased level of challenge. The format is proposed to increase the efficiency of differentiating a lesson. Skim the list to validate current differentiation practices, select options to implement, or prompt your brainstorming of different variations. View this chart as a developing document to use to refine and add to as often as adaptation ideas occur.

**Before Direct Instruction**

1. Use preassessment to accurately determine students' instructional level. Promote above grade-level instruction and materials as appropriate.
2. Assess to exempt students from work they already know, understand, and are able to do.
3. Discuss, model, and post a rubric of the behaviors students should demonstrate when meaningfully engaged in learning.

**During Direct Instruction**

4. Strive to stretch students slightly beyond their comfort zones.

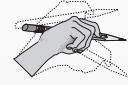
5. Communicate high expectations and personal best.
6. Ensure that instruction is targeted at advanced levels, is interesting, and is both mentally and emotionally engaging so students look forward to learning opportunities.
7. Compact and extend more than just practice the grade-level targeted concepts and skills. Analyze complexity to ensure that tasks extend beyond current mastery levels.
8. Ensure that students understand why it is important to learn the targeted concepts and skills. For example, have students interview professionals to find out how these skills are required in their work.
9. Cluster by intellectual peers and readiness level to promote the advanced language and elevated abstract and complex thinking that is typical of advanced and gifted learners.
10. Add sophistication to targeted concepts and skills by using technology and multiple texts with above grade-level readability.
11. Share with advanced learners the brain research that affects their

learning. Advanced learners are often fascinated with how the brain works. Inform them that brain research documents they increase long-term memory by summarizing and chunking information. Practice summarization techniques to apply when pursuing topics of personal interest to develop their expertise.



12. Differentiate and elevate content rather than just offer enrichment activities that practice known concepts and skills.
13. Diversify content depth by inviting student to read and pursue individual interests and personal connections related to the topic.
14. Plan how to appropriately minimize direct instruction and increase student autonomy.
15. Assume the role of coach and facilitator more than the dispenser of knowledge. As the saying advises, become a guide on the side rather than a sage on the stage. All students need to experience feedback, encouragement, and respect from a teacher.
16. Use strategies geared to the instructional needs of advanced and gifted students, including curriculum compacting, tiering, complex content, and appropriate rate of learning.

17. To accommodate how advanced students learn best, proceed at a faster pace of instruction with minimum guided practice and repetition. Use quick sketch and think alouds to assess students' learning process during instruction.



18. Use process letters and A & E cards to efficiently assess and document understanding after instruction.



19. Provide fewer examples and require students to complete fewer examples unless continuing assessment documents that students lack appropriate understanding.

20. Elicit abstract thinking using analogies and symbols as content connections.




21. Use a Socratic Seminar approach that guides students to examine opinions or ideas logically through open-ended and probing questions that elicit students' perceptions and substantiation of their thinking.

22. Require in-text and beyond-text substantiation of ideas and generalizations with simple strategies such as before-after-support.



23. Focus on issues and ethical connections to the topic.

Use strategies such as  analyze it to structure responses.

24. Provide frequent opportunities for students to explore authentic text, such as researching related historical speeches instead of just reading an overview of a historical event.

25. Use biographies and autobiographies as life models of eminent people in students' fields of interest.

26. As appropriate, delegate more responsibility to students for their learning to ensure that they gain independence and management skills.

27. Involve students in searching for advanced resources and technology.

28. Create learning experiences that are more complex, require more abstract thinking, are interesting, and use advanced resources and technology.

29. Adapt the content through themes or what Erickson (2007) refers to as *conceptual lenses* to engage students' personal intellect, extend their thinking, and deepen understanding. Sample conceptual lenses include: patterns, conflict, change, power, influences, origins, and

interactions. *How is change both a cause and an effect in our world today?*

30. Immerse students in advanced levels of vocabulary and word study that incorporates academic vocabulary in specific contexts.

Use affixes and roots in meaningful contexts to exponentially increase vocabulary. Use the topic talk and word associations strategies



to engage vocabulary applications.

31. Initiate goal setting. Motivate students to establish personal goals and criteria for success related to their learning.

32. Use rubrics that specify abstract thinking, complexity, and depth beyond grade-level skills so students envision how to continue learning and have specific targets that challenge advance responses.

33. Demonstrate examples of superior work in order to provide concrete models of advanced products and challenge students to ever-increasing levels of excellence.

#### **After Direct Instruction**

34. Challenge students to develop high-level inferences and advanced interpretations with authentic products

that explore significant problems and issues.

35. Require students to complete a rubric self-assessing their work before turning it in for a teacher's evaluation. Self-assessment encourages students to accept greater responsibility for their learning.

36. Provide product captions, such as the one below, that students complete to document advanced achievement and complex thinking.

37. Encourage student record-keeping. Ensure that students maintain records of their progress and personal changes as learners rather than gauge their results through comparisons with grade-level peers.

38. Organize buddies of intellectual peers to pursue advanced content in similar interests.



39. Pairs of students work together on advanced level products, such as creating summaries of a concept but omitting three to six key words or phrases. Student pairs exchange and complete the summaries to review key ideas through the perception of others.



40. Use tiered centers with activities that promote practice and extension of targeted skills and concepts. The centers should be organized with a mixed-readiness group so students have multiple opportunities to interact with all peers.

## Product Caption

PRODUCT \_\_\_\_\_

**This work shows that I:**

**I relate this to:**

**I elevated the depth and complexity of my response by incorporating:**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Essential questions      | <input type="checkbox"/> Symbols or analogies        | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal connections |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple resources       | <input type="checkbox"/> Complex process             | <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced technology  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple viewpoints      | <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple content areas      | <input type="checkbox"/> Change over time     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patterns or interactions | <input type="checkbox"/> Precise academic vocabulary |   |