

Differentiating Instruction

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| “Learning Centers,” by Helen F. Robison | 152 |
| “Independent Study: A Flexible Tool for Encouraging Academic and Personal Growth,” by Carol Ann Tomlinson | 157 |

Teachers:

- Teachers get to know individual students better.
- Teachers get better at understanding and addressing individual needs.
- Teachers feel better about meeting individual needs.
- Teachers discover that discipline problems decrease as students feel less frustration and boredom.
- Teachers feel more creative.
- Teachers become clearer on the essential skills and understandings in their subjects, and feel less compelled to “cover” the curriculum.
- Teachers are energized as their students experience growth.
- Teachers develop a wider repertoire of management and instructional strategies.
- Teachers work more collaboratively with colleagues.

School:

- Students feel better about themselves as learners, consequently, they feel better about their classes and about school in general.
- Students develop a greater appreciation and respect for peers and learn to work more collaboratively with fellow students.
- The school grows as an effective institution because of the staff’s professional growth.
- Parents feel better about the role of the school in their childrens’ lives.

Question 4. What are some factors that make it difficult to differentiate instruction?

- Large class sizes.
- Small classrooms.
- Short blocks of time.
- Pressure to cover curriculum guides.

- Emphasis on standardized or competency testing.
- Little time for teacher planning.
- Teacher discomfort with managing a differentiated classroom.
- Fear of administrative disapproval if classrooms are noisy.
- Traditional report cards.
- Adoption of single textbooks for a given class (subject and grade).
- Shortage of supplementary materials.

Question 5. What actions might we take in the very near future as a school (or district) and as individual teachers to support more differentiated instruction?

- Work together as teams to plan differentiated activities.
- Begin slowly and work at a pace that makes sense for you.
- Systematically study your students.
- Include suggestions for differentiation in curriculum guides as curriculums are revised.
- Use parents, community volunteers, and the full range of school personnel in classrooms to have extra pairs of hands working with individuals and small groups.
- Observe in classrooms where teachers do some differentiation of instruction.
- Use peer coaching teams to work toward differentiation.
- Allow teachers to opt for texts and supplementary materials at varied grade levels, rather than whole-class or grade adoption of single texts or supplementary materials.
- Encourage parents and community members to donate materials related to student interests.
- Help parents and students understand what differentiated instruction is and why it makes sense.

Needs Assessment (Optional — 5 minutes)

1. If appropriate, tell participants you are interested in finding out ways you and others might help them learn more about differentiated instruction and its implementation in classrooms. Distribute Handout 3, “Where Do We Go From Here?” Ask participants to complete the brief assessment of needs and interests so that you will be better able to provide useful assistance.
2. Thank the participants for their time, participation, and contribution to the workshop. Collect Handout 3 from participants.

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Workshop 2

This 6-hour workshop is suggested for educators who wish to examine the key concepts and principles of differentiated instruction; see examples of how teachers differentiate content, activities, and products; and explore how to plan a differentiated lesson.

The times listed in the following agenda include the time required for viewing Tape 1 and suggested times for completing workshop activities. You may want to adjust the time schedule to meet the needs and interests of your group.

Agenda and Time Guide: Workshop 2

| Activity | Time (minutes) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Introduction | 25 |
| View Segment 1 of Tape 1 | 26 |
| Reactions to Video Segment 1 | 15 |
| Break | 15 |
| Analyzing a Differentiated Classroom | 45 |
| Differentiating Content, Activities, and Products | 25 |
| View Segment 2 of Tape 1 | 13 |
| Reactions to Video Segment 2 | 15 |
| Stand and Stretch Break | 2 |
| Analyzing a Readiness-Based Task/Designing a Tiered Activity | 35 |
| Lunch Break | 60 |
| View Segment 3 of Tape 1 | 15 |
| Reactions to Video Segment 3 | 20 |
| Student Interest and Learning Profile/Developing a Differentiated Activity | 45 |
| Concluding the Workshop | 10 |
| Approximate Workshop Time | 6 hours |

For this workshop, you will need copies of Handouts 3–15 for participants. You will also need transparencies of Overheads 1–3. Masters for these are in the “Handouts and Overheads” section of this guide. You may provide workshop participants with a copy of the resource list located in the “Resources and Readings” section. Materials needed for this workshop include chart paper, felt-tip markers, masking tape, blank overhead transparencies, and erasable markers. Some activities require

information to be written on chart paper. To save time, these can be prepared before the workshop.

Introduction (25 minutes)

1. Introduce yourself to participants. Then show Overhead 1 and explain that the focus of today's workshop is on differentiating, or modifying, instruction based on differences in students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

Explain your role as the workshop facilitator. As a facilitator, you will guide the group through the workshop and help them meet the workshop goals. Show Overhead 2 and call their attention to the objectives. Briefly discuss these objectives and review the workshop agenda. (Allow 5 minutes.)

By the end of this session, participants will be able to

- Identify key features of an effectively differentiated classroom.
 - Explain some of the key concepts and principles of differentiated instruction.
 - Analyze differentiated learning tasks.
 - Expand their repertoire of strategies for assessing student readiness, interest, and learning profile.
 - Translate one or more key principles of differentiation into their own classrooms.
2. Distribute Handout 4, "Addressing Diverse Learner Needs," and introduce this activity:
 - ◆ **The purpose of today's workshop is to help us explore what differentiated instruction is and why we might use it. This first activity is designed to get us thinking about how differentiation might relate to our own teaching experiences.**

Ask participants to work alone to complete Handout 4. (Allow 8 minutes.)

Facilitator's Note

You may want to draw four boxes (see Handout 4) on a piece of chart paper and record abbreviated responses as participants share their answers.

3. Ask participants to share the following with the group:
 - Two or three descriptions (without using names) of students they have taught who have had learning needs that differ from “standard expectations” — for example, a student who is vastly ahead in math; a student who thinks very clearly and has highly creative ideas, but has trouble writing them down; a student who is under stress due to difficulties at home; a student for whom English is not her first language.
 - What these students need in their classes to have a really excellent school year — for example, a sense that they are respected, someone to help them with reading, more time for many tasks, and more advanced math materials.
 - Examples of things teachers do to make teaching responsive and appropriate for students like the ones they have described — for example, allowing students to stay after school for extra help, encouraging independent projects, and asking individuals questions that match their readiness level in a discussion.
 - Factors that make it difficult for teachers to differentiate instruction — for example, large class size, one set of textbooks, fragmented instructional time, not enough time for teacher planning, and not knowing how to manage a differentiated classroom.
4. Thank participants for sharing their experiences and views.

View Segment 1 of Tape 1 (26 minutes)

1. Introduce the video segment by telling participants:
 - ◆ **The educators you are about to see have had teaching experiences similar to those we’ve just shared as a group and have struggled with many of the same issues. This video segment will allow us to see how some other educators have begun to respond to varied learner needs in academically diverse classrooms.**
2. Distribute Handout 5, “Looking at Differentiated Lessons.” Ask participants to jot down their reactions on the organizer as they view the segment. In the “P” column, participants should note things they think are positive about the classrooms and comments. In the “M” column, ask them to note things that strike them as minuses or troublesome about the classrooms or comments. In the “I” column, they should note things they see or thoughts they have as they watch

that are just interesting to them — neither positive nor negative. Tell the participants that they will have some time after viewing the tape to finish writing their notes.

3. Answer any questions from participants. Then view the first segment of Tape 1, *Creating Multiple Paths for Learning*. This segment examines what differentiated instruction is and shows three classroom examples of differentiation of content, activity, and product. It runs from the beginning of the tape to the end of the high school art class working on differentiated products (about 23 minutes).

Reactions to Video Segment 1 (15 minutes)

1. After viewing the first segment of the video, give participants 3–4 minutes to finish making notes on their PMI organizer (Handout 5). As they work, tape three pieces of chart paper on a wall with a “P” at the top of one, an “M” at the top of the second, and an “I” at the top of the third.
2. Ask for three volunteers to jot down participants’ comments on the chart paper.
3. Invite participants to share with you the positive, negative, and interesting thoughts that came to them as they viewed the videotape. Facilitate the discussion as your volunteer scribes write participants’ comments on the appropriate sheets of chart paper.
4. Thank participants for thinking along with you. Point out to them that the topic today is a complex one and involves educators thinking about change. The purpose of this and other activities is to facilitate that thinking process — not to provide easy or automatic answers.

Break (15 minutes)

Analyzing a Differentiated Classroom (45 minutes)

1. Begin this activity by saying:
 - ◆ **In this activity, we’ll focus on key principles that are evident in well-differentiated classrooms by doing an analysis task where we’ll look closely at a differentiated setting and think about principles or guidelines behind what we see. It’s important to understand these key principles so our planning is**