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Introduction

Oh, the many hats we wear daily as educators! We assume many roles to meet the unique needs of our students. We know that one hat does not fit everyone, because each individual comes to each learning segment with a unique bank of prior knowledge and experiences. We consider the learner's needs and choose the most appropriate style for each activity or event. In daily instruction, we wear a variety of hats. We need them to be appropriate, so we search for the right one!

Hats are worn for specific jobs and special occasions. For example, educators wear uniform hats as they carry out federal, state, and local curriculum mandates to address standards and learners' needs. These established guidelines provide a framework for expectations and responsibilities in each grade level. It is important for educators to become familiar with the uniform hats and have them accessible at all times to fulfill the requirements.

Differentiated instruction challenges educators to wear numerous hats daily as they adapt to the learners' unique needs. Most teachers have a large collection of comfortable hats, or favorite instructional approaches. Often the most comfortable instructional hat does not coordinate with a student's strengths or preferred learning styles. When this occurs, the teacher must wear an uncomfortable hat to reach the learner.

Responsive educators go to great lengths to find the right hat for the student to learn each standard. For example, when a struggling student is a visual learner and visual/spatial approaches are the teacher's weakness, the teacher needs to put on a glitzy hat and plan visual strategies for the learner.

Your authors have had extensive careers in teaching and administration. In recent years, we have worked internationally with districts and schools as professional developers, trainers, and consultants. We know teachers have limited time, resources, and energy to expend on designing differentiated instructional strategies and activities to teach each standard.

In this resource, we provide approaches, techniques, and ideas that are practical, cost free, and easy to implement or adapt in all grade levels to meet the learners' diverse needs.

■ STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION

As we write this second edition, a majority of states have volunteered to adopt national or Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The impetus for this initiative was a major study identifying the standards students need for success in college and career (Conley, 2003). Some organizations and states are questioning the value of CCSS. We know this debate will continue into the future. We also realize that expectations or mandated standards will continue to be used as the benchmarks for learning and the framework for curriculum development. We believe that standards provide a blueprint for planning and teaching.

Teaching the Standards

Standards are the expectations or learning goals for each grade level, with precise criteria for mastery. The knowledge, concepts, and skills are defined and provide the "what" for instruction. Teachers have the privilege of guiding students to master each standard. They accomplish this feat by selecting the appropriate content material, choosing the best strategies, and identifying the most effective assessment tools for an individual or specific group of students.

The following information is presented as a practical guide to teaching the standards.

Know the standards. Keep a list of the standards nearby while planning and teaching. Study the lists often so you know the instructional expectations. Familiarity with the standards makes it easier to strategically place them in daily instruction.

Chunk the standards. Teach more than one standard in a lesson segment if they work together to make the lesson relevant and challenging. This step is similar to finding two jigsaw pieces that fit together perfectly.

Post the standard(s). Post the standard(s) to address during instruction in a designated space so you and the students understand the lesson's goal(s).

Continually assess the learner's mastery level of the standard. Monitor the learner's knowledge-base level in relation to his or her mastery of the standard. Plan interventions, grade level, and enrichment assignments as needed through active learning experiences.

Provide immediate feedback, if possible. Give specific feedback with suggestions for improvement. Teach students how to use self-assessment strategies, checklists, and answer keys to accelerate the feedback process.

■ USING DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

In the flagship book of our series, Gregory and Chapman (2012, p. x) provide the following explanation for differentiation: *Differentiation is a philosophy that enables teachers to plan strategically to reach the needs of diverse learners in classrooms today to achieve targeted standards.* To carry out this belief, teachers differentiate instruction to meet the individual's needs. Each lesson is based on the learner's assessment data related to the identified standard. Differentiated strategies, the "how" of instruction, are selected to deliver customized assignments and activities. This is a challenging and rewarding task.

The differentiation movement is making educators more aware of the need to reach the diverse needs of the classroom population. This idea has been discussed for centuries, but today, more than ever, educators are more successful in meeting this goal. They are improving because they have more assessment tools, instructional techniques, models, strategies, and resources. We have more multidimensional classrooms today. But with so many standards to address and personalized tasks occurring simultaneously, teachers need well-planned differentiated strategies to be successful.

■ WHAT ARE DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES?

Differentiated instructional strategies are used to carry out the philosophy of differentiation. Teachers are expected to organize and customize instruction to provide the very best learning opportunities to address the targeted standard(s) for the student. Routines and rules are carefully selected or written to meet the learner's changing needs.

Teachers taking the first steps into differentiated instruction need to begin with small steps, choosing one or two strategies or activities to implement. Teachers currently using differentiated techniques can adapt the ideas to tweak their skills, reaffirm their beliefs in present approaches, add novel strategies, or put a new twist on old ways of doing things. After the target standard(s) are identified, use the checklists, charts, outlines, activities, and suggestions in this book to plan and organize differentiated instruction.

The keys to successful implementation of differentiated instructional strategies include the following:

- Selecting the standard(s) to teach
- Maintaining a comfortable, stimulating learning environment that instills in each student a desire to learn and improve
- Assessing students' individual needs before, during, and after learning
- Using assessment data to plan strategically with the most beneficial models, techniques, and strategies
- Selecting and organizing instructional activities for the total group, individuals, partners, and small groups

TEACHER JUDGMENT: CHOOSING THE APPROPRIATE HAT FOR THE OCCASION

Teacher judgment is a key to selecting the appropriate hat to wear for each instructional event. For example, after analyzing the assessment data, the teacher decides how to use the results.

Here are some questions to address for student productivity.

- What is the best strategy to use so this individual learns the identified standard, skill, or concept?
- Do I assume the role of a facilitator or teacher?
- Does the student need to work independently or with a partner?
- Will I need to rewind or fast-forward the curriculum for this student?
- Do I need to continue with grade-level instruction for this learning segment?

Effective instructional decisions are based on the teacher's ability to select the standard and the content information to reach and teach each learner. Selection, organization, and pacing of instruction for the student's uniqueness are determined by many factors, including the learner's . . .

Knowledge base	Cultural background	Learning styles
Strengths and needs	Special adaptations	Preferences
Cognitive ability	Personality	Interests
Social needs	Emotional factors	Self-concept

ANALYZING SELF AND PURPOSE OF DIFFERENTIATING

Take time for a self-assessment before making critical decisions relating to differentiation. Identify aspects of instruction you currently use to meet the unique needs of learners and areas to improve. The following checklists will assist you with these self-analysis tasks. Each individual changes with their personal attitude, background, and experience. Identify your stage of buy-in for standard-based differential instruction.

TEACHING STYLE ANALYSIS ■

Your personal presentation style is reflected in daily teaching. Some students are more comfortable in quiet rooms, while others need the buzz of active engagement. Some students may respond positively to your style, while others may be uncomfortable in your established environment. It's important to be sure learners are productive with your style. Knowing each individual is crucial. For example, learning will ultimately suffer if a student thrives on movement but is never allowed to get the wiggles out. Analyze your teaching traits by identifying your personal learning styles, personality traits, multiple intelligences, and tolerance levels. Select strategies to support your comfort levels in these areas.

Use the following Likert scale as an informal self-analysis of your teaching preferences. Your approaches may fall between the two extremes. Use the results to become a more effective educator.

Teacher Centered		Student Centered
Teacher directed	←————→	Facilitator
Enforces strict rules	←————→	Self-directed learners
Unaware of personal needs	←————→	Meets personal needs
Delegates responsibilities	←————→	Shares responsibilities
Subject/task focus	←————→	Focus on learning

OUR GOALS IN WRITING THIS BOOK ■

We wrote this book to assist teachers with the complex task of teaching the standards through differentiated instruction. We know the body of knowledge related to differentiated instruction continues to grow as researchers share information about how the brain learns. Brain imaging is not available to schools, so we have to take the findings of brain specialists to identify the best practices for individual learners.

Our beliefs for effective teaching and learning are based on the latest research that guides our work. We designed this guide to assist effective differentiating teachers by . . .

- Emphasizing the importance of strategically selecting the standard(s) and organizing instruction for each learning segment
- Providing techniques, tips, and strategies to design and maintain an organized, productive learning environment
- Presenting models as blueprints for planning and organizing differentiated instruction
- Providing techniques and ideas to incorporate flexible grouping strategies for targeted interventions and customized instruction
- Adding a treasure trove of instructional strategies for differentiated instruction

■ A PREVIEW OF THE BOOK

Each strategy, technique, and guideline was carefully selected and narrowed to five-star summary statements. The goal is to give our readers star power to work smarter, not harder.

Below is a chapter-by-chapter description to present the overview of the major topics explored in the upcoming chapters in this resource. The overview may be used to plan professional learning opportunities for individuals or groups. Each session can be planned by an assessment of the group's desires and needs.

At the end of each chapter, probing questions, suggestions, and activities are provided to use as a guide to lead sessions for a professional learning community (PLC) book study.

Introduction

A standards-based classroom uses differentiated instruction to teach, and to learn the needed information based on the gathered formative assessment data. This chapter introduces the book, as well as information about CCSS and differentiated instruction. The strategies, techniques, and tips presented throughout the resource can be easily adapted to teach standards, outcomes, and benchmarks in all grade levels.

Differentiated Learning Environment

The environment plays a vital role in what and how much students learn. Classroom goals are met by establishing an accepting affective environment and a productive physical climate. This chapter explores ways to improve the classroom environment to increase student learning. Both the physical and emotional climate of the room are important to the community of learners who call it home. In this section, educators will learn to put on their chef's hat to cook up a recipe for affective and cognitive success.

Differentiated Formative Assessment

Teachers need to compile the data to draw academic conclusions. Because of the differentiated and standard movement, teachers are assessing before, during, and after learning. Assessment reveals what a learner knows and doesn't know. It provides valuable insight into student needs and assists teachers in planning well-rounded and meaningful lessons.

Both informal and formal assessments provide teachers with the needed information to plan strategically. Teachers often assess students with formal assessment tools. This takes hours of preparation and administration. Some informal tools such as response cards or signals can provide the immediate information needed. This chapter is designed to help teachers assess their students in meaningful ways.

Differentiated Instructional Strategies

This chapter discusses many varied instructional strategies for meeting the unique needs of the learners. Activities are presented to engage learners before, during, and after learning. Choice boards, cubing activities, intriguing graphic organizers, centers, and stations are presented, with suggestions for customized planning. Teachers who can select the perfect strategy to teach the standards and engage all learners will have a classroom of students who are focused and motivated to learn.

Flexible Grouping Strategies

A teacher continually assesses the students' work to identify areas for improvement. The strategies presented in this chapter can guide instructional decisions needed in the Response to Intervention steps for Tiers I, II, and III, because the grouping techniques are tailored to a learner's identified need. The information in this chapter answers the following questions when planning: How will students be grouped to learn? Does the individual need to work with a partner on a specific skill? Should the learner work alone while the rest of the class receives additional instruction in an area they have mastered? Does an identified group need an intervention or tutoring session?

When a teacher remembers to keep group flexible and add variety to the grouping strategies, students stay engaged in learning. This chapter explores various flexible grouping strategies and discusses how to use them in the classroom while managing multiple activities occurring simultaneously.

Planning With Differentiated Models

When preparing to plan a unit of study or a special activity, teachers can don their thinking hats! By choosing the best planning framework for instruction, goals of the lesson will be met in an engaging way and students will learn. We present twelve planning models to teach the standards in a differentiated classroom.

Teachers are challenged to fill in the gaps for students who do not have the proper background to learn the identified standards. Learners who know the information must be challenged. This chapter will help teachers identify the model to choose for planning to meet each learner's identified needs so everyone learns every day.

Planning for Standards With Differentiated Instruction

Once teachers have the tools and elements necessary to create a differentiated environment in their classrooms, they need to identify a standard, assess it, and strategically plan differentiated instruction. This chapter provides checklists and simplified grids for recording data to help teachers plan for each learner's identified needs and strengths. Administrators or colleagues may use the classroom observation tool to design improvement plans. The teacher may also use it, as a self-analysis tool and to set professional development goals.

■ UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK FORMAT

The following format is used with each model and strategy to provide information for practical application to teach the standards in differentiated classrooms:

What is _____?	A working definition and description of the model or strategy is outlined.
What are the instructional benefits?	A rationale is presented for using the model, tool, or strategy to meet the diverse needs of students.
Implementing standards using _____	What is the relevance of the standard(s)? This links the standard with the model, tool, or strategy. Recommended key steps for implementing the model or strategy are listed.
Demystifying	The simplified definitions, analogies, metaphors, and suggested dialogue in this section can be used to explain the model or strategy to students, parents, or colleagues.
Five-star tips	Suggested techniques and approaches are presented, with advice and points for immediate implementation.
Examples	The sample situations and scenarios provide practical ideas for application of the models and strategies.

Next, an overview of the PLC philosophy is presented. The information is designed to provide a deeper understanding of collaborative studies and their value in guiding the faculty and staff through this resource for standards-based differentiation.

This section includes self-reflective questions or statements to direct to personal thinking and application after the reading. Activities are listed for planning a Professional Learning Community (PLC) study for this resource.



Five-Star Tips for Establishing a PLC Study

1. Identify the needs of the staff with regard to the topic of interests or area for improvement. Give team members a voice in selecting the topics. Discuss and prioritize the suggestions. Come to consensus on the topic, goals, and purposes.
2. Select the book, article collection, websites, video series, and/or other resources to use during the study.
3. Develop a timeline for the study.
4. Ask each group member to commit to being present and accountable.
5. Establish team roles.
 - a. Select a leader to conduct the meetings.
 - b. Assign a participant from the administrative level to be a team member.
 - c. Share responsibilities so each person makes a valuable contribution.

Examples of PLC Studies in Action

Example A: Book Study Team

The team agrees to study a book of interest. A meeting calendar is distributed with scheduled reading assignments. Each member signs the schedule after the recorder or team leader outlines the meeting dates. The goals are set as the group identifies what everyone wants to gain from the study. Readings and discussions are valuable uses of time because the team is learning together. Individual members can apply the new ideas and techniques in their various job roles.

The most powerful strategy for improving teaching and learning is to create the collaborative culture and collective responsibility of a PLC.

—DuFour, Rick, & Mattos (2013)

Example B: A Video Series Study

A video series is carefully chosen for the study topic. Short segments are shown. Participants discuss important aspects of the scenes and reflect on ways they can apply the new ideas in planning and instruction.

Example C: Personal Taping Series

Each team member videotapes a portion of his or her teaching. Individuals sign up for a night of stardom to lead the group and show the video contribution. Before the video is shown, the star teacher provides an introduction to highlight important scenes. Each clip is shown and discussed. Viewers adapt the learned information and share application ideas to improve their teaching.