

Content Overview

- 1. One Size Doesn't Fit All** 1

The challenge is how to reach the individual needs of each student. If you believe in the philosophy of differentiation, then you believe that all learners have areas of strength and need based on their interests, backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge base. This chapter identifies content, formative assessment, performance tasks, and instructional strategies as ways to differentiate instruction. Teachers must plan Common Core State Standards strategically to meet the needs of diverse learners in classrooms today.
- 2. Creating a Climate for Learning** 13

A learning climate needs to establish a healthy, safe, and nurturing environment for all students. This chapter explores ideas, tips, and strategies to build the learning community that addresses the emotional, cognitive, social, and physical aspects of an effective learning culture.
- 3. Knowing the Learner** 27

Every brain is unique. It is vital for educators to take the time to get to know each learner. The more a teacher learns about each student, the easier it is to understand actions and provide strategic differentiated learning opportunities. Explore this chapter for a treasure chest filled with ways and tools to target personality, personal styles, intelligences, and preferences.
- 4. Assessing the Learner** 55

Formal and informal formative assessment tools are used to exchange productive feedback and adjust learning opportunities. The gathered assessment data drives curriculum planning. Formative assessment tools are assigned before, during, and after instruction. In this chapter, discover pre-assessment tools that reveal the data needed to create a plan based on each learner's knowledge base and background experience. Use the appropriate tools with observation during the learning process to determine how to pace instruction and make conscious decisions. Identify the mastered goals and standards. Pinpoint what each student learned in the experience.
- 5. Adjusting, Compacting, and Grouping** 83

Adjustable assignments are planned based on pre-assessment data. Plan adjustable assignments to challenge students at knowledge-based levels. Some learners need interventions at the beginning level of mastery. Many have the proper background needed to learn the grade-level material. Others are reviewing the

material taught and are assigned a challenging, engaging experience to learn more information. Students master information and develop skills at different times, so individual and group assignments are planned to be fluid and flexible. This chapter shares the acronym TAPS for helping with flexible grouping, representing **T**otal or whole-group instruction, **A**lone or independent work, **P**artner tasks, and **S**mall-group assignments.

6. Instructional Strategies for Student Success 113

This chapter outlines brain- and research-based learning strategies to help students succeed. An instructional repertoire is a necessary component to have greater success in reaching all students. Teaching and learning information in varied ways reaches more students. This chapter is designed to assist teachers in their constant search for the best assessment activities to use before, during and after learning. Educators can add the strategies to create a strategy toolbox to motivate and engage students.

7. Curriculum Approaches for Differentiated Classrooms 153

A variety of useful curriculum approaches for implementing differentiated instruction is presented in this chapter. Stations, centers, projects, contracts, cubes, and choice boards are some of the approaches explained and explored in this chapter. Management tips are included for successful implementation. Using these instructional strategies engages learners in motivating opportunities to learn and use information and to develop skills outlined in the Common Core State Standards or standards in your province or country.

8. Putting It All Together in Your Differentiated Classroom 189

Planning is the key to successful implementation of differentiation. In this chapter, a six-step model for successful implementation is provided. View completed examples for the templates for adjustable assignments and lesson plan formats. A variety of lessons are shared for different grade levels. Meet the diverse needs of learners during learner engagement. Implementing differentiated instruction holds the answer to increasing student achievement by meeting the individual's learning needs. Remember,

One Size Doesn't Fit All!

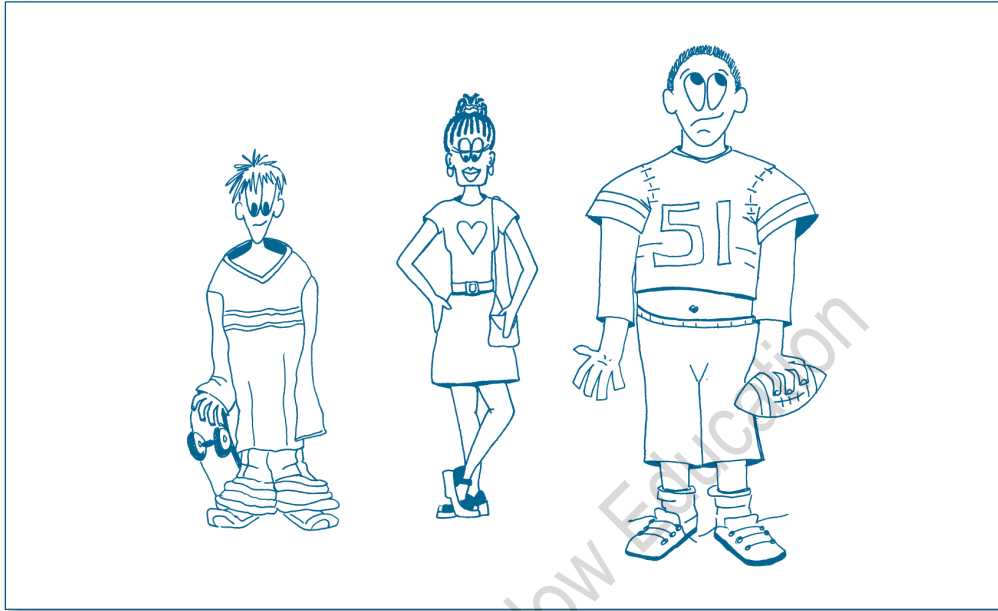
One Size Doesn't Fit All

CLASSROOMS ARE FULL OF DIVERSE LEARNERS IN THIS SECOND DECADE of the 21st century, both culturally and linguistically (Goodwin, Lefkowitz, Woempner, & Hubbell, 2011). Each student is unique. They differ in countless ways, including physical characteristics, personalities, backgrounds, cognitive abilities, experiences, learning preferences, and social development. Teaching experience and recent research tell us each brain is distinctively wired and impacted by previous experiences. With this knowledge, effective teachers know that learners cannot be placed through the same education hoops. Experience and research continue to provide insights about the human brain. Each student is different, they have had exclusive opportunities, and their brains are wired uniquely. So it's only reasonable that everyone learns differently and has different likes, interests, preferences, and needs.

Students bring their interests, personal experiences, and attitudes to each learning moment of every day in a classroom. How does a teacher reach the diverse needs in a classroom today? See each class member as a valuable star! All learners bring differing prior knowledge and skills. To develop deep understanding, they need not only factual but conceptual knowledge. Customized teaching and learning benefits all students with effective lessons that meet the individual needs of each learner. To emphasize this point, consider the purchase of school uniforms. Each one is sized and adjusted for the student's fit and comfort. With this in mind, we can routinely remind ourselves to differentiate instruction because "one size doesn't fit all"!

Yet for years we have planned "The Lesson" and taught it to all, knowing that we were boring some and losing others because they were not ready for that learning. Still, we expect students to adjust to the learning when the learning should really be adjusted to the learners. Adjustments should be based on sound knowledge of the learners. This includes what they know already, can do, like, are like, need, and prefer.

Effective teachers must be familiar with both their students and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) or standards in their district or county and the students

Figure 1.1 As With Clothing, So With Lessons: One Size Does Not Fit All

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they teach. The Common Core State Standards were developed to give a national consistency rather than differing standards state to state. They were also designed to be clearer, go deeper, and prepare students to become critical and creative thinkers, college or career ready in a global market. The standards and the needs of students should determine instructional decisions. Programs, materials, and resources should not determine the curriculum and instruction. Specific materials and resources are selected to teach to the needs of the particular group of students and the standards being addressed.

Our quest in schools and classrooms everywhere as well as in the CCSS is to foster success for students in their lives by becoming self-directed, productive problem solvers and thinkers. For years, we have been studying and implementing research and evidence-based instructional strategies and assessment tools that make a difference in student achievement. *Differentiation* is a philosophy or mindset that enables educators to plan strategically in order to reach the needs of the diverse learners in classrooms today so that they can achieve targeted standards. Differentiation is not a set of tools, but a belief system or mindset that educators embrace to meet the unique needs of every learner.

The mindset of teachers who are differentiating in their classrooms embraces the following ideas:

- All students have areas of strength.
- All students have areas that need to be strengthened.
- Each student's brain is as unique as a fingerprint.

- It is never too late to learn.
- When beginning a new topic, students bring their prior knowledge base and experience to the learning.
- Emotions, feelings, and attitudes affect learning.
- All students can learn.
- Students learn in different ways at different times.

By using a variety of differentiated instructional strategies and activities, educators are implementing this philosophy daily in classrooms across the grade levels and content areas. Each time a teacher meets the individual needs of a student, he or she is differentiating instruction.

Differentiating instruction is not new, but it requires a more conscious effort on the teacher's part to analyze available data and make decisions about what is working and what needs to be adjusted. Keep what works. Discard practices that do not work. Change what needs changing. Educators are already doing a great job! More conscious consideration and a greater repertoire of strategies will help them do an even better job.

A 2007 report issued by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development says that “aspects of development—neural, cognitive, social, psychological, physical and ethical—*have far-reaching effects on children's ability to learn.* . . . [Teachers] need access to scientifically-based knowledge concerning student development and learning.”

THE DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOM

A *differentiated classroom* is one in which the teacher responds to the unique needs of students. Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999) names content, process, and products as components that are differentiated in a classroom. The content is what is taught. The way a learner interprets, adapts, and finds ownership is the process. The product shows the learner's personal interpretation and what he or she knows. Each of these components is constantly assessed to create quality plans to meet the individual needs of students. Differentiated instruction offers a variety of options for successfully reaching the targeted standards in the CCSS. It meets learners where they are and offers challenging, appropriate options for them in order to achieve success.

Teachers can strategically and effectively differentiate the following:

- content
- assessment tools
- performance tasks
- instructional strategies

Differentiating Content

The first step is deciding which Common Core State Standards are to be targeted. Then essential questions are composed and the knowledge, skills, and understandings are highlighted. Depending on the readiness and interests of the students, the content may be differentiated. Teachers also have the added tools available in the CCSS that allow them to look at the learning progressions related to the standards

so that they know what students have been exposed to and what skills they will need at the next grade level. The information to teach and the resources to best teach it are selected strategically. This is implemented by

- using different genres,
- leveling materials,
- using a variety of instructional materials,
- providing choice, and
- using selective abandonment.

Quality differentiated content is relevant to the study, interesting and intriguing to learners, has a defined purpose, and has established learning goals that target the identified Common Core State Standards. The planned assignments are not boring or frustrating, but challenging and timely for learners and will clearly show the student's competency related to the targeted standards. A wide variety of materials and resources need to be accessible for students to explore, discover, and expand their knowledge of the content. The key is selecting the most effective cognitive opportunities that are relevant, engaging, and challenging to ensure learning for each student.

Differentiating Formative Assessment Tools

Many teachers are already effectively differentiating assessment during and after the learning. However, it is equally important to assess knowledge and interests prior to the learning. Understanding what students know about the upcoming topic is essential to planning quality learning experiences. Dispense a blending of formal and informal tools for ongoing formative assessment throughout the learning experience. It is important to interpret the gathered data and use the learned information to plan strategically to meet learners' individual needs. This important learned information determines what to teach and whether interventions or more challenging learning opportunities are needed for individual learners.

Types of formative assessment include a collection of formal and informal tools that are strategically chosen to assess before, during, and after the learning. Teachers are constantly adding new ways to assess levels of understanding and needs. Use the gathered data to plan differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Differentiating Performance Tasks

Students demonstrate their knowledge in many different ways. Teachers should provide various authentic opportunities and choices for learners to show what they know. For example, students can choose how to demonstrate their knowledge by creating a prop, giving an oral report, or engaging in a center experience.

Differentiating Instructional Strategies

When teachers vary instructional strategies and activities, more students learn content and information, and they develop the necessary skills. By targeting diverse intelligences and learning preferences, teachers can label learning activities and assignments in ways that help students choose when to work with their areas of strength and when to work with areas that still need strengthening. Providing options

or choices enables students to learn the material their way or show what they have learned. Using research-based best practices (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, & Stone, 2012) will help ensure that more students develop the concepts and skills targeted. Rehearsal in a variety of ways helps learning become part of long-term memory.

As with clothing, one size doesn't fit all, so in classrooms one way is not the only way.

WHY DIFFERENTIATE?

We have been faced with more change than ever before in education. Several decades ago, teachers came into the profession with a desire to work with children, a knowledge base, and good intentions. Today, teachers face a challenging landscape that is in constant flux. Many factors influence the constantly changing classroom:

- CCSS-based classrooms: targeted expectations set by states, provinces, and/or nations
- High expectations for all students: no longer can we leave children behind and just “spray and pray” for success
- Multicultural diversity: continuous influx of immigrant children with little or no communication skills or competencies in English
- Student diversity: unique learning preferences and different strengths of multiple intelligences
- New cognitive research on human learning: knowledge of the brain and how it processes memory and makes meaning, and its need for social interaction and appropriate level of stress and challenge
- Rapid societal and technological change: political and economic revolutions that influence what and how learning takes place

The students arriving at school in the 21st century are *digital experts*. Technology has been an integral part of their lives and, for some, a compelling attention-getter. Students today are wired differently because of daily exposure to technology. In *Teaching Digital Natives*, Marc Prensky (2010) explains that students want to live in today's world using today's tools.

Figure 1.2 shows three distinct categories and skills within each that should be embedded in curriculum.

Along with all these issues is the fact that we are teaching students not for our lifetime but for the future, and teachers using the CCSS are also integrating skills for the 21st century:

- Thinking critically and making judgments
- Solving complex, multidisciplinary, open-ended problems
- Creativity and entrepreneurial thinking
- Communicating and collaborating
- Making innovative use of knowledge, information, and opportunities
- Taking charge of financial, health, and civic responsibilities

Schools are expected to build in opportunities within the curriculum for students to practice and develop these skills. However, the balancing act involves dealing

Figure 1.2 Categories and Related Skills to Embed in the Curriculum

<i>Learning and Innovation The 4 Cs</i>	<i>Digital Literacy</i>	<i>Career and Life</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking and problem solving • Creativity and innovation • Communication • Collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information literacy • Media literacy • Information and communication technology literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility and adaptability • Initiative and self-direction • Social and cross-cultural interaction • Productivity and accountability

with the CCSS and the reality that classrooms contain diverse, heterogeneous groups of learners. Learners with different cultural backgrounds, experiences, interests, learning preferences, and multiple intelligences are the norm.

Students do not all learn the same thing in the same way on the same day. As educators in classrooms, we need to consider each child in the learning community, based on his or her needs, readiness, preferences, and interests.

We live and work in a global society of high accountability. The legislative notion that any educator would willingly “leave a child behind” is insulting to most educators who view their chosen profession as a mission rather than as a job.

For many decades, educators used a bell curve to rank students. They didn’t expect everyone to succeed. It was more the norm to “teach, test, and hope for the best.” Today, however, we do expect that all students will learn to their full potential and that all teachers will find a way to enable each individual to be successful. Dr. R. L. Canady, of the University of Virginia, has shared that there are three groups of students in classrooms:

- A group of 25% to 37% of students learn “in spite of us.” Those are the students who come ready, willing, and prepared to play the school game in order to succeed. These learners see education as a means to an end, do the work as assigned regardless of preferences, and have the support of significant others in their lives.
- A group of 15% to 25% of students are identified as having some exceptional-ity and receive additional resources.
- A large group of about 37% to 50% learn because of the teacher’s skills and efforts and because of appropriate instruction and assessment aligned with CCSS targeted standards.

Through differentiation, we give all these students the opportunity to learn to their full potential. Throughout this book, we explore the elements needed in the differentiated classroom to engage students and to facilitate learning in order to increase the chances that all learners will succeed. Figure 1.3 organizes these elements in categories, listing tools and strategies that build an inclusive, nurturing classroom and allow teachers to design learning to honor the diversity of the learning population.

Figure 1.3 Tools and Strategies for Designing Inclusive Differentiated Classrooms for Diverse Learners

Climate	Knowing the Learner	Assessing the Learner	Adjustable Assignments	Instructional Strategies and Differentiation	Curriculum Approaches
Safe Nurturing Encourages Risk Taking Multisensory Stimulating Complex Challenging Collaborative Team and Class Building Norms Mindset	Learning Profiles Learning Preferences Sweet Spot Dunn & Dunn Gregorc Silver/Strong/Hanson Multiple Intelligences Using observation checklists, inventories, logs, and journals to become more aware of how students learn Cultural Gender Pop culture	Before Preassessment Formal Pretest Journaling Informal Squaring off Boxing Graffiti facts During Formative Formal Journaling/Portfolios Teacher-made tests Checklists/Rubrics Informal Thumb it Fist of five Face the fact After Formal Summative Posttest Portfolio/Conferences Reflections Informal Talking topics Conversation Circles Donut	Compacting Gifted TAPS Total Group Lecturette Presentation Demonstration Jigsaw Video Field trip Guest speaker Text Alone Interest Personalized Multiple intelligences Paired Random Interest Task Small Groups Heterogeneous Homogeneous Task Oriented Constructed Random Interest	Edu-neuroscience and Differentiation Brain facts Memory model Elaborative rehearsal Focus activities Graphic organizers Compare & contrast Webbing Metaphorical thinking Cooperative group learning Jigsaw Questioning Cubing Role-play Technology	Centers Projects Choice Boards Problem-Based Learning Inquiry Models Contracts

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