

Contents

About the Authors	iv
Introduction	ix
Why This Book Was Written	ix
What This Book Will Do For You	x
1 Building the Foundation: What is Tiering in Differentiated Instruction?	1
Differentiating Instruction.....	3
Differentiating Content (Adjusting Materials and Supports for Learning Concepts)	3
Differentiating Process (Making Sense and Meaning of Content).....	5
Differentiating Products (Showing What Has Been Learned)	5
Defining Tiering.....	6
How Tiering Is Framed in This Book	6
Straight Talk on Tiering: What It Is and What It Isn't	7
How Tiering and Response to Intervention Differ.....	8
A Metaphor for Tiering: "The Learning Zone"	9
Research to Support Tiering.....	11
Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, Rieber and Carton)	11
Implications for Differentiation.....	11
The Effects of Challenge on the Brain (Jensen, Jacobs and Diamond)	12
Implications for Differentiation.....	12
Applying Tiered Objectives with Gifted Talented Children (Kettler and Curliss).....	12
Implications for Differentiation.....	12
Middle Years Tiering (Richards and Omdal)	13
Implications for Differentiation.....	13
Tiering Instruction Using a Common Outcome (Witherell and McMackin).....	13
Implications for Differentiation.....	13
Tying Things Together	14
2 The Essential Building Blocks: Getting Ready to Tier.....	15
Activities That Celebrate Strengths and Encourage Growth	17
Ask Me Poster.....	17
Uniqueness Bingo	18
My Strengths Web	19
Children's Literature Connections	20
Grouping and Tiered Instruction	22
Cooperative Learning	23
Before Grouping Strategies.....	23
During Group Work Strategies	25
After Grouping Strategies.....	26
Bringing Parents On Board	26
Tying Things Together	27
3 The Blueprint for Tiering: Designing with the End in Mind	29

When to Tier	31
How to Set Up Tiering	32
Study Your Goals	32
Brainstorm Assessments and Implement Preassessments.....	33
Types of Preassessments.....	34
Brainstorm Ways to Support Students with the Chosen Objectives	41
Tying Things Together	41
4 Pour the Concrete! It's Time to Tier.....	43
Construction Specifications: The Tiered Lesson Plan Template	45
From Unit to the Daily Lesson Plan	45
The Big Picture	45
Preassessment	47
Materials	48
Grabber and Hook.....	48
Instruction.....	51
Writing the Objectives.....	51
The Three Tiers	53
Review the Tasks	55
Closure	55
Conduct the Lesson and Assess	56
Tiered Lesson Plan Examples	56
Tying Things Together	74
5 Passing Final Inspection: Assessment of Tiered Products.....	75
How to Assess Tiered Assignments.....	77
Summative Assessment	77
Formative Assessment.....	77
Self-Checking.....	78
Self-Reflections	78
More Self-Reflection Ideas	79
“Dear Teacher” Notes	79
Two-Minute Quick Writes	79
Reflecting on the “Construction” of My Learning	80
Personal Reflection on Processing	80
Checklists.....	80
Cubing.....	81
Rubrics and Scoring Guides	82
Interviews and Conferences as Assessment Tools	82
What About Marking?	82
Tying Things Together	84
6 Cutting the Tape: Time to Start Tiering!.....	85
Parting Words.....	87
Appendix: Resources	89
Resource 1: Uniqueness Bingo.....	91
Resource 2a: My Learning Strengths at School	92
Resource 2b: My Learning Strengths at Home.....	93

When beginning to build a structure, we must create a solid foundation. Without it, no matter how creative or beautiful the structure is, it will eventually fall apart. When learning to tier instruction, it is important to have a deep understanding of differentiating instruction and how differentiating in this way is just one part of the process.

Differentiating Instruction

There are many different definitions of differentiated instruction. There doesn't seem to be one, specific way to describe it, but there are several factors that are important when adjusting instruction (Figure 1.1, page 4). We like the word "doable" to describe how to differentiate.

Differentiating begins with knowing your students. There are three things you can find out about them: what interests them, how they learn best and how ready they are to learn a particular concept. Once you know these things about your students, you can adjust the content of what they are to learn. This is not to say that we can change the curriculum goals, but we can choose the kinds of materials they will use to learn and adjust the kinds of supports they may require to access the content. Next, the process of how they learn can be adjusted. This can incorporate things such as learning styles, multiple intelligences and cooperative learning. Finally, we can adjust the way students will demonstrate their learning by considering what products they will create or how they will show their learning.

Differentiating Content (Adjusting Materials and Supports for Learning Concepts)

- ◆ Resource materials are available at varying readability levels
- ◆ Audio and video clips
- ◆ Peer and adult mentors
- ◆ Keyed concepts and boldface typed vocabulary
- ◆ Ideas presented through a variety of tools (e.g. websites, audio books)
- ◆ Varied manipulatives and tools (e.g. charts, graphic organisers)
- ◆ Charts and models used to convey an idea
- ◆ Concrete objects used to explain abstract ideas
- ◆ Multimedia presentations including PowerPoint presentations
- ◆ Interest centres for additional exploration
- ◆ "I Wonder" statements to foster curiosity about current topics to guide mini-lessons, resources and connections
- ◆ Events and interests in students' lives as examples in content areas
- ◆ Multiple intelligences and learning styles in exploring materials, especially considering auditory, visual and kinesthetic modes

- ◆ “Big picture” concept as well as the “step-by-step” understanding within each unit of study
- ◆ Text-to-speech software

Differentiating Process (Making Sense and Meaning of Content)

- ◆ Levelled questions or question stems (different levels of complexity)
- ◆ Learning centres
- ◆ Personal agendas containing universal class assignments and supplementary or in-depth assignments for particular students
- ◆ Hands-on materials used in a variety of ways to build understanding of concepts
- ◆ Varied pace according to student’s readiness and processing rate
- ◆ Literature circles, discussions and Socratic seminars as ways to examine topics closely
- ◆ Cooperative learning tasks
- ◆ Choice in strategies for processing
- ◆ Varied working groups (partners, triads, small groups and alone)
- ◆ Use of WebQuests
- ◆ Choices for learning through activity structures such as RAFTs, choice boards, learning contracts, etc.
- ◆ Use of speech-to-text software

Differentiating Products (Showing What Has Been Learned)

- ◆ Varied product choices that have options within the multiple intelligences and the learning styles, and considerations for gender, culture and interests
- ◆ Technology-based products (e.g. digital photos, podcasts, blogs, wikis, multimedia presentations)
- ◆ Collaboration with art, music, physical education and drama teachers to assist in the development of the criteria and quality assignments with students on various products for scoring guides and rubrics
- ◆ Use of student-designed rubrics to showcase criteria and levels of knowledge and understanding (with teacher input and guidance)
- ◆ Tiered product activities

curriculum, and students are expected to reach learning goals, but with different kinds of support, complexity and pacing.

Straight Talk on Tiering: What It Is and What It Isn't

In understanding tiered instruction, it is important to understand not only what it is, but what it is not. Figure 1.2 serves as a brief summary and it can help teachers focus on what they are planning and check whether it falls within the construct of tiering.

Figure 1.2. Is this Tiering?	
Yes	No
◆ Begins with, and focuses on required curriculum	◆ May or may not be focused on curriculum
◆ Focuses on “big ideas” that will endure over time and be transferable to other subjects. All learners reach the same learning destination	◆ Curriculum is altered or not used. Care is not given to focus on enduring understanding
◆ Uses proactive instructional strategies, based on preassessments and ongoing formative assessments	◆ Reactive strategies after students have already experienced predictable frustration
◆ Fluid, constantly changing groupings, based on student needs	◆ Groups that stay the same for long periods of time or for the whole school year
◆ Tasks with increasing or decreasing complexity, abstractness or open-endedness; they are qualitatively different	◆ Adds or removes the volume (quantity) of work
◆ An indicator of a student’s readiness to learn a particular concept	◆ An indicator of the ability or potential of the student
◆ Appropriate support or open-endedness provided for learners at all levels of readiness	◆ Support only for those who are “less ready”
◆ Creating as many tiers as necessary according to student preassessments	◆ Always three levels of tiering
◆ Equally engaging and challenging for all students	◆ Interesting, engaging tasks only for those who are most ready and tedious drill and practice for those who are less ready
◆ Encourages high levels of thinking for all students	◆ High-level thinking for only some tiers
◆ Strategically employed when there is a wide gap in readiness	◆ Used all day, every day

The Three Tiers

Year-Level Tier (START HERE)

Many students will be at this “year-level” tier. This tier starts with the learning goals, the curriculum statement. It is beneficial to begin with this tier because it contains the goal that is required. In fact, if you weren’t tiering, this would be the objective you would teach. Choose an activity that has the appropriate concepts and allows for processing the specified objectives.

Basic Tier

Now that the Year-Level Tier is prepared, it’s time to create a Basic Tier task for those students who have not yet acquired the background knowledge or skills to master the objective. What small steps in the skills or content do these students need to support their learning and create a solid basic level of understanding? Figure 4.4 contains examples of how the teacher can structure work for this tier so that it has more support, or scaffolding.

Advanced Tier

Once the Basic and Year-Level Tiers are prepared, an Advanced Tier task is created for students who show mastery or near mastery of the concept through a preassessment, and now need an opportunity to work in more depth or complexity, or with more open-endedness. Figure 4.4 provides examples of how this might be done with this tier.

To adjust tiers, consider using the strategies outlined in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4. Learning Strategies for Tiering

Learning Strategies for the Learner Not Yet at the Learning Goal	Learning Strategies for the Learner Already at the Learning Goal
◆ Provide a graphic organiser—fill parts of it out to get student started.	◆ Have students create their own graphic organiser.
◆ Photocopy sections of text so that students can highlight, place sticky notes in important sections, write their thinking, circle confusing sections, etc.	◆ Provide students with choices on how to process what they are reading (journal entries, split-page processing notes, writing in the margins of photocopied texts, novelty books such as foldable books, etc.).
◆ Provide sentence prompts, question stems or framed paragraphs to help the student get started.	◆ Use the following dimensions of depth and complexity to add challenge:

Figure 4.6. Tiered Lesson Plan: P-2: High-Frequency Words

<p>The Big Picture of the Lesson:</p> <p>Concept, Skills, Essential Questions, Enduring Understandings or Goal</p> <p>Recognise high-frequency words.</p>	<p>Preassessment</p> <p>Independent reading of a checklist of the first 50 high-frequency words.</p>	<p>Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Checklist of 50 high-frequency words for teacher ◆ Flashcards of the first 50 words for students ◆ High-Frequency Word Activities for teacher (see Fig. 4.11, page 64)
<p style="text-align: center;">Grabber & Hook</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Model lesson: Demonstrate activities using a few of the high frequency word flash cards (e.g. a flashcard game, sorting by beginning sound, making a sentence using the cards). Ask students to think about which one would be the most complex, least complex and just right activity for them. Discuss how some of these activities would help them learn the word in different ways. 2. Discuss with students: "How many of you would prefer the flashcard game? Sort by beginning sound activity? Make a sentence using the word cards?" Explain that there will be student choice of how to practise the first 10 high-frequency words. 		
<p style="text-align: center;">Instruction</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare activity stations so there are 2 choices at each (e.g. Basic Tier: students write the words on sentence strips and cut out their shape or they play the game Memory with the 10 words). These stations can be used for each additional set of 10 words that are practised each week. Remember to have students continually integrate the previously learned words each week in addition to the 10 new words. 2. Students work independently or in small groups at the stations to practise the words in a way that is most beneficial individually. 		
Basic Tier	Year Level Tier	Advanced Tier
<p><i>Possible Choice</i></p> <p>*This group may need the most teacher help. Students will play a word-matching game that includes reading the words aloud to their small group using the first 10 high-frequency word cards.</p>	<p><i>Possible Choice</i></p> <p>Students will take turns dictating prewritten sentences with multiple high-frequency words included to their own small group. The students within the group will write a sentence. The reader then can move to the next student.</p>	<p><i>Possible Choice</i></p> <p>Students will review the high-frequency words along with other words by playing the game <i>Make It, Mix It and Fix It</i> within their small groups. They will write these sentences on a piece of paper to share.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Closure</p> <p>Ask each student to write 2 new words that they learned during this exercise (may or may not be the high-frequency words). After giving response time, have the students hold their answers up for a quick formative assessment.</p>		

Figure 4.14. More Tiered Lesson Ideas: Examples for Younger Students

These “starters” may provide ideas to use as a springboard for more detailed lessons, that you can tailor for the needs of your students. There are a variety of subjects and year levels represented; some have ideas for two tiers and others for three.

Maths—Sorting

Basic: Sort objects that differ by only 2 characteristics with the support of graphic organisers (e.g. colour, shape, into 2 or more different groups (big/small; red/blue/green) and explain how they are grouped.

Standard: Sort objects that differ by 3 characteristics. Students should identify each group; and then regroup the same objects into a second different set of categories.

Advanced: Students create a Venn or H diagram, and sort objects provided on the organiser. They should state how the properties of the items cause them to fit into the specific sections of the organisers.

Reading—Comprehension Through Retelling

Basic: Students will use 4–6 pictures representing the text from a story. Students sequence pictures and retell the story.

Standard: Students will be able to read a story and retell the story with as many details as possible.

Science—Describing Objects by Their Properties

Standard: Students are given a variety of objects inside numbered plastic sandwich bags. Along with the items are slips of cardboard that have words describing each object. The students match the cards to the items, and then self-check their work by turning over the cards and matching its number with the sandwich bag number.

Advanced: Students find their own objects/materials and create their own word-description cards with the answers on the back. These tasks can be shared with other students.

Social Studies: Understanding Change Over Time

Basic: Students create a timeline with their own baby pictures (or pictures of a child growing from an infant to an older child) and describe and give examples of how they have changed over time.

Figure continues on next page.