

ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

USING THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

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REVISED EDITION
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM



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STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES

It has been my experience in working with teachers that nearly all know the standards they are to teach. Some are required to write the standards on the board each day; most all write them in their lesson plans.

The achievement standards teachers must use are still being discussed and debated from state to state. Many states have adopted or partially adopted the Australian Curriculum framework. Other states, however, continue to utilise their own standards. If you are in a state that has not currently adopted the Australian Curriculum framework, the activities are easy to correlate to whatever standards you use.

The activities in this book are integrated across the curriculum. Many of them are interdisciplinary. Most require reading, writing, gathering information, organising and/or research skills. Therefore, many of the activities that I have categorised in one content area may address the standards in other areas as well.

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Note: Visual and performing arts are included in almost every set of activities in this book.

INTRODUCTION

Differentiation, assessment and standards-based learning are major buzz words and prime areas of concern for those of us working in education today. Teachers and administrators are well aware that all of their students need to meet the standards, yet at the same time they are equally well aware that students come to them at very different ability and readiness levels, with different interests, intelligences, learning styles and learning modalities.

Thus, the need for differentiation is obvious to most educators. Therefore, the challenge of differentiation doesn't come in identifying the need. Instead, it comes as teachers work to put the theory into practice in their classrooms. This book is written to address this challenge and provide a link between the theory and the "how-to" of differentiation.

WHO NEEDS THIS BOOK?

First and foremost, this is a book for teachers. I have discovered that while most teachers would like to differentiate their curriculum and day-to-day instruction, many do not understand how to actually implement differentiation. They need practical strategies that are user-friendly and that do not take an inordinate amount of time to plan and put into practice. Teachers also need ways to assess and grade the variety of student projects and performances that are often the result of differentiated instruction.

If you are a teacher new to differentiation, this book provides you with many examples of activities and assessments you can use as you begin to differentiate your curriculum. Utilise the examples as they are written or use them as models for writing your own. When teachers take the first step in differentiating the curriculum, other steps generally follow as they become more comfortable with this type of teaching.

If you are already differentiating your instruction, use this book to gain new ideas for both student activities and ways to assess products, performances and outcomes. Assessing a variety of products and performances is never easy, and writing assessment criteria succinctly is difficult, even for many experienced teachers. This book gives you new ideas for student products as well as ideas and wording for writing the corresponding assessment criteria.

Administrators and program coordinators also need this book. It offers many practical strategies that you can share with your teachers during a staff meeting, short in-service session or study group. It will help you translate the theory into classroom practice and will give you a multitude of different examples suitable for all year levels.

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

In my professional development workshops, I usually share eight to ten strategies for differentiation. Three of the most popular are the Noughts and Crosses format, the Individual Lesson Plan™ format, (including the Upper-Primary and Lower-Primary ILP) and the Tiered Primary Unit/Lesson Plan. Even though I show teachers how to write their own lessons and units in each of these formats, and give workshop time for them to do this, many teachers have asked me if I would create some of these differentiated activities with corresponding assessments for them.

This request, which I have heard from teachers over and over again, was the genesis for this book. It contains 21 Noughts and crosses activities and assessments, nine Upper-Primary Individual Lesson Plans and assessments, six Lower-Primary Individual Lesson Plans with assessments and 14 Tiered Lessons or Units with assessments. They are already written and ready to use! Teachers can use them, modify them, adapt them, or take ideas from them and write their own.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is organised into sections and then alphabetically by topic. The Nought and Crosses activity grids are alphabetised by topic, as are the Upper-Primary Individual Lesson Plans, the Lower-Primary ILPs and the Tiered Lesson Plans. I have included some samples for every year level and subject area.

Find the topic or subjects that most closely match the topics and units you are teaching. Check to make sure the activities seem appropriate for your year level. Use the form on page 10 to record the topics and your standards.

You may also want to consult the Index of Products/Performances if you need to work on any of these specifically or if you need ideas for new products and performances to give to your students.

You may copy any of the activities and assessments in this book to use directly with students in your classroom. You are encouraged to change or adapt the activities and assessments to meet the specific needs of your students, your curriculum or your state standards.

At the end of each section of this book you will find a set of step-by-step guidelines for writing your own differentiated activities and assessments using the format featured in that particular section. After you have tried some of the examples, challenge yourself to write a differentiated unit or lesson of your own!

I hope this book encourages all teachers to try differentiation. I further hope it will truly be a time saver for the many teachers who are already differentiating their instruction but do not have the planning time to develop all of the differentiated activities they would like to have.

Using this book both as a time saver and as a guide in implementing differentiation should result in a richer curriculum and more exciting learning opportunities for all students.