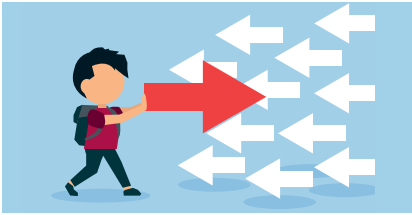




THE GOVERNOR JOHN ENGLER
CENTER FOR
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DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION



Definition

At its most basic level, differentiation consists of the efforts of teachers to respond to variance among learners in the classroom. Teachers can differentiate at least four classroom elements based on student readiness, interest, or learning profile: content, process, product and learning environment.

Strategies to Differentiate Instruction

Elements to Differentiate Instruction

- 1. Determine the standard** — All students are expected to master grade-level standards, so that all students should receive direct instruction and supports to attain mastery.
- 2. Content** — What the student needs to learn or how the student will get access to the information.
Examples include: (1) Using reading materials at varying levels; (2) Audio recordings of text materials; (3) Using spelling or vocabulary lists at readiness levels of students; (4) Presenting ideas through both auditory and visual means; (5) Using reading buddies; and (6) Meeting with small groups to re-teach an idea or skill for struggling learners, or to extend the thinking or skills of advanced learners.
- 3. Process** — Activities in which the student engages in order to make sense of or master the content.
Examples include: (1) Using tiered activities; (2) Providing interest centers; (3) Developing personal task lists written by the teacher with the common work for the whole class and work that addresses individual needs of learners; (4) Offering manipulatives; and (5) Varying the length of time a student may take to complete the task.
- 4. Products** — Culminating projects that ask the student to rehearse, apply, and extend what he or she has learned in a unit.
Examples include: (1) Giving students options of how to express required learning (e.g., create a puppet show, write a letter, or develop a mural with labels); (2) Using rubrics that match and extend students' varied skills levels; (3) Allowing students to work alone or in small groups on their products; and (4) Encouraging students to create their own product assignments as long as the assignments contain required elements.
- 5. Learning environment** — The way the classroom works and feels.
Examples include: (1) Ensuring there are places in the room to work without distraction along with places that invite student collaboration; (2) Providing materials that reflect a variety of cultures and home settings; (3) Setting clear guidelines for independent work that matches individual needs; (4) Developing routines that allow students to get help when teachers are busy with other students; and (5) Helping students understand that some learners need to move around to learn while others do better sitting quietly.

Resources

- » Edutopia.org
- » *Differentiation of Instruction in the Elementary Grades* by Carol Ann Tomlinson
- » *Differentiating Instruction in a Whole-Group Setting* by Betty Hollas
- » Teachingchannel.com