

Differentiation

By Juli Knecht (PAR Consultant)

As a PAR Consultant common refinement areas that my interns share for their growth goals are Assessment of Student Learning and Differentiation. When looking at these two areas, they essentially go hand in hand in support of their students' growth and progress. For many having a differentiated classroom is intimidating and seems overwhelming. In fact, if organized and planned correctly it can be a time saver and create a classroom environment that is academically productive and behaviorally sound.

To look at differentiation I want to first define this term simply from the root word different. Our students are different. Therefore, they require different approaches to their education. That seems very simple. Really it is that easy. We assess our students. We find out their learning styles, their learning gaps, academic and behavioral needs, backgrounds and experiences and we build from there. The misconception of differentiation is that it is time consuming and difficult. I will say, educators are pressed for extra time. **I will also say a well-run differentiated classroom saves time in the long run.**

So, now that we know students learn differently, what do we do? These precious and curious learners are a classroom of mixed abilities and various developmental academic learning levels. What is your differentiated classroom going to look like? Looking at the pictures below you can see what is a good differentiated room and what is not.

WARNING!

WHAT IS **NOT** DIFFERENTIATION

- ✗ The assumption that one instructional methodology benefits all students
- ✗ The assumption that one disciplinary practice works for all students
- ✗ The assumption that individualized instruction means planning assignments for each individual student
- ✗ The assumption that all work is "fun and games"
- ✗ The assumption that one educational philosophy or practice is better or more effective than all others
- ✗ The misconception that differentiated instruction is a comprehensive school reform model.

Differentiation Continuum

Not Differentiated

Fully Differentiated

Assessment is at the end.	Assessment is ongoing.
A single form of assessment is used.	Diagnostic assessment is used.
Teacher directs student behavior.	Teacher scaffolds self-reliant learning.
Instruction is whole class.	Flexible grouping is practiced.
Coverage of texts and curriculum drive instruction.	Materials are varied.
Intelligence is viewed narrowly.	Multiple forms of intelligence are valued.
Single option assignments.	Assignments offer multiple options.
Time is inflexible.	Time is flexible in terms of student needs.
Teacher solves problems.	Teacher facilitates student problem-solving.
Grading is based on teacher-set, inflexible objectives.	Grading is determined by learning goals.

adapted from Carol Ann Tomlinson, 1999
The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners, p. 16

Spotlight on Skills Continued

Differentiation

The teacher cannot just define the difference and provide different instructions or “water down” the same lesson. That is NOT differentiating. Before the master teacher can truly become a master at differentiating they must accept that their students are exceptional in many ways: ESL, special needs, gifted, etc. The next sentence is very important.

Instruction needs to be tailored to meet the student’s need; not the student tailored to meet the instruction!

So, now that we know what differentiation is all about, what are some ways that we can do this in the classroom? This is where it actually becomes fun. I sincerely mean that!! It is fun for the teacher and fun for the students. There is no single method at the heart of differentiating in your classroom. You are maximizing your students’ growth with a method that works for them, which in turn works out great for you. Sometimes it is trial and error. As I tell my interns you reinvent yourself, but in this case your classroom management and lesson delivery. Sometimes you must reinvent your differentiated approaches until they work. To start slow it could begin with numerous visuals, pacing, adjusting seating, providing resources, modifying worksheets, or providing enrichment materials for higher level learners. These are simple approaches.

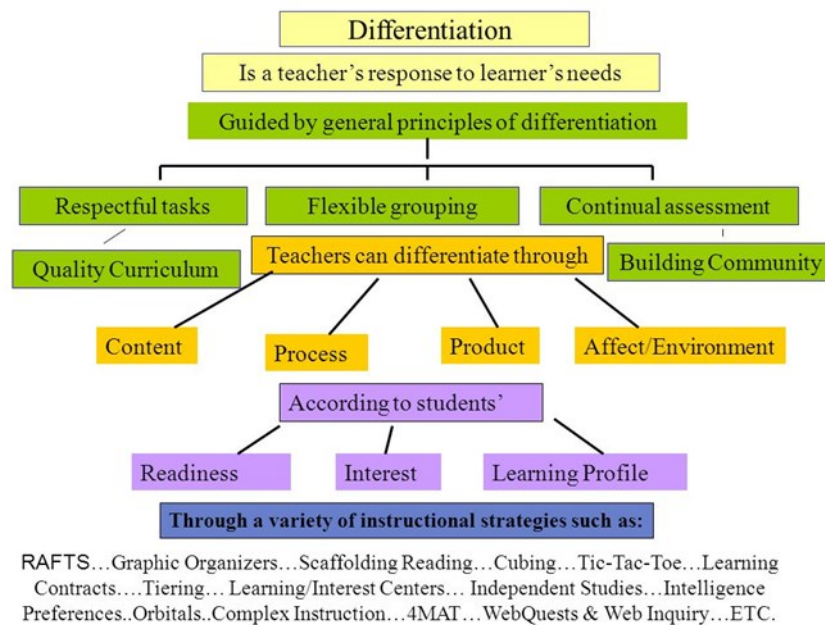
When you are ready you can step it up. Change the content or presentation for each student. For some it may be individualized with step-by-step instructions. Others it may be a power point that students read independently. Higher level learners can research and explore a topic on their own. How students work in the room can vary. Flexible grouping is a great option for students, building social skills and teaching teamwork. Remember this skill needs to be taught. Most students do not know how to work in groups. It is a learned skillset. The end product is another way to differentiate, which can look different for each student. This is where it can be based on developmental levels, learning styles, and/or student interests. Allow students to build on prior knowledge, incorporating their different perspectives of the world. If the learner sees their cultures and viewpoint in the lesson, they will feel validated and more interested in the lesson.

Spotlight on Skills Continued

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Wherever we decide to start, on-going assessment and growth are key to the planning. Always begin with the end in mind. What are you hoping to accomplish for each student? The outcome might vary, but at least you knew where you were headed. Assessments can be informal or formal throughout the process. Assessments can be interviews, surveys, student polls, student self-assessments and, of course, the finished products. It is never too late to start. Getting the students more engaged in learning is your goal.

Differentiation = Success



Resource List

www.edutopia.org/discussion/18-teacher-tested-strategies-differentiated-instruction

<https://education.ky.gov/educational/diff/documents/strategieshatdifferentiateinstruction4.12.pdf>

<https://www.prodigygame.com/blog/differentiated-instruction-strategies-examples-download/>

<http://cnweb.cn.edu/tedu/New%20Website%20Docs/Differentiatedinstructionstrategieskit.pdf>

http://www4.esc13.net/uploads/math/docs/podcast%20transcripts/LowPrep_DI_Strategies.pdf

<http://www.hartfordhustlers.net/caring.pdf>

Picture of Practice

Picture of Practice: Differentiation through Learning Stations

By Emily Burk
(First Year at CCS: Spanish Teacher)

A goal of mine this year was to incorporate lessons with stations into each unit. The stations I created have ended up being some of my favorite lessons, and my students' too! One of the best parts of doing stations is how I am able to differentiate. First, students are grouped by low, mid, and high performing. This data comes from a formative assessment that I usually give the day before stations. Often, I use Plickers to assess my students. Plickers allows me to see the data immediately, find trends in common errors, and easily group students. Since students are grouped based on this data, during stations I know the strengths and weaknesses of each group, as well as individual needs. One station is always facilitated by me. During this time, I differentiate based on what the group I am with needs. I reteach to the lower performing groups. This gives me time to break down the skill for the students struggling. The mid performing groups are given more practice to improve the skill, and minimize mistakes. I challenge the high performing groups to go above and beyond. As a World Language teacher, for me this looks like only using the target language, asking more difficult questions, and asking students to elaborate and use a wider variety of vocabulary.

Not only am I able to differentiate based on skill level during stations, but I also adhere to different learning styles. One station incorporates technology. Often this a web quest, cultural activity, listening activity, or students are given an opportunity to practice their vocabulary on Quizlet. When we use Quizlet at this station, students are given the choice of which study set they practice with, based on their own personal needs. At least one station involves hands-on manipulatives. For visual learners, most stations include colorful images. I spend lots of time laminating and cutting these images for future use. It's worth the time to be able to use it over and over again! I also do a mix of individual and cooperative learning activities within the stations. As a World Language teacher, I strive to include all four language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Each station is centered around one of these skills. Therefore, each station is quite different, which keeps students' interest. The station with me is always an interpersonal activity, in which the students and I engage in conversation in the target language. This is where I can adapt the level of difficulty of the questions I ask. Learning stations as an instructional practice is truly a great way to differentiate in multiple ways, and I love that the class is student-centered. I have found that doing stations in this manner keeps the students focused on learning as they enjoy having a wide variety of activities. In addition, I get precious one-on-one or small group time... all while catering to the various needs of my students.

Quizlet: <https://quizlet.com/>



Each student is highly-educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success as a citizen in a global community.

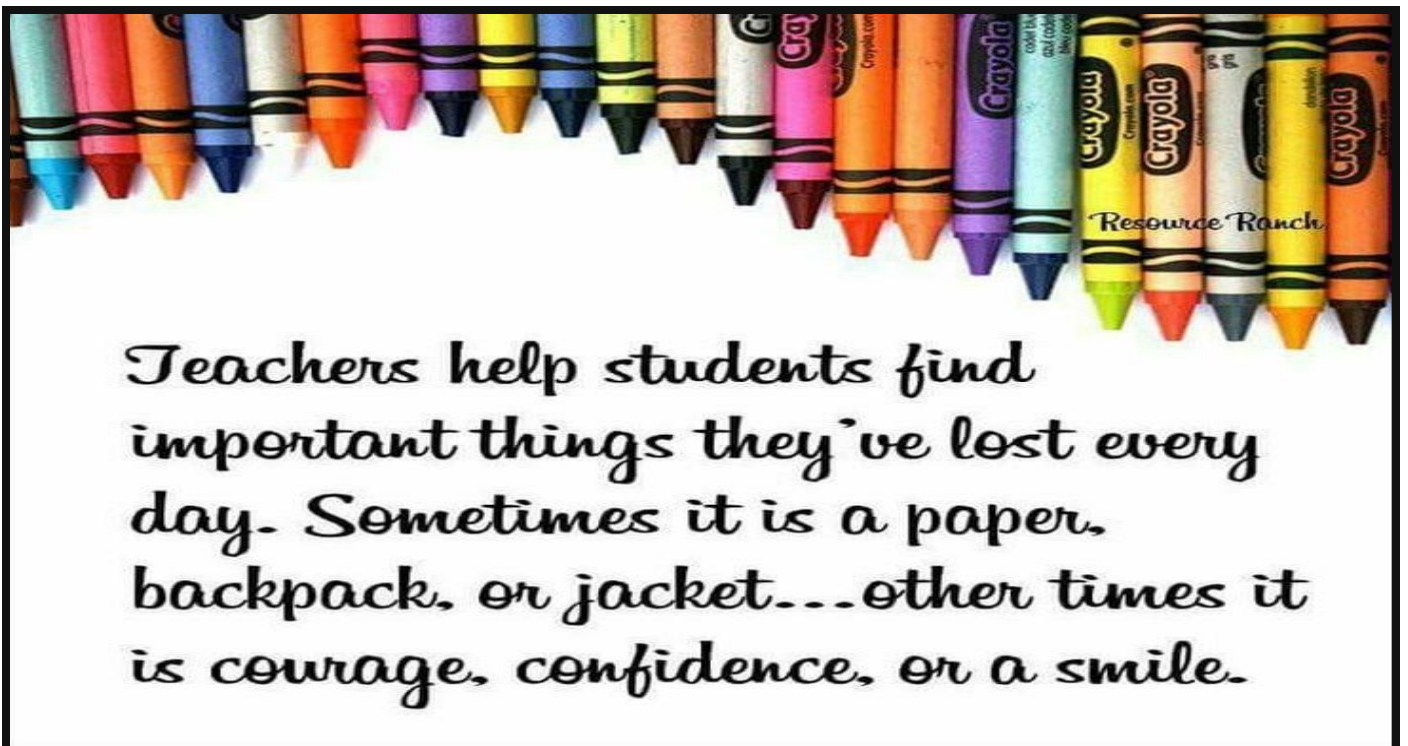
Trending Now

Genius Hour:

What is Genius Hour?

*Genius Hour is a movement that allows students to explore their own passions and encourages creativity in the classroom. It provides students a choice in what they learn during a set period of time during school. Below is a link to a video that explains Genius Hour in more details.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=COF-bqZuE-



Upcoming PD

March 2018

20th

The Inclusive
Classroom

April 2018

10th

Homelessness

18th

Teens & Technology
(TCFSH)

24th

Family & Student
Engagement

May 2018

8th

End the Year on a
High Note

Register on
CiMS-PD Planner
for CEU's

For future dates see
the PAR
Website at
[www.ccssoh.us/
PAR.aspx](http://www.ccssoh.us/PAR.aspx)

Have a topic you want to
submit? Send your
requests to
[lbutler@
columbus.k12.oh.us](mailto:lbutler@columbus.k12.oh.us)

On The Lighter Side

1. why are there rings on Saturn?

Because God liked it, so he

put a ring on it. Saturn was

NOT a single

Lady.

DID YOU REALLY JUST ASK



**IF YOU HAVE TO WRITE
IN COMPLETE SENTENCES?**