



Differentiation, Distilled*

*Distilled (di-stild') adj. 4. Separated or extracted essence

| What Differentiation Is... | What it is <u>NOT</u> ... |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting all learners where they are, and helping them move forward. Maintaining high expectations. Instruction and assessment that engage learners... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By considering students' learning profiles, interests, and readiness when planning experiences and assessments; Through grouping students in a variety of ways for different purposes designed to maximize learning; By using varied rates of instruction; With varying degrees of complexity, always respectful to the needs of the learners. An opportunity for a learner to compete against himself rather than others as he develops in his own understanding. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A one-size-fits-all delivery system for instruction and assessment. Lowering expectations. Instruction and assessment that engage learners... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By only addressing learners' learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic). Teaching struggling learners separately; teaching advanced learners separately. Keeping some learners busy, while others catch up. Giving advanced learners more work to do, or struggling learners less work or menial tasks to do. A competition among learners. |

So... Is Differentiation Really Doable?

“When we differentiate, we do whatever it takes to help students learn.... Adjusting lessons, homework assignments, classroom procedures, and assessments to meet students where they are—struggling, advanced, or in between—and making sure they’ve mastered their subjects is simply good teaching. And it is both possible and powerful for every educator.”
(Wormelli, 2007)

| Four Reasons to Differentiate: | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------------|-------------|
| Readiness | Interests | Learning Profile | Affect |
| Options for Modification: | | | |
| Content | Process | Product | Environment |

How to Meet the Needs of All Learners

Use Promising Cognitive Practices (Based on How the Human Mind Learns)...

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build background knowledge. Prime the brain. Structure information. “Load” the beginning and end of your lessons (Primacy-Recency Effect). Explore similarities and differences, examples and non-examples. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a positive learning environment (Emotional Content). Excite the brain; use novelty. Hydrate the brain. Promote healthy habits. Incorporate memory strategies. Engage learners in social interactions about learning. |
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Use General Approaches to Differentiate ...

- Change the nature of the task, not the workload. Design **different**, not more or less, work – all directed toward the same standard, but based on the readiness of different students.
- Use brief formative assessments for each “chunk” of learning to inform your teaching.
- Modify options for learning in the areas of content, process, product, affect, and environment.
- Vary the model of instruction used, in response to student needs.
- Establish a culture of flexible groupings to maximize learning.
- Collaborate with students; be open to the fluid nature of learning.
- Provide individual checklists for students to use to focus themselves and monitor their progress.

Tier and/or Ratchet Instruction ...

- Adjust the complexity and/or nature of tasks and experiences based on students' readiness to learn (capacity to handle different levels of challenge) from introductory to full mastery.
- Tier the instruction with respectful tasks.
- Compact the curriculum, when needed.
- Teach a variety of levels at the same time.
- Scaffold instruction; then pull back support as students can “fly solo.”



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Developed by Ann Lewis, Laurel School District, Laurel, DE; & Aleta Thompson, Cape Henlopen School District, Lewes, DE; January 2010
Resource: Rick Wormeli (2007). *Differentiation: From Planning to Practice, Grades 6 -12*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers and Westerville, Ohio: National Middle School Association.