

Using Differentiated Instruction

Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center (MC3)

Regional ELL/CCSS Task Force

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Definitions

- Differentiated instruction is a theory where the teacher considers diverse student factors to plan and deliver instruction.
- Differentiated instruction means changing the pace, level, or kind of instruction provided by the teacher in response to learners' needs, styles, or interests.

Differentiated Instruction IS...

- proactive,
- more qualitative than quantitative,
- rooted in assessment,
- providing multiple approaches,
- student-centered, and
- a blend of whole-class, group, and individual instruction.

Differentiated Instruction is NOT...

- disregarding all your planning from the past,
- the same as individualized instruction,
- lowering the standards so students do not fail or feel defeated,
- using strategies that are fun for students even if they do not focus on significant learning,

Differentiated Instruction is NOT...

- teaching “to the middle,”
- poor classroom management,
- another way to provide homogeneous grouping, or
- allowing each student to learn something different.

Differentiated Instruction should be...

- **rigorous**, providing challenging instruction to motivate students to push themselves;
- **relevant**, focusing on essential concepts and using the learning time to the maximum;
- **flexible and varied**, offering students different opportunities so they can select how they will learn and show what they have learned; and
- **complex**, actively engaging students in content that conveys depth and breadth.

What Can We Differentiate?

Differentiated instruction implies making modifications to instruction in one or more of its three areas:

- content,
- process, and/or
- product.

Modifying the Content

- Content refers to the curricular themes or concepts to be taught.
- Curriculum content is determined by the district or school to reflect state or national standards.
- Curriculum can be differentiated by
 - focusing instruction on the most relevant and essential concepts, processes or skills; or
 - increasing the complexity of learning.

Modifying The Content

- Differentiating content happens when the teacher
 - pre-assesses students' skills and knowledge about the topic, matching learners with proper activities according to their readiness;
 - gives students choices about topics within the theme of the lesson to explore in greater depth; and
 - provides students with basic and advanced resources that correspond to their level of understanding.

Modifying the Process

- The process comprises the strategies used to provide instruction.
- Differentiating the process implies the teacher
 - provides instruction that reflects the students' learning styles and preferences, using the same content; and
 - adds greater complexity or abstractness to tasks to engage students in critical and creative thinking.

Modifying the Process

- Differentiating the Process happens when the teacher
 1. groups students by their level of language proficiency;
 2. assigns tasks according to each level, using the same content for all groups;
 3. asks the different groups to share their ideas with the other groups; and
 4. reinforces the learning by compiling and organizing the ideas shared by the groups.

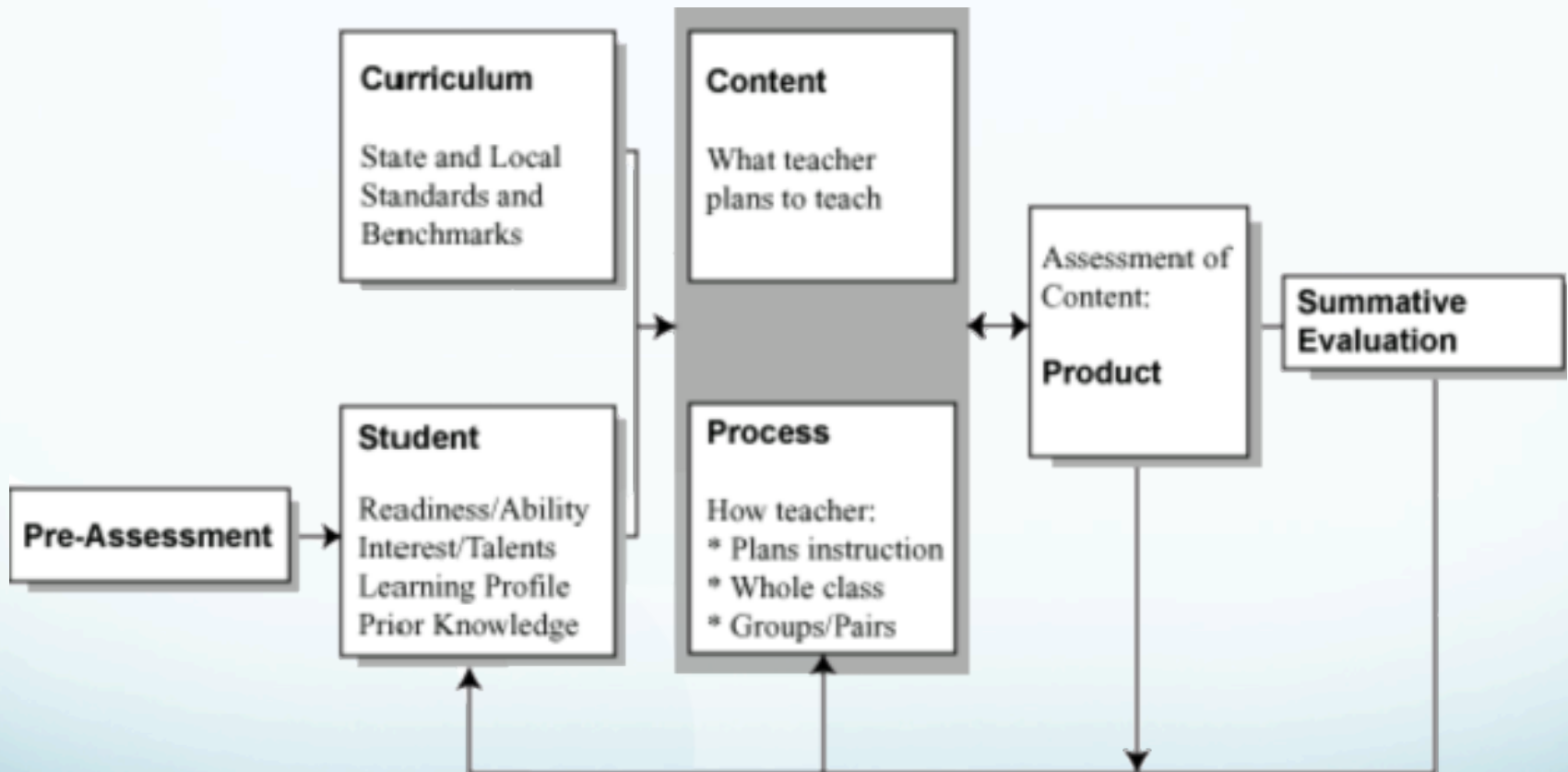
Modifying the Product

- Products are the end results of learning. They might be tangible, such as a report, brochure, or model, or they may be verbal, such as a dialogue, speech, or debate. They can also involve action, such as a skit, mock trial, or dance.
- Products reflect what students have understood and are able to apply.

Modifying the Product

- Differentiating the product happens when the teacher
 - gives students the opportunity to choose from a given list how they will demonstrate or represent what they learned, or
 - encourages students to be creative and suggest other ways to show the new knowledge they have acquired.

Process



(adapted from Oaksford, L. & Jones, L., 2001)

Non-effective Teaching Practices

- Presenting large amounts of material at once
- Failing to guide student practice
- Giving little time to students to process the new material
- Expecting that all students will get new material the first time
- Failing to prevent students from developing misconceptions

Positive Results

- To achieve effective results, teachers need to make sure, even if students may not always have identical tasks, every student's work is
 - equally interesting;
 - equally important based on essential understandings and skills for the unit; and
 - requires the student to think at high levels to make meaning of enduring ideas and apply essential skills.

Tiered Assignments

- All students are working towards the same essential skills and understandings, but at different levels of complexity, abstractness, and open-endedness.
- The focus of the activity is the same, but routes of access vary.

Tiering Assignments

Tiering can be based on

- level of challenge,
- complexity of the assignment,
- resources to be used,
- outcomes expected,
- process to be followed, or
- type of the required final product.

Tiering Level of Challenge

Example of tasks at various levels of challenge:

- *Application level:* Review the information about frogs and toads from the book, and record the characteristics of each on a chart.
- *Analysis level:* Review the information about frogs and toads from the book, and create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting these two amphibians.

Tiering by Complexity

Example of activities tiered by complexity:

- *Least complex:* Create a brochure provide information about an environmental issue related to rainforests.
- *More complex:* Create a brochure provide information about different points of view on an environmental issue related to rainforests.
- *Most complex:* Create a brochure that presents various positions on an environmental issue related to rainforests. Determine your position on the issue, and present a convincing argument for it in the brochure.

Tiering Tasks by Resources

Example of assignments tiered by resources:

- *Less advanced:* Use bookmarked websites to find information about healthy lifestyles and share your ideas on a display board.
- *More advanced:* Use print resources such as sports or fitness magazines to analyze the presentation of healthy lifestyles and construct a display board.

Example of Tiering by Outcome

After reading and discussing Martin Luther King's "*I have a Dream*" speech as part of a unit on social justice:

- *Basic task*: Think about Dr. King's dream for social justice as presented in his speech, and create a visual representation of his ideas.
- *Advanced task*: Think about the United States today. What other dreams of social justice do you believe have surfaced in response to new issues and concerns? Create a visual representation of your ideas.

Example of Tiering by Process

How do consumers make wise buying decisions based on relevant criteria?

- *Basic task:* Choose a product and review consumer information about it in publications such as consumer magazines. Identify relevant criteria for deciding what you should look for when purchasing this product.
- *Advanced task:* Choose a product and interview at least three people who have bought it. Identify the criteria these people used in making their decision to buy.

Useful Websites for Teachers' Professional Development

Best Practices: Pieces of the Puzzle

<http://wblrd.sk.ca/~bestpractice/index.html>

A Different Place

<http://www.adifferentplace.org/>

4teachers.org

<http://www.4teachers.org/>

Odds 'n Ends: More Ways to Differentiate

<http://www.gp.k12.mi.us/ci/diff/diff/oddsends.htm>

Useful Websites for Teachers' Professional Development

Math Staff Development

<http://jeffcoweb.jeffco.k12.co.us/isu/math/mathsd/index.html>

ASCD: Education Topics/Differentiation Instruction

<http://www.ascd.org/>

Jim Moulton's Education Sites

<http://www.jimmoulton.org/educator.html>



For additional information, please contact

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