

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION OVERVIEW

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Focus on mastery and independent thinking

Mastery: *Students have mastered content when they demonstrate a thorough understanding as evidenced by doing something substantive with the content beyond merely echoing it. Anyone can repeat information; it's the masterful student who can break content into its component pieces, explain it and alternative perspectives regarding it cogently to others, and use it purposefully in new situations.*

Assessment:

Focus on:

- Essential and enduring knowledge, concepts and skills
- Know, understand, be able to do
- Varied and “over time”
- Authentic
- Substantive (vs. “fluff”)
- Three important types: portfolios, rubrics, student self-assessment

Pre-assessment—used to indicate students’ readiness for content and skill development and to guide instructional decisions

Formative assessments—en route checkpoints, done frequently

Summative assessment—given at the end of learning; match objectives and experiences; formats are negotiable if the product is not the literal standard and would prevent students from revealing what they know about a topic

Backwards design: summative assessment first, then pre-assessment, then formative assessments

Grading:

Re-assess what grades mean . . . Do they truly indicate a student’s mastery?

Ten appropriates to avoid when differentiating assessment and grading

1. Avoid incorporating nonacademic factors, such as behavior, attention, and effort into the final grade.
2. Avoid penalizing students’ multiple attempts of mastery.
3. Avoid grading practice (homework).
4. Avoid withholding assistance (not scaffolding or differentiating) with the learning when it’s needed.
5. Avoid assessing students in ways that do not accurately indicate their mastery.
6. Avoid allowing extra credit and bonus points.
7. Avoid group grades.
8. Avoid recording zeroes for work not done.
9. Avoid grading on a curve.
10. Avoid using norm-referenced terms to describe criterion-referenced attributes.

Fair Isn’t Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom by Rick Wormeli (2006).

Examples of Differentiated Instruction

Teacher explains a concept in a different way to help a struggling student understand.

Teacher moves physically close to some students while explaining the assignment.

Students complete assignments of their choosing.

Students complete additional problems to get extra practice.

Teacher provides more examples to a small group to students to enhance understanding.

Teacher provides books on tape for students with reading disabilities.

Teacher orally questions student with intense test anxiety.

Teacher provides thermometers for students who are still at the concrete level of thinking.

Teacher provides extended time on an assignment to a student who struggles to meet deadlines.

Teacher gives a small group of students a challenging assignment that is different from what the rest of the class is working on.

One student is working independently on a project of his choosing.