ONE SIZE NEVER FITS ALL: DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION FOR ALL STUDENTS

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Everyone deserves to do meaningful work that develops and deepens understanding.
Goals for the day

- Some theory to contextualize your thinking
- Some questions to think about
- Some strategies/techniques you can use in your own classrooms
- Please ask questions at any time!
What does Differentiated Instruction mean to you?

- How do you understand Differentiated Instruction?

- What are you already doing to support your students’ diverse learning needs?
  - Think, pair share
Myths about Differentiation: What it is and what it isn’t!

- It’s just a toolbox of strategies

- Teachers must differentiate instruction every day, during every lesson

- Differentiation is just a more polite form of tracking – weaker students get less of the core curriculum and accelerated students get more of it
Let’s start with some theory

- Some fancy terminology
What exactly are DI, UDL and UbD?

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Understanding by Design (UbD)
- Differentiated Instruction (DI)
How to begin incorporating DI in your teaching

- Often teachers start their planning by thinking about the kinds of activities they want to include in their lessons.
- But what if we did something different?
Order of Operations

1: **WHY** am I teaching this?

2: **WHO** are the students in front of me?

3: **HOW** will I know that I’ve reached my goal?

4: **WHAT** activities shall I design?

5: **REFLECT** on what worked and what didn’t
Why I am I teaching this?

- Why am I bothering?
- Use Understanding by Design to determine essential meanings.
- Having a “cool” activity is not enough reason to teach something.
Getting to know your students

- Anchor Activity
- Activities
- Questionnaires
The Anchor Activity

- Who are the different learners in your class?
- Who are the proficient writers? The reluctant ones?
- Who are the very verbal students? Who are the reticent ones?
- Who feels comfortable with ambiguity? Who does not?
- Who are the “wiggly” ones?
- Who needs additional support?
So, why the anchor activity? Getting to know your students

- We are teaching people, not content.
- Create a culture of acceptance/expectation of difference
- Who we teach will inform how we teach.

Ask:
- What barriers to learning might exist in my class?
- What springboards to learning might exist in my class?
- Anticipate these and plan accordingly
How will I know that I’ve reached my goals?

Three kinds of assessment:
- Pre-assessment
- Formative assessment
- Summative assessment
Choice and Voice in Student Learning – Menus

- Using menus/Learning Contracts/Tic-Tac-Toe

- A differentiation technique that allows student choice in how their learning is demonstrated.

- Students are offered, and can suggest different options for the final product, but all products are evaluated with the same key criteria.

- Teachers must ensure criteria reflect the learning content goal, not just the product/production option.

- Secondary criteria can be linked to the specific product/performance option the student has chosen.
Choice and Voice in Student Learning – Centers (and Stations)

- Know your students
- Know your learning goals
- Attend to organizational concerns
- Create Centers that allow you to differentiate:
  - By modality (more verbal/visual/kinesthetic)
  - By group size (individual/partner/small group)
  - By aspect of study (character development; plot development; how milieu deepens meaning; thematic considerations)
  - And so on
Cubing – Considering a Topic from Multiple Points of View

- Kinesthetic and novel

- A technique that guides students to consider a topic from 6 different points of view/perspectives.

- Students can use cubes independently, in partners, or in groups.

- How it works: Each side of the cube has a different verb (can vary in complexity from concrete to abstract re: Bloom’s taxonomy)

- Keep the learning goals in mind as well as student readiness levels, interests and learning styles
Maintaining Goals/Standards...

- We need to be sure we are aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

- Using Understanding by Design, we really need to start with goals and assessment and work backwards.

- Therefore, although we may offer students different options for showing what they know, we use the same criteria for judging their responses (accuracy, thoroughness, including various elements). Therefore, criteria are derived from the content goals and not from the response mode.
Organizational considerations when planning a differentiated lesson

How will I use:

- time
- space
- materials
- Assistants
- Specialists
- Technology

What will I be doing during the lesson?

What will the students be doing during the lesson?
Reflection: Ask Yourself Five Critical Questions

- What is it we expect our students to learn?
- How will we know when/that they have learned it?
- How will we respond if they have not learned it?
- How will we respond if they already know it?
- Would we do anything differently next time?
The best laid plans…
When things go wrong

- Implementation Dips (practical and psychological)
- The need for patience, flexibility and humor
- The need for ongoing parental, collegial and administrative support
- The importance of communicating what you are doing in your classroom and why you are doing it.
“Grow slowly, but grow…”  
(Carol Tomlinson)