Differentiated Instruction

"Three principles from brain research: emotional safety, appropriate challenges, and self constructed meaning suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to classroom instruction teaching is ineffective for most students and harmful to some."

What is it?

- Differentiated instruction is a philosophy of teaching that asks the instructor to reach all learners on a personal level.
- Differentiated instruction takes many things into consideration for each student: prior knowledge, level of readiness, learning style, age and environment.
- Differentiated instruction has four main components:
  - Individual learner: instructors must know their individual students on a personal level
  - Brain cognition: knowledge of how the brain works at each stage of development
  - Curriculum: derived from state and district standards
  - Content: instructors must be knowledgeable on the subjects they teach
- Differentiated instruction can be accomplished in three ways:
  - Process: the path a student takes to understanding the objective
  - Product: how a student demonstrates understanding of the objective
  - Content: not more work, but more readiness-appropriate work to reach the objective

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Differentiated instruction is an approach to planning so that one lesson is taught to the entire class while meeting the individual needs of each child.
The teacher weaves the individual goals into the classroom content and instructional strategies. The content and the instructional strategies are the vehicles by which the teacher meets the needs of all the students.

Each lesson:

- has a definite aim for all students
- includes a variety of teacher techniques aimed at reaching students at all levels
- considers student learning styles in presentation of lesson
- involves all students in the lesson through the use of questioning aimed at different levels of thinking (Bloom's Taxonomy)
- allowing that some students will require adjusted expectations
- providing choice in the method students will use to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts
- accepting that different methods are of equal value
- evaluating students based on their individual differences

RATIONALE:

- Encourages inclusion of all students
- Addresses different learning styles
- Allows teacher to reach all of the students some of the time
- Allows for diversity among students
- Fosters social relations and self-worth
- Meets social, emotional and academic needs

STEPS:

1. Identify:
   - Underlying concepts - What is that all students are to understand. Need to clarify difference between the concepts and the content used to develop the concepts.
   - Student objectives
2. Method of presentation:
   - Concept presented in such a way that all students are able to gain varying degrees of knowledge based on their level of understanding
   - Learning styles of student - auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile
   - Level of cognitive domain - Bloom's Taxonomy
   - Differentiated participation - based on student's skill level
3. Method of student practice:
   - Allowance for assignments based on student's needs
   - Learning styles of student - auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile
   - Level of cognitive ability - Bloom's Taxonomy
   - Differentiated participation - based on student's skill level
4. Method of evaluation:
   - linked to method of performance
   - Learning styles of student - auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile
   - Level of cognitive ability - Bloom’s Taxonomy
   - Differentiated participation - based on student's skill level

5. Method of presentation: Adaptations may be necessary to the environment, the materials and the mode of presenting the information.

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Principles for Fostering Equity and Excellence in Academically Diverse Learners


**Good curriculum comes first.** The teacher's first job is always to ensure a coherent, important, inviting, and thoughtful curriculum.

**All tasks should respect each learner.** Every student deserves work that is focused on the essential knowledge, understanding, and skills targeted for the lesson. Every student should be required to think at a high level and should find his or her work interesting and powerful.

**When in doubt, teach up!** Good instruction stretches learners. The best tasks are those that students find a little too difficult to complete comfortably. Be sure there's a support system in place to facilitate the student's success at a level that he or she doubted was attainable.

**Use flexible grouping.** Find ways and time for the class to work as a whole, for students to demonstrate competence alone, and for students to work with varied groups of peers. Using only one or two types of groups causes students to see themselves and one another in more limited ways, keeps the teacher from "auditioning" students in varied contexts, and limits potentially rich exchanges in the classroom.

**Become an assessment junkie.** Everything that a student says and does is a potential source of assessment data. Assessment should be an ongoing process, conducted in flexible but distinct stages, and it should maximize opportunities for each student to open the widest possible window on his or her learning.

**Grade to reflect growth.** The most we can ask of any person—and the least we ought to ask—is to be and become their best. The teacher's job is to guide and support the learner in this endeavor. Grading should, in part, reflect a learner's growth.
Web Links for Further Resources

Overall DI resource page of related links:
http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/differentiated/front_differen
tiated.htm

Arizona Department of Education state standards:
http://www.ade.az.gov/standards/contentstandards.asp

Learning styles (or multiple intelligences) information:
http://www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple_intelligences.htm