

**Differentiated Instruction and Examples of Specialized  
Instructional Practice  
Lesson Plans Should Reflect Teaching Styles and Learning Styles**

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The New Haven evaluation process provides opportunities for teachers to document multiple instructional pathways for different student learner styles. To reach different student learners lesson plans need to include varied approaches, and examples of student responses to these varied instruction practices should be kept on file by teachers for review. Rather than looking just at teacher behaviors a new emphasis is focused on what actually takes place in the classroom. Evidence such as instructional practice, assessment instruments are cataloged for exercises or activities for each style.

In other words, educators are now being asked to document different instructional practices and the response to those practices as part of an ongoing “ instructional assessment process.” In some school districts, educators assemble a “ portfolio” of instructional practices utilized in teaching the class. This is commonly referred to as the “ differentiated classroom instruction.”

The differentiated classroom is a learning environment where a wide array of teaching practices are used to accommodate differences in students' learning styles, interests, and abilities. In teaching within the differentiated classroom, teachers select variety of effective instructional techniques and determine a plan for incorporating them into their current teaching practices. The plan provides for selecting teaching methods and learning activities for a unit of instruction that facilitates learning for all students. Teachers using accepted assessment techniques classify students that appear to benefit from one or more instructional styles. The lesson plans should be written down and placed into student folders.

In a differentiated classroom, students work at their individual pace and assessed according to their learning goals. Assessment is embedded into activities and is

extensively considered during the planning process. Teachers use assessment results to determine student strengths and weaknesses and, most importantly to plan for the next lesson.

To effectively implement differentiated instruction educators should have the resources - electronic media, technology, manipulatives, texts, supplies, etc., available and in ample quantities. It is important to remember that differentiated instruction lesson plans are part of the new district evaluation policies. Differentiated Instruction is also an important component of the districts LRE (Least Restricted Environment) compliance initiative with the Office of Civil Rights.

The following definitions and explanations of differentiated instruction are from S.E.R.C. (Special Education Resource Center of the State Dept of Education). They are located in Middletown, Connecticut and offer a wide array of seminars and professional development workshops on specialized instruction for different student learners. They were abstracted from a directory of teacher inservice workshops but provide information about the five components associated with this type of instruction.

## **Planning for Differentiated Instruction**

Today's classrooms reflect the diversity of their communities. Effective instruction needs to provide for this diversity through differentiation. Differentiation involves matching curriculum components to learners by knowing their learning style preferences, interests, prior knowledge, and learning rate. The critical student differences that can be attended to are academic, social/emotional, and cognitive. Teachers will gain skills and techniques for taking existing units and expanding them to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities.

- define differentiated instruction;
- delineate goals and purposes for differentiation;
- explore ways to modify curriculum to attend to critical differences among students in grades 9-12, including students with disabilities, so as to improve student achievement;

- identify essential core content;
- connect Connecticut standards to unit content;
- analyze a unit in order to differentiate and meet the needs of all students;
- plan a unit for differentiating instruction.

### **Classroom Enrichment - Learning Centers (Cooperative Classroom)**

Learning centers provide educators the opportunity to actively engage students in the learning process. The use of learning centers supports meaningful learning in a developmentally appropriate manner (Sloane, 1998). With a multi-faceted, weighty curriculum, learning centers can often be difficult to organize and manage effectively. Teachers can minimize planning time and maximize students' thinking and learning through the use of learning centers.

After attending a professional development activity, it is often difficult to implement what one has learned. Spare time and access to resources is not always readily available. Teachers often find themselves dipping into their own pockets to provide strategic instructional materials for their students. This hands-on, "make and take" experience will give participants the opportunity to share ideas and complete several projects for immediate implementation in the classroom.

- develop exciting, integrated learning center activities;
- incorporate specific activities, materials, and ideas to enable all students in grades K-6, including students with disabilities, to become more independent and proficient learners.
- examine the essential elements of flexible grouping to enhance student achievement;
- design instructional activities to increase students' learning time and productivity;
- reflect on current use of learning centers and how to assist students with learning expectations;
- create learning centers for use as an integral part of the curriculum;

## **Teaching to Different Learning Styles**

The differentiated classroom is a learning environment where a wide array of teaching practices are used to accommodate differences in students' learning styles, interests, and abilities. In Teaching Within the Differentiated Classroom, teachers will explore a variety of effective instructional techniques and determine a plan for incorporating them into their current teaching practices.

Within the Differentiated Classroom covers the components specific to selecting teaching methods and learning activities for a unit of instruction that facilitates learning for all students. This session will focus on matching teaching and learning with the learning goals of a wide range of students. Strategies for using extension activities for greater depth of learning for all students will also be explored.

- teachers assess their own teaching style, attitudes, and practices to clarify how they can refine their skills;
- examine teaching practices that allow for critical differences among students in grades 9-12, including students with disabilities, so as to improve student achievement;
- work with various case studies to identify differentiated teaching practices;
- create learning activities that ensure mastery and transfer of skills for the range of students in the classroom.

## **Managing the Differentiated Classroom**

Today's classroom include many diverse learners with a variety of diverse learning needs. Many educators readily accept the need to provide differentiated instruction to meet these diverse needs of the learners in their classroom. These same educators are often willing to use effective instructional techniques that allow for differentiation. Yet the biggest hurdle they face is the management of the differentiated classroom.

Teachers in Managing the Differentiated Classroom will learn strategies and develop a plan for setting up and maintaining differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all

students in grades 9-12. This session will focus on preparing as a teacher to differentiate, working with students and families, organizing the classroom, and managing student work.

- develop structures for initiating differentiated instruction in the classroom;
- explore various techniques for managing student work in a differentiated classroom;
- select a system for organizing grouping for instruction in order to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities, and improve outcome is for students in grades 9-12.

### **Assessing Within the Differentiated Classroom**

In a differentiated classroom, students work at their individual pace and are assessed according to their learning goals. Assessment is embedded into activities and is

extensively considered during the planning process. Teachers then use assessment results to determine student strengths and weaknesses and, most importantly, plan for the next lessons.

Teachers in Assessing Within the Differentiated Classroom will examine components specific to differentiated assessment when developing a unit of differentiated instruction in grades 4-12. This session will focus on various ways to pre-assess, including current classroom activities and using data to inform instructional grouping and to design products that demonstrate student learning in multiple ways.

- explore ways to modify curriculum to attend to critical differences among students in grades 9-12, including students with disabilities;
- examine multiple ways to pre-assess student understanding;
- use assessment data to determine effective instructional groupings in order to improve student achievement;
- develop differentiated products based on assessment data.

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