

# DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES

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| <b>Alternative Assignments</b> | These can include various ways for students to represent their understanding of a text they have read. Students might represent the main idea or message in the form of a drawing, a dramatic representation, or a written analysis. These can be assigned by the teacher or self-selected by the student.  |
| <b>Anchor Activities</b>       | These are tasks to which students automatically move as soon as they complete an assignment. They are a good way to help students cultivate the habit of using time wisely and with a clear purpose and should not be conceived of as busywork.   |
| <b>Agendas</b>                 | A personalized list of tasks that a particular student must complete in a specified time. They usually take a student two to three weeks to complete, and a designated time of the day or period is set aside for this purpose. While students are working, teachers can move about to coach and monitor progress.  |
| <b>Centers or Stations</b>     | These are different spots in the classroom where students work on different tasks simultaneously (i.e. the tasks can be distinct or work in concert with one another). Not all students have to visit all locations all the time, nor do all students have to spend the same amount of time at any location. Sometimes the teacher decides who will go where and other times the students self-select.  |
| <b>Choice Boards</b>           | Changing assignments are placed in permanent pockets or folders. By asking a student to make a work selection from a particular pocket or folder, the teacher targets work toward student need and at the same time allows student choice.  |
| <b>Curriculum Compacting</b>   | This approach begins with a focus on student readiness and ends with an emphasis on student interest. Teachers assess students before a unit of study or development of a skill. Students who do well on the pre-assessment do not continue working on what they already know. Three-stage compacting documents what students know, identifies what students do not know yet, and develops a plan for what these students will do with the 'bought' time. |

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| <b>Complex Instruction</b>  | A collaborative instructional strategy which has students work together in heterogeneous groups to complete tasks that genuinely draw upon the skills of each of them in order to ensure that each student is indispensable to the work of the group as a whole. The tasks should be open ended, interesting, accomplishable in more than one way, challenging, & use a variety of expressive modalities (e.g. oral, reading & writing, media). The tasks should not be exclusively dependent on decoding, encoding, computation or memorization.    |
| <b>Entry Points</b>         | This has been described as a strategy for addressing varied intelligence profiles. Students explore a given topic through as many as five avenues; for example, narrational, logical-quantitative, foundational, aesthetic, or experiential.   |
| <b>4MAT</b>                 | Based on several personality and learning inventories, this approach hypothesizes that students have one of four learning preferences. Teachers plan instruction for each of the four preferences during the course of several days on a given topic. Thus, some lessons focus on mastery, some on understanding, some on personal involvement and some on synthesis. All students take part in all approaches based on the belief that each learner has a chance to approach the topic through preferred modes and also to strengthen weaker modes. |
| <b>Flexible Groupings</b>   | These are fundamental to the differentiated classroom. Students move into and out of small groups either by choice or by teacher assignment. Students work with many different classmates during a unit of study because groups do not stay the same for long periods of time; likewise students can work as a total class, alone, or in pairs.  |
| <b>Group Investigations</b> | The teacher guides students through selection of topics and breaks the class into groups by learner interest. Then the teacher helps them with planning the investigation, carrying out the investigation, presenting findings, and evaluating outcomes both individually and as a group.  |

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| <b>Homework</b>                               | Many teachers begin differentiating assignments by creating more than one option for students. For example, students may respond to different questions or may read different books.   |
| <b>Independent Studies</b>                    | This offers a tailor-made opportunity to help students develop talent and interest areas. Teachers systematically aid students in developing curiosity, pursuing topics that interest them, identifying intriguing questions, developing plans to find out more about those questions, managing time, setting goals and criteria for work, assessing progress, and presenting new understandings.  |
| <b>Jigsaw Activities</b>                      | This is a popular cooperative learning strategy that divides the material to be studied into sections and makes individuals or groups responsible for learning and then teaching their section to the other students.  |
| <b>Learning Menus or Contracts</b>            | These are designed to give learners choices of tasks while still ensuring that each learner focuses on knowledge and skills designated as essential. Typically, they will include a 'main course' which students are required to complete in its entirety; 'side dishes' from which students must select a designated number of options; and 'desserts' which are optional extension or enrichment tasks. For older learners, the terms 'imperatives,' 'negotiables', and 'options' might be used in the form of a contract. |
| <b>Literature Circles</b>                     | Students may be assigned to read different texts connected by theme or genre or to select a text from possible titles. Then students can participate in discussion groups or produce an artifact such as a report or speech.   |
| <b>Multiple Texts &amp; Resource Material</b> | Using multiple texts and combining them with a wide variety of supplementary materials increases teachers' chances for reaching all students. Teachers can develop valuable differentiation resources by building a classroom library of varied-level texts, magazines, newsletters, brochures, and other print materials. Additionally, there is a rich array of materials available through the Internet, computer programs, audio and video materials, etc.   |

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| <b>Orbitals</b>                     | These are independent investigations revolving around some facet of the curriculum and lasting from three to six weeks. Students select their own topics and are guided by their teacher to develop more expertise on the topic and on the process of becoming an independent investigator.  |                   |                           |        |       |              |                    |      |               |            |                |      |                           |            |          |        |            |                 |        |                   |            |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|--------------|--------------------|------|---------------|------------|----------------|------|---------------------------|------------|----------|--------|------------|-----------------|--------|-------------------|------------|
| <b>Projects</b>                     | Students explore a topic as investigators, researchers, or discoverers of knowledge. Several variations are available: (1) structured projects (e.g. build the tallest structure that will stand alone using the materials given), (2) topic-related projects (e.g. choose a political figure and create a collage), and (3) open-ended projects (e.g. develop an innovative product that would be useful to the elderly).   |                   |                           |        |       |              |                    |      |               |            |                |      |                           |            |          |        |            |                 |        |                   |            |
| <b>RAFT</b>                         | <p>Students are provided choices for the ways in which they show that they know and can do (assessment tasks). The table or grid is designed as follows:</p> <table><tr><th>Role</th><th>Audience</th><th>Format</th><th>Topic</th></tr><tr><td>Nutritionist</td><td>Hungry Caterpillar</td><td>Menu</td><td>Eat healthier</td></tr><tr><td>One planet</td><td>Another planet</td><td>Venn</td><td>What I got that you don't</td></tr><tr><td>Pythagoras</td><td>Students</td><td>Letter</td><td>My theorem</td></tr><tr><td>Chinese student</td><td>Public</td><td>Political cartoon</td><td>Great Wall</td></tr></table> | Role              | Audience                  | Format | Topic | Nutritionist | Hungry Caterpillar | Menu | Eat healthier | One planet | Another planet | Venn | What I got that you don't | Pythagoras | Students | Letter | My theorem | Chinese student | Public | Political cartoon | Great Wall |
| Role                                | Audience   | Format            | Topic                     |        |       |              |                    |      |               |            |                |      |                           |            |          |        |            |                 |        |                   |            |
| Nutritionist                        | Hungry Caterpillar   | Menu              | Eat healthier             |        |       |              |                    |      |               |            |                |      |                           |            |          |        |            |                 |        |                   |            |
| One planet                          | Another planet   | Venn              | What I got that you don't |        |       |              |                    |      |               |            |                |      |                           |            |          |        |            |                 |        |                   |            |
| Pythagoras                          | Students   | Letter            | My theorem                |        |       |              |                    |      |               |            |                |      |                           |            |          |        |            |                 |        |                   |            |
| Chinese student                     | Public   | Political cartoon | Great Wall                |        |       |              |                    |      |               |            |                |      |                           |            |          |        |            |                 |        |                   |            |
| <b>Schedule Chart or Work Board</b> | These are used by teachers to help organize class time and to help students work independently as they follow the schedule. What students do in a particular task can vary based on interest or need; the chart assigns names of students accordingly. Students then go to the designated tasks on the chart in the designated order.  |                   |                           |        |       |              |                    |      |               |            |                |      |                           |            |          |        |            |                 |        |                   |            |

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| <b>Socratic Seminar</b>  | This is a discussion strategy that emphasizes thoughtful dialogue among the students without teacher intervention. In one model, all students sit in a circle and participate in an open-ended discussion based on teacher- or student-generated questions. Or students can sit in two concentric circles with the inner circle discussing and the outer circle listening (then they switch roles).   |
| <b>TIC TAC TOE</b>       | This seems like a positive way to present a variety of assignments. The assignments on the board can be arranged by rows representing degree of difficulty or learning preferences. A variation is to use the board for extension activities for students who have demonstrated the capacity to go beyond the core class assignments. Another variation is to have students complete three assignments, not necessarily in a row.                             |
| <b>Tiered Activities</b> | An instructional approach designed to have students of differing skill levels work with essential knowledge, understanding, and skill - but to do so at levels of difficulty appropriately challenging for them as individuals at a given point in the instructional cycle. Begin by developing one challenging activity squarely focused on the stated outcomes; then develop two to four different versions of the task to challenge the range of learners. |
| <b>Web Quests</b>        | These are inquiry-based activities designed by teachers to help students negotiate the Internet for a teacher-assigned or student-selected topic. When creating these, the teacher pre-determines links that are connected to the topic. They support differentiated instruction because they can be based on student readiness and interest and can be conducted as a group or individual inquiry.   |
| <b>Writing Workshop</b>  | Students work at their own pace at the various stages of the writing process. They may be working individually, in pairs, in small groups, or in conferences with the teacher.  |