



Differentiating Instruction

Try these strategies to help differentiate instruction for your students.

Learning Menus

When students need practice with a concept, provide options in the form of a learning menu. Include choices that differentiate for content (such as harder or easier texts), process (such as where to work), and product (such as presentation format). This can take the form of a tic-tac-toe board, or an appetizer-main course-dessert, or any other format you dream up!

Another Way

When some students seem to provide an answer or explanation more quickly than others, routinely ask those fast finishers to show you “another way.” What’s another way you can get that answer? What’s another explanation for the result? What’s another way to explain what happened?

RAFT

Use the RAFT strategy to differentiate instruction and to promote creative thinking. Assign (or have students choose) a Role, an Audience, the Format, and the Topic. For example, you may have students present a Topic that is related to the investigation question, and students might choose to play the Role of a newscaster, present in the Format of a cartoon, and pretend their Audience are parents.

Tiering Assignments

To scaffold struggling students and move each learner forward, consider tiering key assignments. Use Bloom’s Taxonomy as a guide for tiering. For example, if working on identifying theme, you might ask your struggling students to summarize the theme of a text using evidence. Students who are ready for more of a challenge could apply the theme of one story to another story. Students who need even more challenge could evaluate the theme, using evidence from the story to argue the importance of that theme in society.

Fact-Question-Connection

When curious people learn new information, they continue to ask questions and make connections to their unique interests and background knowledge. Encourage students to share their learning from secondary resources using a Fact-Question-Connection format. They should share one fact they learned, one question they still have, and one connection from what they learned to something they already know, something they are interested in, or something another classmate said.

Choice Moments

Whenever possible, allow for student choice. This could include allowing for different variables to be investigated, encouraging a variety of ways that data can be presented, providing different media for journal recording, or supporting different styles of presenting an argument. When students have a choice they can exercise critical thinking, they can learn from mistakes, they can develop self-direction, and they are more engaged and motivated to learn.

To see a Differentiating Instruction strategy in action, check out this Blue Apple project:



GERMS. They lurk in every classroom. Each year, students miss an estimated 164 MILLION school days due to illness. In this project, students will fight back against these microscopic monsters with this public-service project designed to make your school—and the world—a safer and healthier place. They will collect germs from common surfaces such as desks, laptops, and more. Then, they’ll test the effectiveness of disinfectants in fighting germs. Finally, they’ll create a public service announcement for their school.



To explore this project and others, visit BlueAppleTeacher.org