

Differentiating Instruction

Center on Instruction

Differentiating instruction allows classroom teachers to provide effective instruction to all students. Differentiating instruction is not a single strategy or practice but rather an approach that utilizes research-based instructional and organizational practices to accommodate student differences in the classroom. Teachers can differentiate instructional content, process, product, and/or learning environment based on student readiness, interest, and/or learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2001) to respond to the unique needs of each student. Some examples of differentiated instruction include: using various grouping practices such as small groups, pairs, and one-on-one instruction; modifying assignments so that all students can participate in learning; providing opportunities for students to respond in multiple ways including writing, orally, and by providing responses to peers; and using effective instructional strategies such as reteaching, using multiple examples, and teaching strategies for how to read, complete math problems, or remember content.

Action Principles

For District

1. Provide professional development on differentiated instruction for classroom teachers.
2. Utilize coaching methods to support teachers as they learn to implement differentiated instruction in their classrooms (Newman & Singer, n.d.).

For School

1. Continually assess students to obtain valid data and use this student data to inform instructional decisions and determine appropriate grouping patterns (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000; Tomlinson, 2001; Moon, 2005).
2. Use grouping strategies to meet the individual needs of students within the broader group context and design instructional tasks for each group to align with educational goals (Hall, 2002).
3. Use differentiated instructional strategies to include special education students in the general education curriculum (Boderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005) and to respond to the unique needs of diverse gifted learners (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2005).
4. Use student-centered activities (SCAs) to differentiate reading instruction for elementary students (Kosanovich, Weinstein, & Goldman, 2009).

References and Resources

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