



Leading Implementation of Differentiated Instruction: From Imagination to Reality

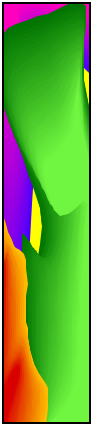
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- The fact that students differ may be inconvenient, but it is inescapable. Adapting to that diversity is the inevitable price of productivity, high standards, and fairness to kids.
- Theodore Sizer, Brown University

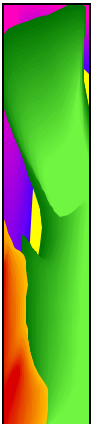
The biggest mistake of past centuries in teaching has been to treat all children as if they were variants of the same individual and thus to feel justified in teaching them all in the same way.

-- Howard Gardner



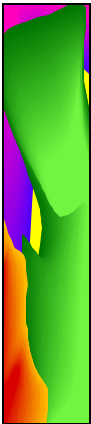
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Differentiation is...

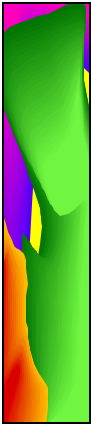
...the recognition that the increasing diversity of students requires an alternative to the one-size-fits-all approach and a commitment to plan for student differences. A differentiated classroom provides different avenues to acquire content, to process or make sense of information and ideas, and to develop products.



The Goals...

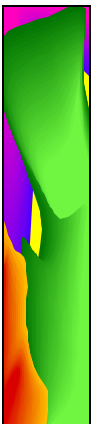
... of a differentiated classroom are to maximize student growth and to promote individual student success.

There should be no walls and no ceilings to learning.



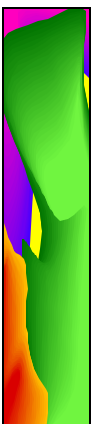
Three assertions:

1. Differentiated curricula and instruction can't succeed if they are rooted in ineffective curriculum and instruction.
2. Differentiation is not a set of strategies, but rather a way of thinking about teaching and learning.
3. Movement toward differentiation is movement toward expertise in teaching.



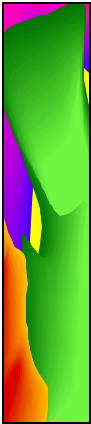
Differentiation is...

- Providing multiple assignments within each unit, tailored for students of different levels of readiness, interest, and/or learning style
- Having high expectations for all students. Aim high and differentiate down as necessary.



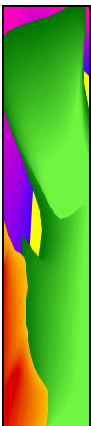
Differentiation is

- Permitting students to opt out of material they can demonstrate they know and to progress at their own pace through new material.



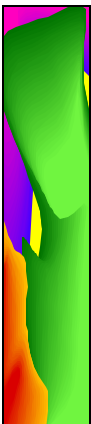
Differentiation is

- Allowing students to choose, with the teacher's guidance, ways to learn and to demonstrate what they have learned.
- Providing students with opportunities to explore topics in which they have strong interest and find personal meaning.



Differentiation is

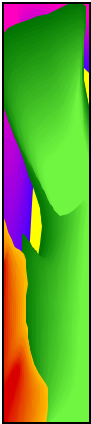
- Implementing flexible grouping strategies that cluster students by achievement (readiness) in a particular subject area, interest, learning style and/or personal choice.



Clearing Up Common Misunderstandings

Differentiation uses flexible grouping.

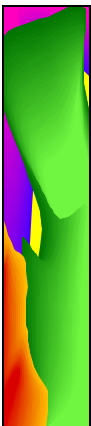
- Teachers implement flexible grouping strategies that cluster students by achievement in a particular subject area, interest, learning style, personal choice, and/or ability.
- **The key is flexible.** Teachers move students in and out of groups after assessing students' instructional needs.



Clearing Up Common Misunderstandings

Differentiation Isn't:

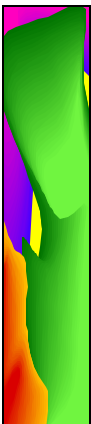
- The cumbersome technique of individualization. It can be thought of as grouped individualization.
- Giving all students the same work most of the time, even in achievement or ability grouped classes



Clearing Up Common Misunderstandings

Differentiation isn't

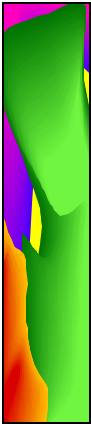
- Assigning more math problems or more reading at the same level to high achieving students.
- Focussing on student weaknesses and ignoring student strengths.



Clearing Up Common Misunderstandings

Differentiation isn't

- Requiring students to teach material that they have already mastered to others who have not yet obtained mastery.
- Cooperative learning delivered in rigidly grouped formats, lacks individual accountability, and/or focuses on work that isn't new to all of the students.



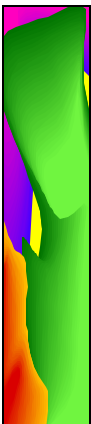
What Are the Forces that Create Stumbling Blocks?

- Long entrenched beliefs about education.
- Time and support: many central district resources have been downsized
- Some teachers need basic skills: what comes first?
- There are other demands on schools



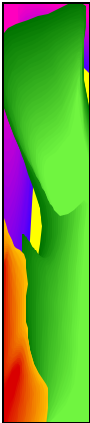
NCLB and Differentiation: There's more than one way

- There are multiple pathways to learning.
- The goal is not to have some children meet the standards and others not meet them but to provide support for those who need it and flexibility and freedom for those who need to keep going.



NCLB and Differentiation:

No walls and no ceiling to learning doesn't mean no floor.



Two Key Questions About Change

Is it worth it?

Can I do it?

Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillian & Switzler (2008)

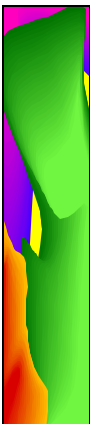


Is it Worth It?

What Forces Might Support Differentiation?

Parents Love Differentiation!

What would you say if someone told you I want to respond to your child's talents and needs and provide an education that maximizes his or her potential?



What Forces Might Support Differentiation?

- Increasing parental awareness and empowerment
- Movement toward best practices
- Assessment and Accountability
- Competition from alternative schools
- Increased student engagement and achievement



Best Practices that “fit” differentiation

- Response to Intervention (RTI)
- The use of assessment to inform instruction
- Teaching for understanding/Understanding by Design
- Higher order thinking
- Flexible grouping
- Danielson’s Frameworks for Teaching
- Special education and gifted education – both inclusion and support programs
- Challenge and accountability



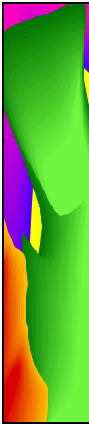
Initiation

- What are the conditions that allow differentiation to be initiated in a school district?
 - key administrative support
 - grass roots support of members of a significant stakeholder group (teachers, parents)
 - resources -- both financial and human



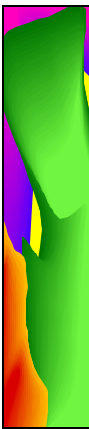
Implementation

- sufficient attention to supporting both teachers and administrators
- presentation of differentiation as a synthesis of good research on learning to avoid the pitfall of being considered a member of the “Flavor of the Month” club
- development of internal expertise
- access to external expertise



Implementation (con't)

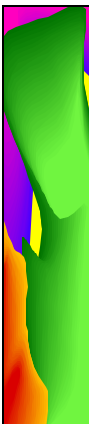
- parent education
- development of public commitment
- acceptance of a long timeline
- clear understanding of grouping and a willingness to use flexible grouping strategies on a regular basis
- adoption of a clear definition that appropriate education for all means all



Can I do it?

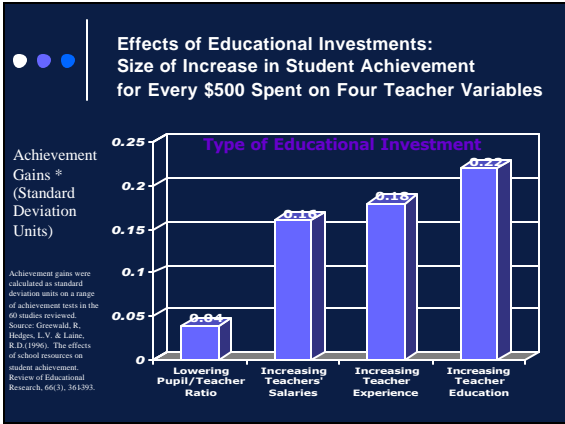
Supporting the Teachers: Staff Development

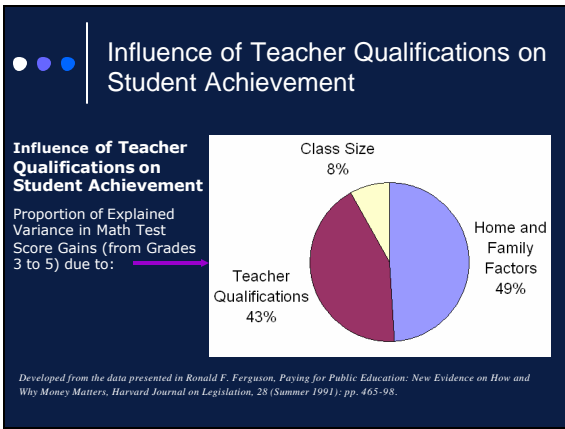
- differentiate for teachers' levels of readiness (comprehension, skills, commitment), interest, and preferred learning styles
- have varied foci – grade levels, subject areas
- mandate introductory level -- if not at first, at least after an early buy-in group has been established



Supporting the Teachers: Staff Development (con't)

- make advanced levels optional but accompanied by clear expectations as a part of the teacher evaluation system
- include incentives if not pay increase, then release time, recognition
- include building administrators who will work with teachers and increase their own expertise in order to be able to support and evaluate teachers' growth

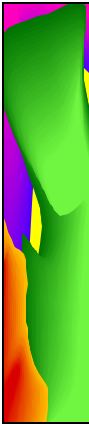




Supporting the Teachers

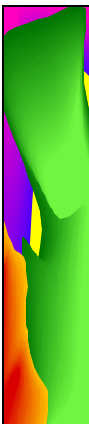
The biggest bang-for-the-buck practical tip:

Mini-grants!



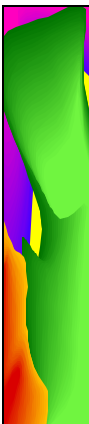
Strategies that Support Implementation

- focus on development of a core group of subscribers who have opportunities to interact (teacher loneliness)
- provide modest financial support (books for different readiness levels, pay to develop units, mini-grants, etc.)
- develop strategies for accountability for administrators and teachers and evaluate accordingly
- create realistic objectives and timelines for implementation



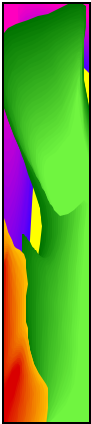
Strategies that Support Implementation (con't)

- align district goals and systems so that staff development, curriculum, instructional supports, textbooks, etc. incorporate differentiation
- develop system guidelines that promote the use of multiple materials at grade levels and in subject areas
- explore alternatives to traditional report cards and assessments



Continuation

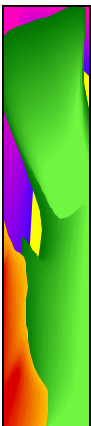
- Integration with curriculum
- Incorporate as part of teacher supervision and evaluation. What gets measured, gets done.
- Hire the right teachers! Look for student-centeredness



Hiring the Right Teachers for the Future: The Search for Positive Deviants

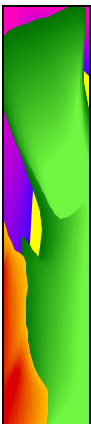
“They were ‘positive’ because they were doing things right, and ‘deviants’ because they engaged in behaviors that most others did not.”

Sternin and Choo (2000)



Hiring the Right Teachers for the Future: The Search for Positive Deviants

- Are some teachers predisposed to differentiate instruction?
- Is it possible – using Gallup and Strengthfinder type materials – to screen applicants for those characteristics?

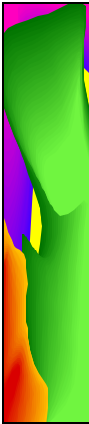


Hire the Right Teachers

Key Characteristic: Student Centeredness

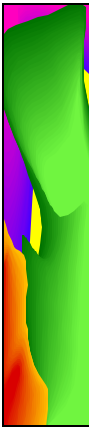
Differentiates effectively, considering and responding to the needs and abilities of each student individually and supporting students in becoming confident and competent independent learners.

This research was conducted in partnership with Polaris Assessment systems (Dr. John Arnold) and Mr. Larry Lobert



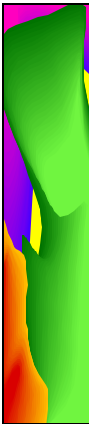
Student Centeredness

- Characteristic rated “very important” by high school students (N=206 m= 3.91) and successful teachers (N=74 m= 3.99) on a 5 point scale from 1 = helpful to 5 = critical.
- There were some differences among teachers by level but not statistically significant.
 - Elementary = 4.13
 - Middle School = 4.06
 - High School = 3.61



Does Differentiation work?

- Results in student learning from differentiation are difficult to separate out from other good practices.
- However, there has long been research evidence that components of differentiation indeed correlate to student achievement.



Does Differentiation work?

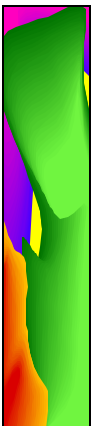
- A recent research study found a more direct link between differentiation and student achievement.
- The level of differentiated instruction reported by 4th grade teachers was positively and significantly associated with student achievement in both reading and mathematics on high stakes assessments.

Goddard, Y. L., & Goddard, R. D. (2007, November). *A statewide study of the effects of differentiated instruction on fourth grade students' mathematics and reading achievement*. Paper presented at the University Council for Educational Administration annual conference, Washington, DC.



Don't Underestimate the Time Investment

- There have been some changes in pre-service education but the progress appears slow and spotty



Don't Underestimate the Time Investment

- From the mouths of the new teachers
- Moral: We are more likely to teach as we were taught – not as we were taught to teach
- “It only takes a generation.”
