

# A FRAMEWORK FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

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## Guiding Questions to Help Teachers Address All Students' Needs

As you plan and deliver differentiated instruction (no matter which student group or needs you are responding to), you might be guided by the following issues and questions:

### **ASSESSMENT: WHO AM I TEACHING?**

#### **✓ My Students' Readiness:**

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- What do I know about my students' backgrounds, previous learning, and skill development?
  
- What can I learn from test data and other measurements of achievement and abilities?
  
- How can I learn more through classroom "pre-assessment" activities?
  
- What is the range of readiness in my classroom, and how might I respond to that range?

#### **✓ My Students' Interests:**

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- What do I know about my students' interests (in school and out), motivators, and goals?
  
- How can I learn more through classroom "pre-assessment" activities?
  
- What is the pattern of interests in my classroom, and how might I respond to that pattern?

#### **✓ My Students' Learning Profiles:**

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- What do I know about my students' favored learning styles and/or intelligences?
  
- How might cultural, socio-economic, or family background influence their learning profiles?
  
- How can I learn more through classroom "pre-assessment" activities?
  
- What is the pattern of learning profiles in my classroom, and how might I respond to that pattern?

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### **LEARNING TARGETS: WHAT DO I WANT MY STUDENTS TO LEARN?**

#### **✓ Key Concepts, Big Ideas, or Essential Questions:**

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- Which concepts, ideas, or questions provide a focus and frame for the unit or lesson?
  
- How can I ensure that these concepts, ideas, or questions are meaningful for all my students?
  
- How can these concepts, ideas, or questions provide an organizer for differentiation?
  
- How can I get (and keep) these concepts, ideas, or questions in front of all my students?

#### **✓ Standards:**

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- What content knowledge and skills am I focusing on in the unit or lesson?
  
- How do these learning targets align with standards from state, district, or national frameworks?
  
- How can I use the grade level benchmarks for these standards (or other resources) as a continuum of learning? Where are my students on that continuum?

#### **✓ Assessment:**

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- How can I assess what students know and can do in relationship to these learning targets before, during, and after instruction?
  
- How can I use or create rubrics to communicate these targets (and students' progress in reaching them) to all my students?
  
- How can I fairly assess, evaluate, and grade my students in relationship to these targets while still differentiating instruction and activities?

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## **DIFFERENTIATION: HOW WILL I ORGANIZE INSTRUCTION?**

### **WHAT WILL I HAVE STUDENTS DO?**

#### **✓ Varying Content: (What students study, know, and/or are expected to learn)**

- How might I vary the content expectations and learning targets based on my students' varying levels of readiness?
  
- How might I vary the materials students use or what they read based on their readiness, interests, or learning profiles?
  
- How can I unify the differentiated content expectations or materials students encounter through common concepts, big ideas, or collaboration and exchange among students?

#### **✓ Varying Process: (How students learn, are taught, and interact)**

- How can I provide varying levels of sophistication, scaffolding, and independence for students based on their readiness and learning profiles?
  
- How will I vary my teaching methods and learning activities in response to students' learning profiles, so that all students are in their "comfort zone" at least some of the time?
  
- How might I use varied grouping structures (ability, cross-ability, interest, learning profile, random) to facilitate both learning and positive social interaction?

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### ✓ **Varying Products:** (What students produce and how they demonstrate learning)

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- How might I vary the sophistication, complexity, or difficulty of tasks to accommodate my students' varying levels of readiness?
  
- How might I vary the level of structure, scaffolding, or independence provided to students as they complete tasks and develop products?
  
- How might I vary the nature of products to let students pursue their interests? How might I vary the modes of expression open to students in response to their favored intelligences or learning styles?
  
- How will I identify common criteria and expectations to guide student work and assessment? How will I use those criteria to establish fair, growth-based evaluation of learning and grading of products?

### ✓ **Organizing Instruction:** (How I organize and sequence learning experiences)

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- How do I synthesize the decisions I have made into a unified plan for differentiated instruction?
  
  
- How should I sequence and “calendar” activities into an effective learning progression? At what points might I need to monitor and adjust based on what I learn through ongoing assessment?