Differentiation Strategies and Modifications

To Support:
Students with Special Needs
English Language Learners
Students at Risk of School Failure
Gifted and Talented Students
Students with 504 Plans
and *All Learners*

Curriculum Addendum
Randolph Township School District
Randolph, New Jersey

Differentiation For All Students

Noted researcher Carol Ann Tomlinson has said, *"The idea of differentiating instruction to accommodate the different ways that students learn involves a hefty dose of common sense, as well as sturdy support in the theory and research of education. It is an approach to teaching that advocates active planning for student differences in classrooms."* (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)

Teachers have the important task of teaching to grade-level expectations and encouraging career and college readiness in a way that promotes learning for ALL students. **The Randolph School District helps all students, including those with special needs, English Language Learners, those who are "at-risk" of not meeting proficiency, and gifted students, to maximize their learning through differentiation of instruction**.

Differentiating instruction means that teachers observe and understand the differences and similarities among students and use this information to plan instruction. In order to differentiate instruction, teachers must continually strive to know and respond to each student's learning needs.

Tomlinson says that differentiation **is not a set of strategies, but a way of thinking about teaching and learning**. Strategies are the tools that accomplish differentiated instruction.

The characteristics of differentiated instruction are widely recognized to be:
- Respectful tasks
- Quality curriculum – Essential KUDs (What to Know, Understand, and Do), engagement, "teaching up"
- Flexible grouping – Multiple strategies, flexible management
- Continual assessment – Pre-assessment, ongoing assessment to inform instruction, 3-P grading (performance/product, process, progress)
- Building community – teacher/student connections; safe environment; shared partnership

Teachers differentiate for all students by adjusting:
- Content (including providing various levels of texts at each grade level)
- Process
- Product
- Affect/Environment

Differentiation should reflect students'
- Readiness
- Interests
- Learning Profiles

Differentiation can be accomplished through a variety of instructional strategies such as:
- RAFTS
- Graphic organizers
- Scaffolding
- Cubing
- Think-Tac-Toe
- Learning Contracts
- Tiering
- Learning/Interest Centers
- Independent Studies
- Intelligence Preferences
- Orbitals
- Complex Instruction
- 4MAT
- Web Inquiry
- Etc.

When tailoring differentiation to meet their students' unique needs, teachers should take into consideration what motivates individual students.

Students are motivated and engaged by a variety of conditions. Among these are:
1. Novelty
2. Cultural significance
3. Personal relevance/passion
4. Emotional connection
5. Product focus
6. Choice
7. The potential to make a contribution or link with something greater than him/herself

Methods of Instruction for Greatest Student Learning Outcomes

Teachers generally use 3 types of instructional methods:
1. Traditional instruction (primarily memory-based)
2. Critical-thinking instruction (primarily analytically based)
3. Triarchically based instruction (involving infusion of analytical, creative, and practical instruction)

Research has shown that, in general, <u>triarchic instruction is superior to the other modes of instruction</u>. (Sternberg, Robert J.; Torff, Bruce; Grigorenko, Elena L., Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol 90(3), Sep 1998, 374-384.).

Tips for teaching triarchically, to address the needs of all learners:
- Some of the time, teach analytically, helping students learn to analyze, evaluate, compare and contrast, critique, and judge
- Some of the time, teach practically, helping students learn to apply, utilize, contextualize, implement, and put into practice
- Some of the time, teach creatively, helping students learn to create, invent, imagine, discover, explore and suppose
- Much of the time, enable all students to capitalize on their strengths
- Most of the time, enable all students to correct or compensate for their weaknesses
- Make sure assessments match teaching; assessments should call upon analytical, creative, and practical as well as memory skills
- Value the diverse patterns of abilities in all students

Following is a list of some key principles that form the foundation of differentiating instruction (Laura Robb).
- **Ongoing, formative assessment:** Teachers continually assess to identify students' strengths and areas of need so they can meet students where they are and help them move forward.
- **Recognition of diverse learners:** The students we teach have diverse levels of expertise and experience with reading, writing, thinking, problem solving, and speaking. Ongoing assessments enable teachers to develop differentiated lessons that meet every student's needs.
- **Group Work:** Students collaborate in pairs and small groups whose membership changes as needed. Learning in groups enables students to engage in meaningful discussions and to observe and learn from one another.
- **Problem Solving:** The focus in classrooms that differentiate instruction is on issues and concepts rather than "the book" or the chapter. This encourages all students to explore big ideas and expand their understanding of key concepts.
- **Choice:** Teachers offer students choice in their reading and writing experiences and in the tasks and projects they complete. By negotiating with students, teachers can create motivating assignments that meet students' diverse needs and varied interests.

Nine Practices to Differentiate Reading Instruction (Robb)

1. **Make your read alouds a common teaching text.** Read-aloud materials become your common text, setting the stage for differentiation. Use them to build background knowledge and to show students how you apply strategies (Beck & McKeown, 2006; Robb, 2008; Wilhelm, 2001, 2005). You can also use them to introduce issues and invite students to respond to these issues. Making your read-aloud your teaching text will ensure that every student has access to the information and skills they need to become a better reader.

2. **Teach with diverse materials.** Avoid using one text for the entire class. Instead, use multiple texts at diverse reading levels for your units of study. This will enable every student to gather information from books and magazines they can truly read (Robb, 2003; Worthy et al., 1999).

3. **Organize for instruction so you meet all reading levels.** Whether you use a differentiated whole-class instructional approach or have students work in small groups, you'll need to organize each unit of study around a genre, issue, or topic — rather than teaching "the book."

4. **Value independent practice reading.** Set aside 15 to 30 minutes of class time, at least three times a week, for students to read books at their comfort levels — and these levels carry from student to student.

5. **Show students how to construct meaning while reading.** Students can become better readers only if they understand how to construct meaning as they read. By modeling the ways you think about texts during your read alouds, while you work with small reading groups, and in your one-to-one instructional conferences with students, you are offering students multiple opportunities for learning how to construct meaning

6. **Encourage discussion.** Discussion is especially important in a differentiated reading classroom because it provides a powerful way to build on every student's understandings and knowledge of facts. It also provides them with opportunities to clarify meaning and to build comprehension. By asking students to move beyond memorizing the facts to applying those facts to issues and problems through discussion, students deepen their understanding and recall. In-depth discussions among small groups, and with the entire class, can show students how their peers think and reason, can build background knowledge, and can make the facts relevant to their own lives.

7. **Write to explore, think, learn, and improve comprehension.** Learners can write only what they know and understand (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998; Robb, 2002; Self, 1987; Vaughan & Estes, 1986). If they haven't absorbed a lesson, they will have little to write. It's crucial for teachers to know that everyone in a class does not absorb the same information from a demonstration or a lesson (Clay, 1993). Reading students' writing can provide insights into whether students can think inferentially and analyze chunks of text. These insights support planning interventions for individuals, pairs, small groups, and, at times, the entire class.

8. **Use ongoing assessments to support each student.** Study the assessments students complete for a unit to discover their successes and their areas of need. Then support each student in your class by getting to know him or her so you can provide targeted instruction. Ongoing assessments allow you to do this.

9. **Plan your units carefully.** Thinking through each unit of study enables you to understand what you want students to learn about a genre, an issue, and reading strategies (Tomlinson, 1999). It will also ensure that you have gathered reading materials that meet the needs of each student, as well as appropriate texts for your read alouds.

The above strategies, while specifically written for the differentiation of "reading instruction," are also applicable to other subject areas.

Modifications For Special Education Students

The Common Core State Standards (2010) say, "The Standards should …be read as allowing for the widest possible range of students to participate fully from the outset and as permitting appropriate accommodations to ensure maximum participation of students with special education needs…. Students with disabilities…must be challenged to excel within the general curriculum and be prepared for success in their post-school lives, including college and/or careers….Therefore, *how* these high standards are taught and assessed is of the utmost importance in reaching this diverse group of students."

In their SGO guidance document for special education teachers (July 2014), the NJDOE recommends that teachers utilize specialized practices, modifications, and adaptations implemented with students' IEPs.

In the NJ Model Curriculum, differentiation strategies, which may be used for special education students, are listed in *Instructional Supports and Scaffolds for Success* as follows (see https://www.nj.gov/education/modelcurriculum/ela/success.shtml for more information):

Provide Multiple Means of REPRESENTATION
Options for Perception
- Ways of customizing display of information
- Alternatives for auditory information
- Alternatives for visual information

Options for Language, Mathematical Expressions, and Symbols
- Clarify vocabulary and symbols
- Clarify syntax and structure
- Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols
- Promote understanding across languages
- Illustrate through multiple media

Options for Comprehension
- Activate or supply background knowledge
- Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships
- Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation
- Maximize transfer and generalization

Provide Multiple Means of ACTION AND EXPRESSION
Options for Physical Action
- Use varied methods for response and navigation
- Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

Options for Expression and Communication
- Use multiple media for communication
- Use multiple tools for construction and composition
- Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance

Options for Executive Functions
- Guide appropriate goal-setting
- Support planning and strategy development
- Facilitate managing information and resources
- Enhance capacity for monitoring progress

Provide Multiple Means of ENGAGEMENT
Options for Recruiting Interest
- Optimize individual choice and autonomy
- Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity
- Minimize threats and distractions

Options for Sustaining Effort and Persistence
- Heighten Salience of goals and objectives

- Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge
- Foster collaboration and community
- Increase mastery-oriented feedback

Options for Self-Regulation
- Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation
- Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies
- Develop self-assessment and reflection

Modifications For English Language Learners

Differentiating Instruction for English Language Learners
What teachers do or don't do in the classroom influences the success of English language learners. Researcher Judy Haynes reported that highly skilled teachers of ELLs incorporate five essential practices into their work:
1. Creating a thriving learning environment
2. Differentiating instruction for English language learners
3. Encouraging flexible grouping for students
4. Using diversity as a resource
5. Developing alternative assessments for English language learners

One of the ways classroom teachers can create access to content learning for their ELLs is by modifying their speech to provide a greater amount of "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1985). Modifying speed, complexity, and syntax provides oral language that is comprehensible to learners.

Discourse adaptations supportive of student achievement include:
- Frontally facing learners while giving directions, rather than doing so with their back towards the class
- Using the same words and phrases repeatedly rather than using a variety of expressions
- Employing gestures and intonation to convey key concepts or words
- Writing the words or using visual supports to oral speech
- Paraphrasing or restating student statements

Scaffolding student activities:
Teachers of all children employ scaffolding techniques in the classroom as a routine matter of good practice, but particular techniques are essential to support ELLs. Scaffolding practices activate students' background knowledge, engage them in the learning through pairing and grouping, and initiate independent work only after a model or guide has been provided. These practices have been linked to student learning, and may include:

1. Activating schema prior to engaging in a task;
2. Use of think-pair-share or turn-and-talk structures to build in oral language use and processing time on tasks;
3. Use of "I do-we-do-you do" modeling or demonstrations prior to student work period;
4. Provision of key words, pictures, or sentence frames to support student work;
5. Summarizing or reviewing key learning points or principles.

Additional Modifications

Modifications for Students at Risk of School Failure

Data collected as a result of federal and state legislation are a good indicator of which students are meeting standards and which students are most at risk of school failure. For example, the White House recently reported that almost half of our nation's dropouts are Latino or African-American students (CNN.com, 2010).

In addition to race and ethnicity, other characteristics of at-risk students include:

- Low socioeconomic status
- English Language Learners
- Disabilities and identified as special education
- Moves frequently
- Poor reading skills
- Grade retention one or more years
- Multiple suspensions and expulsions
- Single parent households
- Home alone more than three hours a day
- Pregnancy
- Drug use
- Bored with school

(Jones, 2006, p. 11)

Teachers are encouraged to observe and understand their students' learning needs and employ the differentiations strategies contained in this document that best meet those needs (including the *Instructional Supports and Scaffolds for Success* contained in the NJDOE Model Curriculum: http://www.state.nj.us/education/modelcurriculum/success/).

Modifications For Gifted Students

What it takes to teach gifted learners well... begins with the premise that each child should come to school to stretch and grow daily. It includes the expectation that the measure of progress and growth is competition with oneself rather than competition against others. It resides in the notion that educators understand key concepts, principles and skills of subject domains, and present those in ways that cause highly able students to wonder and grasp, and extend their reach. And it envisions schooling as an escalator on which students continually progress, rather than a series of stairs, with landings on which advanced learners consistently wait.
~ National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC)

The NAGC, which provides research support for differentiation for gifted students, identified gifted learners as those students often characterized by:
- their ability to process information quickly
- their ability to make connections within and among disciplines
- the pace at which they learn
- the depth of their understanding
- the variety of interests that they hold
- Gifted learners need differentiated content, process, products, and learning environments

The NAGC reports that evidence-based practices that inform the teacher preparation and programming standards in gifted education relate to assessment, curriculum, instruction, and grouping issues, all of which are embedded within the CCSS. The most salient examples of these practices are:
- Pre-assessment and ongoing assessment can help educators adjust instruction for a positive educational experience since the pace of instructional delivery should be consistent with the individual student's progress.
- Assessments should be used to document academic growth and may include performance, products, and other tasks that are authentic to the domain.
- In the classroom, curricular modifications for gifted students include acceleration, enrichment, grouping, cluster grouping, problem-based learning, curriculum compacting, tiered lessons, independent study, and the use of specific curriculum models.
- By engaging gifted individuals from diverse backgrounds in challenging curricula, educators are more likely to recognize their abilities and potential, understand differing points of view and cultures, and reduce underachievement. Working in groups with other gifted students can yield academic benefits as well as enhance self-confidence and communication skills.

The 4 C's of Gifted Differentiation
1. Complexity
2. Curriculum Compacting
3. Creative/Critical Thinking Skills
4. Choice, choice and more choice

Thoughts about differentiating instruction for gifted students:
- Identify the student's areas of interest / strength through individual conferences, student surveys, etc.
- Incorporate the ideas and suggestions of the student when making plans; work as a team to plan appropriate activities
- Make curriculum connections
- Facilitate regular meetings/conference with the student in order to monitor progress, make modifications to the plans, encourage and praise
- Use the student's input in planning and implementing both formative and summative assessments; create the assessment tools along with the student when possible

Ideas for program differentiation for gifted students:
- Use Bloom's Taxonomy of Thinking Skills or Webb's Depths of Knowledge to create higher level thinking challenges within any given unit or topic of study
- Create opportunities for peer-tutoring, coaching, and teaching
- Encourage student proposed leadership opportunities
- Use independent learning kits or enrichment/extension centers within your class
- Provide a resource center which has an interesting selection of reference texts, science experiment books, etc. which challenge higher level thinking
- Use the computer - these students can often explore new programs and become the expert for their classmates as well as for you
- Offer the chance for them to be news editors for newsletters, etc.
- Encourage the writers to write a short story, novel, play, speech, etc.   .
- Provide opportunities for Independent Study projects **-** topic, format, plans, assessment, etc. negotiated between student and teacher - there are many ways these can be used in the classroom - as an alternate activity while the class is done something else, as an ongoing project to be worked on when other work is completed, etc.
- Provide choice by using extension menus that offer a variety of ways for students to show their understanding.

Modifications For Students with 504 Plans

Because students with 504 plans have a wide range of different needs, the following represents a variety of options that might be considered to improve student outcomes.

ACADEMICS	ASSESSMENTS
- Provide necessary services (Lit Support, Math Support, OT, PT, speech, etc.) - Preferential seating - Provide structure and positive reinforcements - Frequently check for understanding - Graphic organizers - Tracker - Slant board - Access to accurate notes - Provide enlarged copies of notes/textbooks - Access to notes ahead of time - Provide a print out of weekly assignments - Additional time to complete tasks/long-term projects with adjusted due dates - Limit number of items learning at one time - Break down tasks into manageable units - Directions repeated, clarified, or reworded - Frequent breaks during class - Provide books on tape, CD, read aloud computer software, or electronic text - Provide opportunities for using a Chromebook as well as assistive technologies - Use of closed captioned videos/film/television - Provide buddy system - Modify schedule - Modify deadlines - Adjust activity, length of assignment, and/or number of problems, including homework - Modification in grading system - Educate/train relevant staff with regards to the signs/symptoms, promote tolerance of needs, and/or providing assistance - Communication with parents - Use of Tutorial Center/Extra help - Allow verbal rather than written responses - Modify curriculum content based on student's ability level - Reduce readability level of materials - Allow typed rather than handwritten responses - Use of calculator - Use of a math grid	- Utilize dictionary on assessments - Use paper-based assessments or assignments - Provide assessments in a small group setting - Provide oral assessments - Permission to elaborate orally on written assessments - Permit use of scrap paper on assessments - Permit to write directly on assessments in lieu of using Scantron forms - Option to retake assessments - Provide a study guide - Modify spatial layout of assessments **ATTENTION/FOCUS** - Seat student near front of room - Preferential seating - Monitor on-task performance - Arrange private cue to student regarding off-task behavior - Establish and maintain eye contact when giving oral directions - Stand in proximity to student to focus attention - Provide short breaks when refocusing is needed - Use study carrel - Arrange physical layout to limit distractions - Frequently ask questions to engage student - Refocusing and redirection - Behavior/time management system - Group directions 1 step at a time - Assign "jobs" to reduce symptoms - Arrange physical layout to limit distractions - Frequently ask questions to engage student - Educate/train relevant staff with regards to the signs/symptoms, promote tolerance of needs, and/or providing assistance - Extended time on assignments/assessments - Provide assessments in a small group setting - Provide buddy system - Establish and maintain eye contact when giving oral directions
SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL	**PHYSICAL** Preferential seating

- Children's books addressing presenting problem - Student jots down presenting problem and erase when it goes away - Meet with guidance counselor - Student jots down presenting problem and erase when it goes away - Attendance plan - Utilize nurse/Health Office/counselor/SAC during episodes of presenting problem - Provide short breaks - Attendance plan - Communication with parents - Assign "jobs" to reduce symptoms - Behavior management system	- Arrange physical layout - Educate/train relevant personnel with regards to the signs/symptoms, promote tolerance of needs, and/or providing assistance - Use nurse during episodes of presenting issue - Attendance plan - Communication with parents - Use of alternative settings - Minimize excessive physical activities - Excuse from activities that affect presenting issue - Include presenting issue in emergency plans - Allow use of assistive devices - Monitor presenting issue

Other Pertinent Information For Differentiation

The following "Applied Research and Best Practices" are listed in the "Innovative Strategies" section of the NJDOE Resource Manual for Intervention and Referral Services (http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/irs/) and may serve as a reference point for differentiation:

- Multiple Intelligences
- Four Stages of Learning
- Managing the Conditions of Learning
- Cognitive/Learning Styles
- Cooperative Team Learning
- Behavior Management and Student Discipline
- Ineffective Disciplinary Practices
- Remediating Classroom Discipline Problems
- Moral and Ethical Reasoning
- Curriculum-based Assessment
- Life Skills
- School Climate
- Cross-age Partnerships

Another useful tool for a myriad of differentiation ideas is the *Pre-Referral Intervention Manual* (PRIM). The PRIM was developed in response to requests for intervention strategies for the most common learning and behavior problems encountered in the classroom. The strategies listed in PRIM are those that special education and regular education personnel have found most effective with students.

Resources

- McCarney, Stephen B., Cummins Wunderlich, Kathy, and Bauer, Angela M. *Pre-Referral Intervention Manual: The Most Common Learning and Behavior Problems Encountered in the Educational Environment*. Hawthorne Educational Services. (1999)
- National Association of Gifted Children: http://www.nagc.org/
- New Jersey Department of Education: *Model Curriculum. Instructional Supports and Scaffolds for Success*: http://www.state.nj.us/education/modelcurriculum/success/
- New Jersey Department of Education: *Resource Manual for Intervention and Referral Services*: http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/irs/
- New Jersey Department of Education: *Special Education:* http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/
- Rimm, Sylvia. Family Achievement Clinic: http://www.sylviarimm.com/
- Tomlinson, Carol Ann. Homepage: http://www.caroltomlinson.com/
- Tomlinson, Carol Ann. *What It Means to Teach Gifted Learners Well*: http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-education-practices/what-it-means-teach-gifted-learners-well