

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated Instruction – Quick Reference Notes

1. What Is Differentiated Instruction (DI)?

- **Definition:** A proactive teaching approach that tailors content, process, products, and learning environment to meet the diverse needs, strengths, and interests of all students.
 - **Goal:** Maximize each learner's growth and achievement while maintaining high expectations for everyone.
 - **Key Principle:** *One size does NOT fit all.*
 - Adjust **what** students learn, **how** they learn it, **how** they demonstrate learning, and **where** they learn it.
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2. Core Dimensions of DI

Dimension	What It Involves	Examples of Strategies
Content	What students need to know	• Tiered readings (e.g., basic text + enriched article) • Use of audio/video for auditory/visual learners • Curated resource lists for varying reading levels
Process	How students make sense of the content	• Flexible grouping (pairs, small groups, whole class) • Choice boards or learning stations • Guided inquiry vs. independent research
Product	How students demonstrate mastery	• Choice of output: essay, poster, video, podcast, model • Rubrics with differentiated criteria (complexity, depth, creativity) • Portfolio assessments

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Dimension	What It Involves	Examples of Strategies
Learning Environment	Physical & psychological climate	• Seating arrangements that support collaboration & focus • Clear expectations & routines • Access to assistive technology, manipulatives, quiet zones

3. Why Differentiate?

Reason	Evidence / Rationale
Student Diversity	Varying prior knowledge, language proficiency, learning styles, and abilities
Achievement Gaps	Targeted support can close gaps for under-represented groups
Motivation & Engagement	Choice and relevance boost intrinsic motivation
Legal & Ethical Mandates	Aligns with IDEA, Section 504, and universal design for learning (UDL) principles

4. Steps to Implement DI

1. Gather Data

- Pre-assessments, diagnostic quizzes, interest surveys, learning profiles.

2. Set Clear Learning Goals

- Common standards + tiered objectives (e.g., “All students will identify the parts of a cell; advanced learners will compare eukaryotic vs. prokaryotic cell functions”). |

3. Plan Differentiation

- Decide which dimension(s) to adjust for each goal.
- Create **tiered tasks**, **choice menus**, or **learning stations**. |

4. Organize the Classroom

- Flexible grouping plan, resource stations, technology setup. |

5. Deliver Instruction

- Use a mix of whole-class modeling, small-group scaffolding, and independent work. |

6. Monitor & Adjust

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- Formative checks (exit tickets, quick polls, observation).
- Re-group or modify tasks as needed. |

7. Assess & Provide Feedback

- Use rubrics that reflect varied product options.
 - Offer specific, growth-oriented feedback. |
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5. Common Differentiation Strategies

Content

- **Tiered Texts** – Same concept, different reading levels.
- **Graphic Organizers** – Concept maps, Venn diagrams, KWL charts.
- **Multimedia Resources** – Videos, podcasts, interactive simulations.

Process

- **Learning Stations / Centers** – Rotating tasks that address varying skill levels.
- **Flexible Grouping** – Homogeneous for targeted skill work; heterogeneous