



Learning Looks Different

The Differentiated Classroom

District #35 Training and Support

Human Resources:

Dr. James Curry, co-author of the The Curry-Samara Model for Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, professor at the University of Southern Maine.
The late Ms. Carol Morreale, Consultant and former Director of Instruction for Lake Forest School District
Dr. Marilyn Friend, professor at University of North Carolina, "Addressing Diversity in the Classroom: Concepts and Strategies"
Differentiated curriculum specialists to model, research, and share
Glencoe University classes, three terms

Professional resources:

Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom by Susan Winebrenner and The Differentiated Classroom by Carol Ann Tomlinson
The Foundation for Critical Thinking, Dr. Richard Paul, founder (link on district website)
Illinois Association for Gifted Children (link on district website)
Summer '04: "Practical Applications of Differentiated Learning Strategies" a workshop held at all three schools, led by successful teachers
Schools Attuned Training on Dr. Mel Levine's Developmental Constructs and Strategies for teaching to children's strengths
New Teacher Training Sessions, two days in August; mentoring program begins and continues throughout school year

LEARNING LOOKS DIFFERENT
The Differentiated Classroom

GLENCOE SCHOOL DISTRICT 35

Differentiated Learning Goals



1. Recognize differences in learning styles, interests, strengths, pace
2. Provide challenging, meaningful activities for all students
3. Meet varying needs of students
4. Integrate higher level learning within the general standards based curriculum
5. Promote excellence in instructional decision-making
6. Strongly encourage and motivate teachers to continue their education and training for understanding and supporting children who exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or specific academic fields.
7. Recognize students' abilities and challenge them early and every day.
8. Provide a psychologically nurturing environment
9. Experience the joy of learning and succeeding which has life-long effects
10. Learn persistence, organizational skills, and study skills to maximize student potential



What might teachers differentiate?

1. Content – What is taught; different groups learning different things or using different materials
2. Process – How content is taught; different instructional strategies may be necessary to get the most from particular students
3. Product – What should the evidence for learning look like? Products or performances may be varied and should balance what is a strength and what needs more practice.
4. Environment – To nurture creative and critical thinking, a child needs to feel safe. The message to all students must be that learning can look different for all or any of us. Each prescription is made for the individual and that's the way it should be. We honor one another and experience teaming with all types of learning. Sometimes we work with other talented people with similar needs. Other times we work with more diverse peoples whose gifts may not be obvious.



5. Assessment – How do we know learning took place? How do we know the activity or task was challenging and worthwhile? We learn to choose the assessment to fit the learning. Do we test, perform, or produce something? Do we compare our learning to others' learning or the criteria taken from the curriculum? Formative and summative assessment strategies are utilized. A balance is suggested for a more complete picture of the child's academic growth.



A Sample of strategies for differentiation.....

1. Interest based activities – based on child's interest or strength
2. Tic-tac-toe  – activities of choice across the disciplines or across intelligences or modalities
3. Socratic discussions – allow and encourage all voices; search for truth and meaning; raises level of discussion to standards of intelligence
4. Open-ended learning experiences – may create more questions; no simple solutions

5. Tiered activities – activities may vary, but same essential ideas are utilized (vary novel choice)
6. Flexible grouping – fluid groups of students with similar needs learn together
7. Clustering – a kind of leveling for instruction

8. Resident experts – child who is charged with a specific area of study who will later share information (like jigsaw learning) 

9. Extended Learning Plans – systematic plan for guiding students through individual or small group learning beyond what is normally expected or assigned
10. Independent study with or without a contract – designed for the individual to research and report; might include a contract describing perimeters
11. Compacting – identifies areas of strength, documents mastery of learning, and offers alternatives; sometimes called “instead” activities; if you don't need what is generally prescribed, do something else at a higher level.
12. Learning Stations – centering that includes levels of learning or choices
13. Individual learning boxes – designed for individuals or small groups for self-discovery, enrichment, reinforcement or practice



Questions....

How do we learn which students need a differentiated program?

1. Articulation among teaching teams in August and September
2. Parent inventories collected in the fall
3. Early conferencing
4. Surveying students with interest inventories, learning modality assessments, authentic assessments, products and performances, unit pre- and post-testing, routine quick checks like “one, two, three, go!” or personal learning time-lines, “cup it,” exit cards, mini-conferencing
5. Formal assessments like the Gates-McGinitie, running records or curriculum based measurements
6. Consistent classroom performance



How might students be grouped for various learning activities within a classroom or among other classes?

1. Interest
2. Ability
3. “Intelligences” or learning modalities or “right brain/left brain”
4. Mixed, taking on different roles that either challenge or meet needs
5. By specific need, as in mathematics unit of study

Note: These groupings are usually flexible to allow for movement in and out. There are times when grouping is not appropriate and whole group instruction is preferred. Open-ended assignments allow for extensions.

What are examples of appropriate student groupings?

1. The teacher plans for jigsaw learning where everyone takes a part to bring back to the whole.
2. Teaching partners or teams decide to mix students in flexible groups for a particular unit of study; each teacher takes on the responsibility for one group.
3. A teacher asks for a curriculum specialist to be involved in the planning or implementation of a special unit of study because learning needs are so demanding. The specialist can work within the classroom or pull out.
4. The same theme is being studied in social studies, and instructional connections will include a novel. The students are grouped by interest or ability in literature circles. Students might lead the circles, each taking a specific role. The teacher(s) become the facilitator(s).
5. There is one student in the classroom reading several levels above the others in the same whole group. A teacher partners with another teacher for clustering others of like ability into one literature group for a book study.



These strategies are *NOT* differentiation:

1. More of the same.
2. Students become tutors within the classroom for every assignment.
3. Reward strong learners with “busy” work.
4. Ignore the signs for a differentiated program.
5. Keep quiet about our instructional needs, material needs.
6. Expect differentiation to occur without administrative support.
7. End training efforts, which includes sharing strategies, knowledge, and materials.

A differentiated learning program might mean...

- ...providing what each learner needs instead of the same for all.
- ...learners are moving, thinking aloud, discussing options, engaged.
- ...taking risks and accepting mistakes as part of the process.
- ...products are not always worthy of “refrigerator posting.”
- ...no room for perfectionism.
- ...children are encouraged to self-advocate.

How do we expand programming and training?

1. Continue to seek funding for at least three differentiation curriculum specialists, one at each building.
2. Offer summer professional academies. *In 2006, the focus will be on differentiating assessment.*
3. Support various grade level curriculum projects for enhancements.
4. Expand Glencoe University offerings.
5. Hire teachers who have a strong foundation in differentiation as evidenced through their university work and teaching experience. Interviews include questions that encourage candidates to share concrete examples of how they differentiate for learners.

