

# Enhancing Classroom Learning through Differentiation



\*Image shows students in a classroom with their hands raised.

Learn about what differentiation is and what it looks like in the classroom.

## Understanding differentiation in the classroom

### What is differentiation?

- Differentiation is an instructional approach that tailors teaching methods, content, and assessments to meet the unique needs of each student in the classroom.
- Differentiation recognizes that students learn in various ways, are at different stages of their learning journeys, and learn at different paces.
- Differentiated instruction is student-centered.
- Differentiation involves recognizing and responding to the unique needs of students to create an inclusive and effective learning environment.

### Key components

Differentiated instruction occurs across four main areas.



Components	Description
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer different materials and resources based on student needs.</li> <li>• Design lessons that cover various levels of Bloom's taxonomy.</li> </ul>
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a variety of instructional methods and strategies.</li> <li>• Allow for different pathways to understanding, paying close attention to different learning styles.</li> </ul>
Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to demonstrate understanding in various ways.</li> <li>• Offer choices for classwork that match student interests.</li> </ul>
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify the learning environment to meet students' emotional and physical needs.</li> <li>• Use flexible seating arrangements and groupings based on readiness, interest, learning styles, and emotional needs.</li> </ul>

## Principles and Characteristics

**Differentiation isn't just a teaching strategy, it's a philosophy.**



Because of the broadness of differentiation, this isn't an exhaustive list.

- Recognize that students learn at different paces and in different ways.
- Tailor instruction based on student needs, interests, and readiness levels.
- Use a variety of instructional strategies that accommodate different learning styles.
- Create an inclusive learning environment that values all students' needs and preferences.
- Use assessment to gather information about student progress and to design instruction.
- Use diverse assessments so students can show their knowledge in different ways.



All classrooms look different. This is an example of a welcoming classroom with different seating and work areas with spaces for group and individual work.



# What does it look like?

## Classroom Examples

These examples were gathered from different general education classrooms with exceptional teachers.

- In a high school classroom, students work in groups to develop classroom rules and expectations. They narrow their list to five each and then come together as a whole class to determine ten classroom rules and expectations. When they have chosen ten, they post them throughout the classroom.
- Students in a middle school classroom studying WWII are provided with different reading materials or documentaries. Struggling readers can access simplified texts or videos, while advanced readers might engage with more advanced materials like primary sources.
- In a 4th-grade classroom, students can complete a presentation on the water cycle through a video, experiment, or research paper.

# References



Differentiated instruction: An introduction. (n.d.).

[https://differentiatedinstruction.ca/resources/4\\_ch1%20intro.pdf](https://differentiatedinstruction.ca/resources/4_ch1%20intro.pdf)

Ferlazzo, L. (2023, November 17). *What does successful differentiated instruction look like in the classroom? (opinion)*. Education Week. [https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-what-does-successful-differentiated-instruction-look-like-in-the-classroom/2023/11#:~:text=Teachers%20who%20practice%20differentiation%20in,banks%2C%20etc.\)%20to%20support](https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-what-does-successful-differentiated-instruction-look-like-in-the-classroom/2023/11#:~:text=Teachers%20who%20practice%20differentiation%20in,banks%2C%20etc.)%20to%20support)

*What does an inclusive, differentiated classroom look like?*. Susan Fitzell. (2021, March 25). <https://susanfitzell.com/inclusive-differentiated-classroom-look-like/>