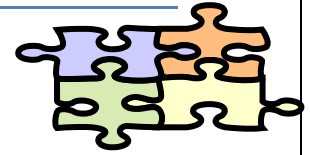


Word of the week: **Differentiation**



## History and Theory

Differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching and learning for students with different abilities in the same classroom. The theory behind differentiated instruction is that teachers should vary and adapt their approaches to fit the vast diversity of students in the classroom. (Tomlinson, 1995, 1999a; Hall, 2002). Teachers who differentiate instruction recognize that students differ in many ways, including prior knowledge and experiences, readiness, language, culture, learning preferences, and interests. They realize they must change the way they teach in order to reach all students (nyu.edu).



## Differentiation vs Tradition



There is no contradiction between effective standards-based instruction and differentiation. Curriculum tells us *what* to teach: Differentiation tells us *how*. Thus, if we elect to teach a standards-based curriculum, differentiation simply suggests ways in which we can make that curriculum work best for varied learners. In other words, differentiation can show us how to teach the same standard to a range of learners by employing a variety of teaching and learning modes (ascd.org)

## Teaching with Diversity

Diversity encompasses many characteristics including ethnicity, socio-economic background, home language, gender, special needs, disability, and giftedness. Teaching needs to be responsive to diversity within ethnic groups, for example, diversity within Pakeha, Māori, Pasifika and Asian students. We also need to recognize the diversity within individual students influenced by intersections of gender, cultural heritage(s), socio-economic background, and talent. Evidence shows teaching that is responsive to student diversity can have very positive impacts on low and high achievers at the same time (educationcounts.govt.nz).

## Classroom Learning Environment

The ideal learning environment includes a balanced student population, appropriate grade and program placement, priority seating based on student needs, has a reasonable class size, practices positive discipline, arranges furniture to promote group work, uses flexible grouping, and has adequate teaching supplies (nyu.edu).



### Reference

Cultural Responsive Differentiated Instructional Strategies  
retrieved from  
<http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/uploads/005/120/Culturally%20Responsive%20Differentiated%20Instruction.pdf>

Reconcilable Differences? Standards-Based Teaching in  
Differentiation retrieved from  
[http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational\\_leadership/sept00/vol58/num01/Reconcilable\\_Differences%C2%A2\\_Standards-Based\\_Teaching\\_and\\_Differentiation.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/sept00/vol58/num01/Reconcilable_Differences%C2%A2_Standards-Based_Teaching_and_Differentiation.aspx)

Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling retrieved  
from  
<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/5959>

Teachers can differentiate at least four classroom elements based on student readiness, interest, or learning profile: (1) Content—what the student needs to learn or how the student will get access to the information; (2) process—activities in which the student engages in order to make sense of or master the content (3) products—projects that ask the student to demonstrate what he or she has learned in a unit; and (4) learning environment — the way the classroom works and feels (nyu.edu)