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Overview

Applying Differentiation Strategies Notebooks

After attending countless conferences on differentiation, teacher and author Wendy Conklin did not feel that anyone really shared concrete ways of applying differentiation strategies in classrooms. So, she created a resource that made differentiation possible for every educator. Her goal was to take complex ideas and make them easy to understand and apply. In 2007, Conklin authored a series of handbooks on differentiation. There are three notebooks in the *Applying Differentiation Strategies* series: K–2, 3–5, and Secondary. Next, Conklin began to give exceptional professional development sessions based on the notebooks. Soon, she was traveling around the country conducting sessions. Trainings took place in Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, New York City, and other school districts around the country. This DVD is the next step in Conklin’s plan to make differentiation strategies accessible to all educators.

This DVD and Facilitator’s Guide offer a framework for professional development sessions focusing on differentiation strategies. The accompanying series, *Applying Differentiation Strategies*, adds value to professional development because participants can return to their school(s) with handbooks that further explain the strategies modeled in the DVD. However, the DVD and this guide can also be used without the notebooks. The key to successful professional development in differentiation is to give participants time and support. They need time to practice the strategies with their own diverse students, and they need support as they have successes and failures along the way.

About the Author

Wendy Conklin is an educational consultant, award-winning author, editor, and teacher. She trains teachers in staff development workshops across the country. Conklin has authored and edited more than 40 educational books. Four of her books won *Learning* magazine’s Teachers’ Choicesm Award. Two books won outstanding curriculum awards from the National Association for Gifted Children. She was also a contributing author to Teacher Created Materials’ *Primary Source Readers*, which won the highest educational publishing honor, the Golden Lamp Award from The Association of Educational Publishers.

While in her first year of teaching, Conklin quickly became aware that she could not reach all her students with the third grade curriculum that was handed to her. Some students struggled to keep up. Others needed more challenging work. All the students had unique interests. Instead of giving in to despair, she embarked on a daunting quest to find ways to challenge all her students.

Conklin has taught in a variety of settings including traditional classrooms, gifted pull-out classes, Saturday enrichment classes, and online graduate courses. She received her master of arts degree in gifted education and uses this knowledge to write curriculum and teach diverse groups of gifted children.

Tiered Assignments

DVD Segment Summary

Menu Choice	Tiered Assignments
Segment Length	11 minutes, 40 seconds
Associated CD Files	Natural Disasters Lesson disasters.pdf
	Tiered Assignments Planning Sheet (page 21) tiered.pdf tiered.doc
	Reflection Prompts—Tiered Assignments reflection05.pdf
Summary	<p>Standards require students to learn about the physical processes that shape patterns on Earth’s surface. They should learn about the various natural disasters that affect Earth.</p> <p>In this activity, students in the fourth grade class will jigsaw into ability-based groups. Each group will focus on at least one specific natural disaster. Then, the students will meet in mixed-ability groups and share the information they discovered. That way, all students will learn key facts and information about natural disasters.</p> <p>This activity should be followed up with focused reading assignments or discussions about each region to thoroughly meet the standard on physical processes.</p>

Differentiation Strategy Summary

One way to ensure that all students in a classroom, regardless of ability levels, advance using the same skills and ideas is to tier lessons. Often referred to as scaffolding, tiered assignments offer multilevel activities based on key skills at differing levels of complexity. One example of this is leveled reading texts. All students, regardless of reading abilities, can learn about a given topic by reading texts that are leveled according to the different reading abilities in the classroom. You can also take this one step further and provide comprehension questions that are leveled. Each student comes away with essential grade-appropriate skills in addition to being appropriately challenged. The entire class works toward one goal (learning about the topic), but their paths to that goal depend on their abilities.

Remember, just because students are above grade level does not mean they should be given more work. And, just because students are below grade level does not mean they should be given less work. Tiered lessons are differentiated because of complexity, not necessarily the quantity of work required for that lesson. Likewise, all tiered activities should be interesting and appealing. No one wants to be in the group that never gets to do the fun activities.

Tiered Assignments *(cont.)*

Reflection Prompts

- ▶ Why is flexible grouping beneficial during tiered assignments?
- ▶ In what ways can students be both homogeneously and heterogeneously grouped during one tiered assignment?
- ▶ The main goal of a tiered assignment is to get everyone in the class to meet the grade-level objective. How can you resist the temptation to give the above-grade-level students more work to keep them busy while you support the below-grade-level students as they work toward the objective? How can you plan for this?
- ▶ In what ways do you balance giving support to the below-grade-level students while also helping them reach independence and the objective so they can pass the standardized tests?

Applying the Strategy

After viewing the segment, “test” the participants by asking them to choose the best option for each group of students below. The grade-level assignment is a 15-question fractions activity sheet.

Below-grade-level choices:

Complete the 15 questions with partners or in a small group.

Only complete the even problems.

Finish the assignment during lunch or quiet reading time.

Complete the 15 questions with teacher help, as needed.

English language learner choices:

Label the parts of a fraction as a group, and work on the activity sheet in pairs.

Only complete the first five problems.

Partner with other students who are language proficient to complete the problems.

Illustrate answers in picture dictionaries.

Above-grade-level choices:

Finish the fractions activity sheet, and then do logic puzzles as an anchor activity.

Work on logic puzzles instead of the activity sheet.

After completing the activity sheet, complete 10 extension fractions problems.

After completing questions 10–15, write five fraction word problems. Include answers.

Give participants time to work on tiering their own assignments. They can use the *Tiered Assignments Planning Sheet* (page 21) to map out their assignments and plan how to tier the assignments above and below grade level. Remind them that the grade-level objective is their goal for all students. They just need to alter the paths students take to get to that objective. It’s important to note that assignments do NOT have to be tiered in all three areas of content, process, and product. Tiering the assignment in just one of those area is sufficient for most activities.

Name _____

Tiered Assignments Planning Sheet

Objective



On Grade Level	Content (What will students learn?)	
	Process (How will students learn the objective?)	Product (How will students share what they've learned?)

Above Grade Level	Content (What will students learn?)	
	Process (How will students learn the objective?)	Product (How will students share what they've learned?)

Below Grade Level	Content (What will students learn?)	
	Process (How will students learn the objective?)	Product (How will students share what they've learned?)