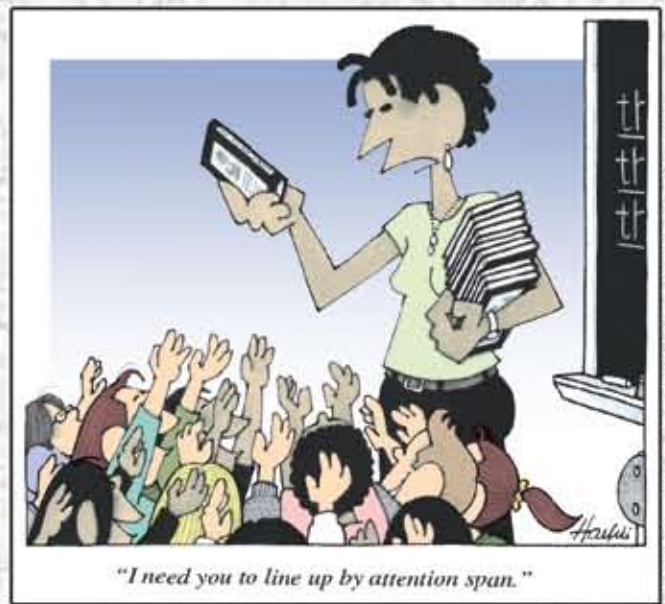


Leadership for Differentiated Instruction

As a school administrator, you are very familiar with the increasing diversity of students in your classrooms. Diversity used to refer to students from specific racial or cultural groups or to students with disabilities. But our students today are diverse in many other ways.

Differentiated instruction is a flexible approach to instruction and classroom management built on the readiness, interests, and learning styles of each student. Student instruction may be differentiated by content (what the student is learning), process (how they learn it), and product (how learning is demonstrated). Differentiation is a way to include students with disabilities successfully in the general education classroom; however, its customized approach to learning benefits **all** students.



No, differentiating instruction does not mean lining students up by attention span. It does mean taking each student's unique learning traits into consideration. Teachers who differentiate instruction don't follow a prescribed "program," but they do plan and organize instruction in response to the varied needs of their learners.



Adapted from Carol Ann Tomlinson, University of Virginia

With the right training and support, teachers can learn to apply the principles of differentiated instruction in combination with their own curricula and unique teaching style.

Our Mission Statement

The Florida Inclusion Network provides learning opportunities, consultation, information and support to educators, families, and community members, resulting in the inclusion of all students.

Implementing differentiated instruction – what school leaders say

Give teachers time. Differentiation doesn't take place overnight. It takes time and encouragement.

Commit to providing professional development based upon student and staff needs.

Start small: Identify teams willing to learn about and implement differentiated instructional practices.

"The differentiated instruction journey may never be over, but it is certainly a fascinating ride!"

Tom Gifford, Principal
Liberty Elementary, Charlotte County



"The use of differentiated instruction has made the implementation of our new reading series much more systematic."

Chuck Vilardi, Principal
Skyline Elementary, Lee County

Connect learning about differentiation with current school initiatives.

Think about how differentiated instruction aligns with your *School Improvement Plan* goals.

Consider how differentiating instruction fits with efforts to include students with disabilities and implement RtI on your campus.

Develop faculty study groups or other professional learning communities to explore the topic of differentiated instruction.

Cultivate internal expertise to facilitate problem-solving, conduct demonstration lessons, or assist with curricular planning.

Engage in ongoing reflection: What evidence do we have that students are doing better? What next steps do we need to plan?

“Teachers developed increased connections with each other. But most importantly, their collaborative efforts showed up in student achievement data.”

Charles Cuomo, Principal
Forest Grove Middle School, St. Lucie County

“Teachers have gained a better understanding of differentiated instruction and have embraced implementation as they realized it was something they were already doing! It reminded them that fair doesn’t always mean equal.”

Angela Hutchinson, Principal
Hiland Park Elementary, Bay County

Show your commitment and support by taking part in professional development activities.

Designate time at faculty meetings for teachers to share their success stories.

Celebrate success: Write notes of encouragement after classroom walk-throughs.



How can the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) help your school get started on the road to differentiation?

Read about how two Broward County schools began their journey:

Under the leadership of Principal Christine Flynn of Westglades Middle and Assistant Principal Donald Gardner of Coconut Palm Elementary, twenty one teachers completed a 14 week study group module for differentiating instruction developed by FIN. With the goal of success for **ALL** students, including those with disabilities, the teachers explored new ways to assess students and design instruction based on each student's learning style, areas of interest, and readiness levels. As a culminating activity, each study group developed an action plan to support and extend differentiated instruction throughout their school.

Your FIN Facilitator can provide...

- Current literature and videos so that you can get and stay informed.
- Assistance in analyzing student data and forming learning teams.
- Guidance in planning for long-term professional development, implementation, and support.
- Materials for and facilitation of faculty study groups.
- Opportunities to attend a variety of professional development workshops.
- And more!



Below is a suggested list of publications about differentiating instruction. Please contact your local FIN Facilitator for more information about how we can help your school get started. Just visit our Web site and click on "Meet the FINs" to contact your local facilitator. While you're there...take a look at our *Spotlights on Success*, *Resources*, and *Products* sections!

www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com

Read More About Differentiating Instruction:

- Holloway, J. H. (2000). Research Link/Preparing Teachers for Differentiated Instruction. *Educational Leadership*, (58)1, 82-83. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*, 2nd Edition. Alexandria VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Tomlinson, C. A., & Allan, S. D. (2000). *Leadership for differentiating schools and classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Wormeli, R. (2005). Busting Myths about Differentiated Instruction. *Principal Leadership*, May 2005. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- Wormeli, R. (2007). *Fair isn't always equal*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.