

Differentiated Instruction Module: Script

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Part 1: Basics of Differentiated Instruction

Learning Objectives:

- Define differentiated instruction and how it relates to concepts of equity.
- Understand the Zone of Proximal Development.
- Learn about the importance of pre-assessment and monitoring for continuing success in differentiation.
- Understand scaffolding, and how instructional scaffolds can be used to support diverse learners.

A3T0: Introduction to Module

Hi, thank you for viewing this module on Differentiated Instruction as part of our Foundations of Special Education learner pathway. This module was developed by Pastel Special Education and 1 Million Teachers.

In classrooms, we see a diversity of learners. We all learn a bit differently from each other and have different learning preferences that work best for us. Each child has their own unique set of personalities, skills, strengths, and areas of improvement. When we consider this with teaching, we must ask ourselves: does the way I teach support learning for all of my students?

Through this module, we will cover the topic of Differentiated Instruction, a set of concepts and skills to help tailor our teaching so that all students learn in ways that best support their development. We will cover what differentiated instruction is, the importance of pre-assessment and monitoring, scaffolding, and differentiating through content, process, product, and environment. Lastly, we will go through an in-depth example to help summarize these skills and help you apply these into your classroom.

As with all modules, we should remember to consider our guiding principles of understanding the individual, empathy, and patience. By understanding the individual, for all students, we can best design and support each student to learn; through empathy, we can better understand the strengths and challenges individuals' face, design around these challenges, and build foundations of positive relationships with our students; and lastly patience, understanding that it may take time for students to develop their skills and for supports to be effective, as well as give us the resilience to keep trying!

Thank you for watching, and in the next video, we will discuss What is Differentiated Instruction?

A3T1: What is Differentiated Instruction

Hi, in this video we will discuss What is Differentiated Instruction. Differentiated Instruction, also referred to as Differentiated Learning, is a methodology of teaching that focuses on adapting or modifying instruction to fit the learning preferences, how a child learns, and readiness, how prepared is a child to learn a skill, of a student. DI is built off of the concepts of equity; each child deserves to be challenged in ways that are appropriate and productive for their learning.



Take two children, Jamie and Mark. Jamie is a neurotypically developing female and her dad is a history teacher. Because of this, Jamie has also taken an interest in reading, and reads above her grade level. Mark is diagnosed with an LD. Mark is very interested in comic books and is still gaining mastery of pronouncing words out loud when reading.

If we were to teach a lesson on writing, the same exercise that would challenge Jamie, is likely out of the ability level of Mark. On the other hand, the exercise that would be optimal for learning for Mark might not be challenging enough for Jamie to support her learning.

With DI, we simply take into account each students' level of readiness and learning preference before designing a lesson to optimize learning for all individuals. Conceptually, DI is all about finding the right amount of challenge for each student. When we look at a learner profile, we can categorize tasks into three different levels.

1. Tasks that a learner can do unaided: these are tasks that we can think of as being too easy for optimal learning. For Jamie, this may be reading a picture book if she is already reading introductory novels. For Mark, learning to recognize letters could be categorized at this level as well.
2. On the opposite end, we have tasks that the learner cannot do. These tasks are too difficult for a student, making them not productive for a student's learning. For both Jamie and Mark, an extreme example of a task that the learner cannot do is to conduct a thematic analysis of the Shakespearean play Hamlet and write a 5 page essay.
3. In the middle, there is the Zone of Proximal Development conceptualized by Vygotsky (L Vygotsky). These are tasks that the learner can do with guidance, and are challenging enough to foster development, but not too difficult that the student cannot accomplish it. These tasks are the most productive for a student's learning. As we discussed previously, the Zone of Proximal Development is different between Jamie and Mark – so what can we do to help both students and the rest of the class learn optimally?

In this case, we could have a flexible task of writing a storybook. Students are given the option of adding photos, the length of story, drawing pictures, or creating a comic book. For Jamie, she may be encouraged to write a longer and more complex story to help her further develop her writing skills. For Mark, he could focus on creating a basic story with little text in the form of a comic book instead. This way, both students are able challenge themselves in ways that are most fitting for their learning profiles.

This is an example of differentiated instruction. Throughout this module we will go into more depth about concepts of DI and ways to differentiate learning. But in essence, the most basic form of DI is simply identifying a learner and asking: "what can I do to help?" While learning the topics in this module, I hope that you keep this guiding question with you. Thank you for watching and in the next video, we will discuss pre-assessment & monitoring.

A3T2: Pre-Assessment & Monitoring

In this video, we will discuss the importance of pre-assessment, and assessing the match in successful differentiation. Pre-assessment involves understanding the learner's preference and readiness before determining how we will differentiate instruction. On the other hand,



monitoring involves observing and assessing the success of whichever teaching strategies we choose to utilize for a student.

Pre-assessment

Let's begin by getting a better understanding of Pre-assessment. Since we have broken this down to learner preferences and learner readiness, let's take a look at why understanding each is important. For assessing learning preferences, we can ask how does this student learn best? Some children may prefer more visual, verbal, kinesthetic (movement), or prefer independent learning vs group activities.

To assess learner readiness, we can ask ourselves: What is the current skill set, background, and ability of the student? Some students may be very strong in certain areas, while others may struggle. For example, children that may have a learning disability may still be building fluency in spelling. We can keep this in mind if we are to give an assignment of colouring and labelling a map, we might provide this student or the class with a list of all the country names for her to label.

With this information on preference and readiness for each student, we can see how we want to organize the lessons and different supports for the most effective inclusive classroom. For many schools, a learner profile or individual education plan (IEP) for a child with an exceptionality will be created by the school team that has this information.

Monitoring:

After differentiating instruction and/or adding supports for students, it is important that we continue to monitor the appropriateness of the strategies we have used. This is important for two primary reasons:

1. To assess if the implemented strategy was appropriate for the student.
2. To assess the progress and development of students.

This way we know how and when to modify teaching strategies as students learn and master new skills. It can be useful to create learner sheets at the beginning of the year with information on each student's learner profile. This way, we can update these as the student grows and we learn more about our class.

That concludes this video on pre-assessment and monitoring. Thank you for watching and in the next video, we will discuss Scaffolding.

A3T3: Scaffolding

Hi, in this video we will discuss scaffolding. What is scaffolding? Instructional scaffolding is the process of adding supports to help with learning of students. Recall the Zone of Proximal Development: the area in which a task is at a level that the learner can do with guidance. These are challenging enough to foster development, but not too difficult that the student cannot accomplish it. Scaffolding helps us support a student in this zone, giving them enough assistance for them to learn. Without these external supports, the task may be too difficult.

So what are some ways we can use scaffolding? There are numerous ways we can support a student, some examples of this may be to include resources, guides, support tools & strategies, templates, or guidance for student to use in their learning. Essentially, anything that



can be used to support the learning of a student in the Zone of Proximal Development is scaffolding.

With all the possibilities of differentiating instruction and teaching supports, what are some considerations for scaffolding? Let's start by thinking about our guiding principles: Understanding the individual, empathy and patience.

We might look at a task and think: what is the purpose of the task in relation to our understanding of the individual and their learning? Along with exercising empathy, we might ask ourselves what challenges the student might experience, and how a scaffold might be best applied. In terms of patience, we might think about the time it takes for a scaffold to work and for a student to achieve a goal. In addition, we have to realize that there might be emotional and social consequences of using a support as well.

When we break this all down, there are 4 considerations we need to make, and are very similar to the questions we just asked ourselves. Remember to take into account our knowledge of learner preference and readiness from our pre-assessment! These considerations are:

- Selection of learning task
- Anticipation of Errors/challenges
- Applications of scaffolds during the learning task
- Consideration of emotions and emotional factors

As the student develops proficiency or mastery of a skill, it is best to decrease scaffolding accordingly. This helps students internalize their learning and support independence.

Let's take an everyday example of scaffolding in learning to tie shoe laces for a 5 year old girl, Sally. When selecting the task, we should consider the ability of the learner. In Sally's case, she is able to dress herself, demonstrating proficiency with most buttons, zippers, and clasps.

Next, we should anticipate possible errors or challenges Sally might experience. One of these might be tying the two loops of the shoelaces to secure the knot.

So, what can we do to help? Considering scaffolds we could utilize during the learning task, some extra guidance could be helpful for Sally. One strategy we could use is modeling the task for Sally. This is simply demonstrating the steps of tying our shoes that Sally can replicate afterward. This way, she can learn visually from watching us.

Lastly, we should consider if there are emotional or social factors in learning this task with the scaffold. In this case, we might consider that Sally may be frustrated if she is unable to tie her shoes properly. Knowing this, we might make an effort of being supportive and encouraging in our tone and body language.

Through this simple example we have gone through the 4 considerations of scaffolding, and wraps-up this video. Thank you for watching and in the next video we will discuss Concepts of DI.

Wood, D., Bruner, J., & Ross, G. (1976). [The role of tutoring in problem solving](#). Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 17, 89–100.



Graves, M., Graves, M., & Braaten, S. (1996). Scaffolding reading experiences for inclusive classes. *Educational Leadership*, 53(5), 14–16.

Rosenshine, B., & Meister, C. (1992). The use of scaffolds for teaching higher-level cognitive strategies. *Educational Leadership*, 49(7), 26–33.

Part 2: Applying Differentiated Instruction in the Classroom

Learning Objectives:

- Appreciate the different frameworks to guide differentiation.
- Understand how to differentiate content, process, product, and environment to support diverse learners.
- Apply concepts in scaffolding, pre-assessment, and monitoring in differentiating instruction.

A3T4: Concepts of DI (What can I change? How can I help?) (SHORT)

In this video, we will introduce a few concepts and frameworks to help you think about DI. We will also tie in some of the previous concepts in the previous lessons and during this video, I would like to challenge you to ask yourself how pre-assessment, monitoring, and scaffolding fit into these frameworks?

The most simplistic way we can think of DI is simply asking ourselves two key questions about the learning of our students:

- How can I help?
- What can I change?

Let's take a look at an example of Norman, a boy with ADHD and a learning disability. We are teaching a lesson on evaporation, condensation, and precipitation as part of the water cycle. If Norman thinks he learns best through movement, how can we help Norman learn? What can we change to help?

First, we can help by structuring learning that fits his learning preference: movement. What can we change to help? During the lesson planning, we might come up with three movements to help students learn evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. We can do this by moving our hands and fingers upwards for evaporation, in cloud shapes for condensation, and downward for precipitation to mimic rain. Remember, many other students might benefit from this as well!

A more sophisticated framework for differentiated instruction is the ABCDE Framework, which is modified from Chamblin's ADAPT Strategy. This helps provide a little more structure in our approach in comparison to those two guiding questions.

- A. Analyze the student's needs, strengths and readiness: This would be understanding the learner profile and readiness for Norman.
- B. B stands for Biases, what are biases that we might have about the exceptionality or the student's abilities? It is important that we do not allow these biases to cloud our judgement.
- C. Considerations for adaptation or scaffolding, as we learned in the previous video. In this case, we identified the way we taught evaporation, condensation, and evaporation as an area that Norman might struggle with and that we can adapt.



- D. Differentiation: This would be teaching movements for the water cycle. We will discuss ways to differentiate in-depth later in this module.
- E. Evaluate the match: remember to assess and monitor how successful the differentiation was in supporting a child in learning. We should also consider how well this differentiation balanced the needs of the exceptional learner with the rest of the class. This not only helps us adapt the differentiation, but also learn and develop our skills as well! It can take time for differentiation to be effective, remember to be patient and persevere.

Now that we have a framework to approach differentiation, and some intuitive ideas on how to differentiate in certain circumstances, how can we differentiate instruction? We can think about differentiation in 4 categories:

- What? Or Content
- How? Or Process
- Why? Or Product
- Where? Or Environment

In the next 4 videos, we will cover each type of differentiation individually. Thank you for watching, and in the next video, we will begin by discussing Differentiating Content.

Chamblin, M. (2017) Using the ADAPT Strategy to Facilitate the Thinking Process of Creating Universal Design Based Instructional Adaptions and Differentiation in Lesson Plans for Diverse Learners. *Open Access Library Journal*, 4, 1-17. doi: [10.4236/oalib.1103585](https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1103585).

A3T5: Differentiating Content

In this video we will discuss one of the ways that we can differentiate instruction. As introduced in the last video, there are 4 different categories of differentiation, which we can think about as what, how, why, and where. These four categories are: content or what we are learning; process or how we are learning; product or why we are learning, or another way is how are we allowing a student to demonstrate their learning; where or the environment of learning.

To help us better understand these concepts, let's take a look at an example of Samuel, a student that has a learning disability and struggles with addition during math class. Let's take a look at how we can differentiate content to help with him.

In differentiation of content, we are modifying what the student is learning, to best support the development of that student. When thinking about how we can differentiate content, we can consider learner preference and learner readiness.

In terms of learner preference, we would be differentiating content to better match the ways the student learns best. One example is incorporating the interests of students into the materials we teach. This way the student is more engaged in the task.

For example. if Samuel likes trains: incorporating trains into the word problems can help him focus and understand the content while still being able to work on the same skills. In a larger class setting, the rest of the class is still able to develop the skills they need while still better supporting a child with a LD.



The other way we can differentiate content is to consider the learner's readiness. This is the foundation or background of the student in learning the curriculum to be presented. Knowing that Samuel struggles with basic addition, as some students move on to double and triple digit addition, we should try to find ways to still allow Samuel to practice single digit addition.

One strategy we can use is having tiered content. We can do this by having one section of the class work on word-based application problems of double digit addition; another section works on numerical practice sheets for double digit addition; the final section of the class works on single digit addition. This way all students in the class can work on practice problems that fit their ability and are most positive for their learning.

Let's wrap up this video here. In this topic we covered differentiating content to support a learner with an exceptionality. We looked at adapting content to fit learner preferences and learner readiness to support development of a student Samuel, while still being able to meet the needs of the rest of the class.

Thank you for watching, and in the next video, we will focus on differentiating process.

A3T6: Differentiating Process

In this video, we will shift from focus on how we can differentiate instruction by changing the process of learning. Another way to think of this is changing how the student learns the material.

Similar to differentiating content, we can also differentiate process by considering the learner preference and learner readiness. To clarify, there may not be a clear divide between learner preference and learner readiness, and our goal with many differentiations is to support the student through both preference and readiness.

Let's take a look at Samuel again, a student with an LD that is still learning basic addition. If we were to consider learner preference and readiness, some differentiations we could explore are:

- Does Samuel learn better in group work or independent work?
- What ways of presenting information are most effective for Samuel?
- Can we incorporate visual, kinesthetic movements, role-playing, songs, or other activities in our instruction?

Presenting information in various formats can help all students in the class learn better. Varying the way we do things day-to-day ensures all types of learners are supported.

In addition, we can talk with students and engage them in how they prefer to learn. We can give students more autonomy in having a say in how they would like to learn, and this can be done by co-creating assignments and rubrics. For example, we can design a game for the class to practice their addition. After input from students, we can utilize math flashcards as part of a scavenger hunt activity, where students search for cards and have to answer them to claim the point.

Another way that we can think of differentiating process while focusing on learner readiness is through scaffolding. As we discussed previously, scaffolding is adding a support for a student to help them in their learning.



One example of scaffolding we could use for Samuel, is to give him a ruler as a learning support. With addition, the ruler can act as a visual support which Samuel can use to count to the first number, and then count the second number on top to reach answer. For example, for the question $5 + 6$, Samuel can count to five on the ruler and then count six up to reach 11.

Through this support, Samuel can focus on building his skills in addition, and can use this to help him approach word problems. As Samuel develops his skills in math, we can slowly remove the support.

That concludes this video on differentiation of process. In this video we looked at how we can change the learning process to fit the preferences and readiness of students, as well as increase engagement. We also looked at scaffolding as a way to support the learning process for students with exceptionalities.

Thank you for watching, and in the next video, we will take a look at differentiating product.

A3T7: Differentiating Product

In this video we will focus on differentiating product during instruction. Another way to think about it is the “why” of learning a topic. Not necessarily “why” as in the purpose of learning, but more so the short-term “why” focus of a deliverable or product to demonstrate the learning of each student.

When looking at differentiating product, we are going to take a slight variation in approach to consider learner preference and readiness. Instead, we can ask ourselves two guiding questions:

- What motivates the student or students?
- What gives us the most accurate picture of the learner’s development in relation to grade-level expectations or curriculum?

When choosing or designing the product portion of instruction, we should try to balance these two questions to find an appropriate way to keep students engaged in the task while still being able to evaluate the outcome of learning.

Let’s take a look at an example when this is not balanced, using Samuel and his class as an example. Imagine if we took the task of a math flashcard scavenger hunt that we discussed in the previous video, and used it as a summative assignment, where the number of flashcards students were able to collect would be used to help evaluate the learning of the student.

In this case, in terms of student motivation, this fun activity might greatly engage students in the task. However, our ability to accurately evaluate the learning of the student is lacking. Does finding a flashcard have any association with a learner’s ability to do addition? Does the difficulty of the flashcards represent a diverse enough range of difficulty to show the ability level of the student? In this case we have an over emphasis on student motivation, without enough consideration for evaluation of learner development.

Another option may be to give a few different options for tasks that students can choose from. One of these might be a standard worksheet, for students who prefer this more direct assessment. Another assignment might be a mystery story, that have multiple math problems that have to be finished correctly in order to solve the mystery. Lastly, we can evaluate some



students by having them teach. We could have students design a lesson on how to teach other students to solve math problems. This way, we can have multiple options for students to choose from that will best motivate them, while still being confident that it will allow us as educators to evaluate the learning of the student.

Of course, this is just one way to differentiate product. Activities/assignments that all students must complete can be designed to fit the needs and preferences of all learners as well. Feel free to look for other resources, online lesson plans, or be creative about your own planning to find the best ways to differentiate products for your students.

Thank you for watching, and in the next video, we will discuss differentiating environment.

A3T8: Differentiating Environment

The last type of differentiation that we will cover in this module is Differentiating Environment. We can think about differentiating environment as the “where” in which a student learns. We want to make sure that the classroom environment in itself is inclusive of the exceptionalities that students have. When we consider environment, we consider both the physical environment where learning occurs, and the access to resources and supports to help support exceptional learners.

Let’s take a look at physical environment first. As we discussed in the **Equity in Learning** module, some students may be experiencing sensory processing differences, which is often associated with ADHD and ASD. This means that students may perceive sensory input differently; for example, the noise of a ticking clock might be extremely distracting, or the feeling of a wool sweater might be painfully uncomfortable.

If we go back to Samuel, in his learner profile it identifies that Samuel is hypersensitive to auditory input. Noting that he has difficulties with the scraping sound of chairs moving across the floor. When chairs scrape, we notice that Samuel’s face winces and he often moves to plug his ears. Sometimes, Samuel will begin crying due to discomfort/pain with this noise.

We should try to make our setting inclusive, and for more information on sensory overload and creating inclusive settings, please take a look at our dedicated “Sensory Inclusive Settings” module. One thing that we can do is cut holes into tennis balls and put them on the chairs in the classroom. This way, there is less noise associated with movement of chairs, while other students are unaffected since there is no change in the chairs function. This way, we modify the physical environment to be inclusive of Samuel’s exceptionality.

Another common consideration is that posters or visuals on the wall that are not relevant to learning can negatively impact children who are easily distracted. Make sure that the environment and associated stimuli are deliberate and serve a purpose for learning. Sometimes we encourage teachers to “build their environment throughout the year”, by starting with only what is needed, and only adding things when you explicitly introduce and use them. This way students are familiar with everything in the environment, and how it can help them learn.

The other area of focus for differentiating environment is ensuring that students have access to the proper resources and supports to support their learning. This means, do we have the



proper visual or learning supports such as a visual calendar for students to reference. Having rulers to help Samuel with math is another example of this.

For students that have difficulties remembering steps, details, and/or expectations, an anchor chart can be a great tool to use. These involve listing or visualizing important information that the class can remember, for example, rules for the class: be respectful, listen, follow directions and stay on task.

Differentiating environment involves developing our understanding of students and asking ourselves: are there resources that can help our students? And, if so, would it be appropriate to have these available in our classroom?

There are too many kinds of resources and supports for us to cover in this module. Instead, it is more important for us to cultivate a mentality in which we are always asking: “how can I help?” As we address this questions through the different types of differentiated instruction, we will be able to understand which resources fit best with a learner’s needs, how we can implement in the classroom, and how to adapt these resources as students develop.

That concludes this video on Differentiating Environment. In the last video in the module, we will go through a recap of this module. Thank you for watching!

A3T9: Wrap-up

In this module, we introduced and discussed the topic of differentiated instruction. We learned what is differentiated instruction, and took introduced key concepts of pre-assessment and monitoring, as well as scaffolding. We learned that we need to understand learner preference and learner readiness to find the best ways to support a student to learn within their zone of proximal development: when a task has the right amount of challenge to best support student development.

To help our understanding and application of DI, we discussed different conceptual approaches we can employ when thinking about supporting exceptional learners. This begins with asking ourselves two key questions: how can I help? And what can I change? If we are looking for a more comprehensive and structured approach to differentiation, the ABCDE framework is a great tool to follow. This gives us a methodology that to guide us as we introduce and adapt various kinds of differentiation.

Lastly, we looked at an in-depth example of Samuel, a child with a learning disability that struggles with addition. We looked at how we can differentiated content through adding Samuel’s interests in our tasks, and having tiered content. We looked into differentiating process or how a student learns, by considering learner readiness and learner preference. For differentiating product, we balanced student motivation/interest with our ability to evaluate learner development in the tasks we choose for assessment. Lastly, we looked at how we can create inclusive environments by adapting physical settings, and the resources that are within the learning space.

Through the last 9 videos, we have covered a foundation of differentiated instruction, one of the key concepts and skillsets for supporting students with exceptionalities. As we hoep you have realized through this module, the great thing about DI is that it can benefit all students in



the classroom as well. We hope you enjoyed watching this module as much as we did creating it. Thank you for your attention, and thank you for supporting Pastel Special Education.

