

Differentiated Assessment: Script

Copyright Pastel Education Inc. 2020

B3T0: Introduction to Module

Hi there! Welcome to this module on Differentiated Assessment, and thank you for tuning in. This module was created in partnership between 1 Million Teachers and Pastel Education, and is part of our Creating Inclusive Classrooms learner pathway.

Assessment is crucial to the success of students as it helps us gather data on the learning of students. We can then take that information to adapt our teaching and to evaluate learners. But in classrooms with a large diversity of students, we must consider if our assessment strategies are fair for all children. Through this module, we will go over what is assessment, an ABCDE framework for assessment, planning formative assessment, differentiating assignments, and adapting tests.

As always, we challenge you to think about this module through the lens of our three guiding principles: understanding the individual, empathy, and patience. These are three pillars that are fundamental to the success of differentiation, and thus, the success of our students.

We hope you enjoy this module as much as we did making it. To start off this module, we will be covering some basics in What is Assessment?

B3T1: What is Assessment?

Hi, thanks for tuning in! What is assessment? Assessment is simply data collection with a purpose. In the classroom, this purpose is to evaluate the readiness, progress, achievement, and learning of a student. This can take the form of a test, quiz, assignment, or project.

For the purposes of this module, if we think about why assessment is given, we can break assessments down into 3 types. The first is assessment for learning, or formative assessment, which is used to evaluate the progress of learning. These are usually unscored or low-stakes, and gathers information to allow educators to adapt their teaching to the level of their students.

Summative assessment, on the other hand, is assessment *of* learning. These are evaluations of student achievement to give a snap-shot of the knowledge and/or skillset the student has acquired. Although these are very useful for reporting, they have limited value for student learning.

The last type of assessment is assessment as learning. This type of assessment involves students being their own assessors, so that they learn as they evaluate their own learning. This can be done through self-evaluation sheets, completion checklists, or peer-evaluation. Assessment as learning is crucial in developing students into being life-long learners as they develop a sense of ownership over the direction of their learning.

So, to quickly summarize, when we break down assessment by why an assessment is given, we get three types: assessment for learning, assessment of learning, and assessment as learning.



To change gears, if we look at assessment through a different lens of how is learning evaluated, we get three different types of assessment as well. The first is criterion referenced assessment. This is when students are graded against a set criteria or objectives for learning, and help to evaluate the understanding of material in context of what has been taught. This is often done when looking at student learning in relation to the standard curriculum. The second is norm-referenced assessment, which compares students to their peers of the same grade-level. This is often done by comparing a student to a national average and scoring them based off of percentile. The last, and arguably most important for special education is ipsative assessment, where the student is compared to their previous results. This allows us to best understand the progression of a student.

To illustrate why ipsative assessment is so powerful, let's use an example of a student that struggles with essay writing, consistently scoring below the class average. For his parents, the last three essay scores are concerning, and has impacted the confidence of our student. Through ipsative assessment, we would be able to show our student improvements in his essays, and how his content, and structure have all improved. This way, the student can see their own improvement and how their learning is progressing. It puts context into the grades we report, and motivates students to build their knowledge and skills.

In the context of the inclusive classroom, it is very important that we keep focused on the purpose of our evaluation. Students with exceptionalities should not be penalized for their function when we are assessing understanding of material. For example, a student that is mute should not be assessed on their understanding in social studies through an oral presentation.

We will discuss this more in the next video, where we will discuss the ABCDE framework for assessment. Thank you for watching!

B3T2: ABCDE for Assessment

To help us have a bit more structure in approaching differentiated assessment, let's take a look at the ABCDE framework that was introduced in the Differentiated Instruction Module and how it can be applied in assessment. To help us better understand this in a practical way, lets use the case example of a child, Sally, who has a hearing impairment in a French class. The assessment that we are looking to adapt is a listening comprehension test, in which passages of conversation are played on a radio and students answer multiple choice questions associated with this. To begin with differentiating assessment, we should be very clear in the purpose: to evaluate the ability of the learner to comprehend spoken French.

Let's look at what ABCDE stands for:

A-Analyze the students strengths, needs, and readiness. We know that Sally has performed well on previous written and reading comprehension assessments. In terms of her hearing impairment, she has challenges hearing the radio during these reading comprehension quizzes. Our purpose in assessment is to evaluate the understanding of content, not functional hearing ability, so we need to find a fair way to do this for Sally.

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 and instead base our actions off of our understanding of the individual. We may have previously had a student who was hard of hearing, and unable to hear at all. However, for Sally,



she is able to hear but has difficulties with quieter sounds and distracting noises. It is important to not allow our previous experience dictate how we treat Sally.

C-Considerations for adaptation or scaffolding. This includes task selection, anticipating errors in that task, and considering emotional and social consequences. One option we might consider is having Sally come in during a separate time to write the test using headphones. Although this might address her hearing impairment, if we consider social and emotional consequences, Sally may not want to come in during other times or feel singled out for her exceptionality. Another option may be to use preferential seating, in which Sally is seated right beside the audio-player, and have the volume turned higher. This might not address the challenges associated with the hearing exceptionality as well, but may be preferred due to social considerations. We choose to discuss the possibilities with Sally, and she prefers the seating adaptation.

D-Differentiation. This would be implementing the preferential seating strategy we just discussed.

E-Evaluate the differentiation. We need to assess and monitor how successful the differentiation was in supporting the child in learning. We can discuss with Sally how the seating worked for her, and compare performance on listening comprehension with her level of understanding in reading and written assignments. If the differentiation was successful, we can continue to use the strategy. If she still had trouble hearing the recordings, we can ask her to try coming in to take tests using headphones.

We hope that through this framework of ABCDE for assessment, you will have a structured approach to adapting an assessment for a student with an exceptionality in your classroom. Before we wrap-up this video let's talk about the 3 categories of adaptation that can be utilized.

Accommodations are adaptations that allow students with exceptionalities to complete the same tasks as other students. They do not alter the expectation but the method of completion may be adapted to minimize the effect of the exceptionality on the students ability to demonstrate their learning. This might be allowing some coins as a visual aid of a math test.

Modifications are adaptations that change the expectation of an assignment or assessment to challenge the student the right amount. This fundamentally alters the expectations of the student in context of the standard curriculum. An example might be less questions on a test.

Alternate assessment is the last form of adaptation and involves having the student on an alternate curriculum. An example may be focusing on life skills, rather than curriculum standards for their grade-level.

That concludes this video on ABCDE for Assessment. Thank you for watching and in the next video, we will discuss planning formative assessment.

B3T3: Planning Formative Assessment (HUTCHINSON)

Hi there, in this video, we will take a look at planning formative assessment for the entire class. To recap, formative assessment is assessment *for* learning. Our objective is to gather



information to understand students' learning, and set goals to inform our teaching. When planning formative assessment, I use the acronym of PIES for key areas to focus on. This helps us structure some guiding questions we can ask ourselves.

P is for purpose. We need to clarify the purpose of the formative assessment.

- What am I evaluating, and how can I use this information to improve my teaching?
- Goal of learning: What are my students supposed to learn?
- Learner readiness: What have my students learned already? What do my students still need to learn?

I is for Inclusivity.

- Do any students have barriers in completing the task?
- Do students require accommodations or modifications? If they do, we can utilize the ABCDE framework to guide us through differentiation.

E stands for Expectations:

- Are the expectations of students clear and obtainable?
- Once they have completed the assessment, have students met expectations? Why or why not? This is important as it helps us to identify areas of improvements for students and helps evaluate how effective our teaching strategies were.

S stands for Support through feedback. Feedback is extremely important to help students give insight into their progress and identify areas they can improve in. One of our goals through feedback is to help students feel supported by the teacher, and build confidence that they can learn the material. Feedback can provide students with feelings of success, progress, and motivation.

There are many strategies we can utilize to help make formative assessment more effective, and we should talk about a few key ones here. One way to help students' learning is by providing examples of good work and if possible, a breakdown of how they were assessed. For example, in my own learning of essay writing, I had a teacher that would show exemplary essays from previous years and a commented rubric on why that essay was graded that way. It also helps go set goals for students and have students reflect on their improvement. Lastly, it is important to give descriptive feedback when possible. This is most effective when we draw students' attention to one part of their work at a time. By doing this, we help link small goals to show the progression of their learning.

To wrap-up this video, I want to emphasize the formative assessment is built off of the fundamental idea that learning is a process. We don't just see something and know it. We need it broken down, we need to practice it, and we need feedback to refine our learning. Formative assessment is a powerful tool to help accomplish this.

Thank you for watching, and in the next video, we will discuss Differentiating Assessment through Assignments.

B3T4: Differentiating Assignments Example

Hi, in this video we will discuss differentiating assignments as a form of assessment. Please note that this topic falls under Differentiating Instruction through product, which is covered in-depth in our Differentiating Instruction Module.



As we know, assignments can be a very useful tool in evaluating the learning of students. They can be used for both formative, and summative assessment, and are useful in ipsative assessment in which students are pointed to the progress they have made through assignments. Because of this, we can use our previous frameworks of PIES for planning formative assessment and ABCDE for differentiating assessment for assignments as well. Even better, is that assignments often give learners a chance to self-assess, which is a form of assessment as learning.

Let's take a look at an example of small formative assignment in writing a summary paragraph after reading a news article. To begin with the PIES framework, we should clarify the purpose of the assignment. In this case, our ultimate goal is to have students critically read an article and be able to write a short essay. At this stage in their learning, our goal is to have them identify key points and summarize them in a written paragraph. Following this, we need to ask ourselves, what have my students learned already? And what do my students still need to learn? This may inform any lessons that need to be given prior to the assignment.

I is inclusivity. Are there any students that may have difficulties completing the task? There are two children in our class with mild learning disabilities and struggle with organizing their thoughts into paragraph form. In addition, we have four more students that are still building similar skills. Do these students require accommodation or modification? We could then apply our ABCDE framework of analyzing student ability, addressing biases, thinking through considerations of differentiation, implementing differentiation, and evaluating the adaptation for each student.

To improve inclusivity for our class, we can give out optional sheets that have guiding questions for students to find the main points in the article. We can also provide a template structure for students to utilize in structuring their paragraph. Students with stronger writing abilities may be encouraged to experiment with their writing structure, while some students can adhere more closely to the template. For one of our students with a learning disability, we can modify the assignment to only discuss one main idea rather than highlight 3 key points. Perhaps our evaluation for our students with exceptionalities incorporates the answers to the guiding questions, rather than evaluating the paragraph alone. Remember, that with differentiation, the focus is to provide the right amount of challenge for each student to support their growth.

Another strategy that helps foster success of all students is to provide examples that the students can learn from.

Moving on to expectations, we should ensure that the expectations of the assignment is clear and obtainable. Students should have a clear idea of what the deliverable is, and what it will be evaluated for. If the students are unable to meet the expectations, we should reflect on why this is the case, and how we can adapt our teaching. If they are successful, we should reflect on what was effective, to help foster future success.

Lastly, we want to support through feedback. If time allows, we can provide descriptive feedback for our students, with identified areas in which they did well, and areas for improvement. An example may be highlighting an insightful point, and then suggesting that the concluding sentence incorporates that idea. Assignments are also a good opportunity for self-



evaluation. We can provide students with a copy of the rubric for them to evaluate their own writing, and identify areas they want to work on. Our goal with feedback is to help students see learning as embracing challenges, and not daunting, intimidating tasks.

That concludes this example of differentiating assignments as a form of assessment. Thank you for watching, and in the next video, we will discuss Student Portfolios.

B3T5: Student Portfolios

Within the realm of inclusive education, student portfolios can be a very helpful tool in assessment, especially for children with special needs. A student portfolio is a purposeful collection of a student's work over a designated time period. They are highly flexible and can be both graded and ungraded depending on how you choose to use them.

So why can they be so valuable in special education? One reason is that portfolios help to show the improvement of a student's work. If done well, we can use this as a tool to help students and parents see their own progress, as well as use this to identify areas of strength and improvement to further work on. Because of this, it allows educators to provide a more individualized approach to assessing learning outcomes and future teaching. In addition, it can often be used to assess alternative outcomes that may not be captured within the curriculum. For students with Individualized Education Plans and particular learning goals, portfolios can be a great way of gathering this information. For example, if a student has a learning goal of being able to write a 3-paragraph essay by the end of the year, we can gather samples of writing assignments to show the progression towards this goal.

There are a number of considerations when using a student portfolio. We should always be clear about the purpose of the portfolio, and there are 4 primary ways to utilize a portfolio. The first is to demonstrate student progress in a particular subject area, the second is to showcase mastery of specific skills, the third is to collect information to assist in transitions from one teacher to the next, and the last is to build evidence for identification of a learning exceptionality if none has been made. Having information to pass between teachers is particularly useful for students with exceptionalities to ease yearly transitions.

In terms of implementing a student portfolio, one question to ask is: do we want to use the portfolio as a student program? This is when students select work they want to share with their parents over the year. Giving ownership in selection to students can help students be more engaged and aware of their learning, but may lead to a less organized portfolio when compared to teacher selected.

Regardless of how and why a portfolio is used, there are some ways to make them more effective. Select samples for the portfolio purposefully, try to have students reflect on goals and their work, and share accomplishments and progress with students and parents.

That wraps-up this video on student portfolios. We realize many of you likely already use portfolios in your own ways! We hope that this video could provide a bit of a different perspective or some other ideas of how to use this versatile tool. Thank you for watching and in the next video, we will take a look at adapting tests.

<https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/OR/ConsumerGuides/classuse.html>



B3T6: Adapting Tests

Hi, in this video we will talk about Adapting Tests. Instead of looking at a step-wise approach to adapting tests, we are going to approach this by identifying areas that can be adapted. It is then important to use your understanding of the individual to see which adaptations will be most appropriate to facilitate student success.

When we break down the tasks in creating and running a test, we can identify 4 areas where there are opportunities for adaptations: student preparation, test design, test administration, and scoring.

Let's start with test preparation. For students that might have challenges with the curriculum content, we might provide study guides with chunked information and mnemonics. We could choose to provide these for the entire class, or for specific students, depending on what is most appropriate for the class. In addition, we can provide practice tests for students to familiarize themselves with expectations, content, and test format.

Some students that have struggled with previous tests may have specific types of questions that they find challenging, especially if it is related to an exceptionality. For example, a student may have a communication exceptionality that effects their ability to organize their thinking through writing. One resulting challenge is that the student finds it difficult to complete short answer questions on tests that require them to express their thinking. To help with this, we can create a set of short answer practice problems for this student to practice and built their skills to prepare.

In terms of designing tests, there are numerous ways to support exceptional learners. We will go through some strategies, but I am sure you will have many more creative ideas as well. One small thing we can do to assist students that struggle with reading is to draw attention to keywords by bolding or underlying. If we choose to only provide this for specific students, they are able to take the same test with a slight accommodation. Another similar strategy is to lower the reading level of tests by using simpler words and shorter sentences for questions.

Some students that struggle with organization, and we can help by chunking questions into smaller steps and splitting the test into parts. Other students may have sensory differences that impact visual information processing. This can lead to discomfort with cluttered and text-filled pages. To design tests to be inclusive of these students, we can avoid cluttered layouts and try to increase white space.

Often times, with test preparation and design, our goal is to create resources and a test for the entire class that is inclusive of the needs of all students. When we move towards test administration and scoring, there are more opportunities to individualize adaptations to support exceptional learners.

In terms of adapting administering of classroom tests, we should look to add supports that are needs dependent. Some factors we can adjust is time, form of administration, having a scribe, assistance in interpreting questions, extra supports, aids or resources, and possible alternative environment. For example, we might provide a student with a learning disability a dictionary



and thesaurus that can be used during a written test. Students with sensory integration challenges might be allowed to take the test in a separate room that is quieter and more controlled.

Lastly, let's touch upon adapting scoring. Adapting scoring is based off of the principle that students should not be penalized for their exceptional learning needs. Although this might not always be possible, we should think creatively about how we can minimize the impact of exceptionalities on assessment, focusing on reporting grading in a goal-oriented way. Each adaptation needs to fit the context of the student, curriculum, and school. For example, if a child has a communication exceptionality related to writing, we can have them identify words they think they have made errors, and not count these towards scoring a written test. However, there are implications of alternative scoring for students. Peers and parents may view this as unfair, and adapted scoring may impact the reporting of student achievement. These should be discussed with other teachers and the school principal.

That concludes this video on adapting test. Thank you for watching, and in the next video, we will talk about preparing students and parents for equitable assessment.

B3T7: Preparing Students and Parents for Equitable Assessment

Thank you again for watching this module on Differentiated Assessment. In this last video, we will discuss some considerations for preparing students, peers and parents for equitable assessment. Let's use the example of a child, Kyle, who has a communication exceptionality. Because of this, Kyle has an accommodation to present their oral presentations with the teacher and extra time.

Prior to this, we need to understand the individual, and discuss with them if there are ways that they prefer to adapt assessments. They may have previous experience with teaching strategies that work best for them, and have an accompanying IEP that outlines accommodations or modifications. The student needs to know that an adaptation is being made, and given the opportunity to provide input.

One common situation is dissatisfaction from peers and other parents, due to the perception that strategies for inclusion are unfair. Why should Kyle get extra time for his presentation? Why does Kyle get to present alone, rather than in front of the class? Other common areas of dissatisfaction are students receiving extra resources, differentiated scoring, and increased teacher attention to those with accommodations.

To prevent this sense of dissatisfaction, we should always be evaluating the need for certain supports, ensuring they are all valuable to the learning of particular students. In addition, we can combat perceptions of favouritism by acknowledging accomplishments of all students and trying our best to share our time. Despite our best efforts, these situations do occur. Let's take a look at some ways to help communicate why these differentiations are made.

For parents and older children, we can directly explain why differentiated teaching and assessment is used. It is helpful to highlight variations in student strengths, and that our goal is to provide the right amount of challenge for each student to learn. One way to do this is to explain how an accommodation would not be valuable or make a task too easy for another student. If Amanda, got extra time on her presentation like Kyle, she wouldn't need it, as she is



able to meet expectations of presentation content within a shorter period of time. We should try to shape the conversation of fairness not through equality, but equity, ensuring all students have the appropriate support to succeed.

A practical example to help communicate fairness is eye glasses. Some students have better or worse vision than others. Only those who need glasses receive them, as they would be of no help to others. Similar to glasses, other students require supports to meet their full potential.

For younger students, it might be more beneficial to have a different approach as they have a less developed ability empathize with others. With this in mind, we can try to address their feelings and perceptions of unfairness. Try starting by asking about why they think something is unfair. Next, ask them what feelings are associated with this. We should then acknowledge those feelings, make sure the student feels heard, and provide a simple rationale that addresses the concerns a student may have. Sometimes, a little more recognition of student accomplishments can help students feel more valued in the class.

That concludes this module on differentiated assessment. Through this module we have covered what is assessment, the ABCDE framework, planning formative assessments, adapting tests, and some things to keep in mind when addressing peers and parents. We hope you found this module valuable, and as always thank you for support Pastel Education. Hope to see in another module!

