



**Differentiated Instruction:  
A Really Brief Overview**

Curry School of Education  
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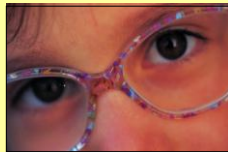
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## What is differentiation?

*Differentiation is classroom practice that looks eyeball to eyeball with the reality that kids differ, and the most effective teachers do **whatever it takes** to hook the whole range of kids on learning.*



-Tomlinson (2001)

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At its most basic level, differentiating instruction means *“shaking up”* what goes on in the classroom so that students have multiple options for taking in information, making sense of ideas, and expressing what they learn.



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Differentiation is  
a sequence of common sense decisions  
made by teachers  
with a student-first orientation

Adam Hoppe, 2010

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### The Common Sense of Differentiation


Ensuring an environment that actively supports students in the work of learning

Absolute clarity about the learning destination in the context of high quality curriculum

Persistently knowing where students are in relation to the destination all along the way

Adjusting teaching to make sure each student arrives at the destination (and, when possible, moves beyond it)

Effective classroom leadership and flexible management



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# 1

## Quality DI

**How do you see your students?**  
**How do they see you?**  
**How do you help them see one another?**



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How I see a child will impact how I treat that child.

How the child believes I see him/her will impact the child's capacity to trust me.

How all the children see me see each of them will determine whether they can become a community or a team.

Everything I need to happen in a classroom begins with my beliefs about kids and teaching.



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## How We Came to Be...Us

Because my teacher treats me with respect,  
I feel a sense of dignity in this place.

Because my teacher treats every one of us with respect,  
We are respectful of one another.

Because my teacher sees our possibilities,  
I am beginning to see them too.

Because my teacher says sweat makes winners,  
We're learning to sweat.

Because my teacher works hard for me,  
I want to work hard for her.

Because my teacher won't settle for less than our best,  
We aim high more often.

Because my teacher says we are responsible for one another,  
We help one another succeed.

Because my teacher helps us see ourselves through her eyes,  
We see hope in ourselves.

Because my teacher is a great coach,  
We are a great team.



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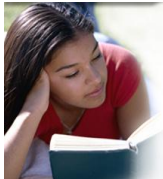
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## Quality DI

**How powerful is what you teach?**

**Does it help kids make sense & make meaning?**

**Do all kids get the good stuff?**



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### Quality DI

How do you know where your students are in their learning?  
What do you do with what you know?



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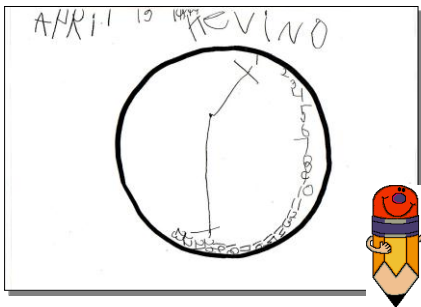
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An Example of Pre-assessing Student Readiness in a Primary Classroom



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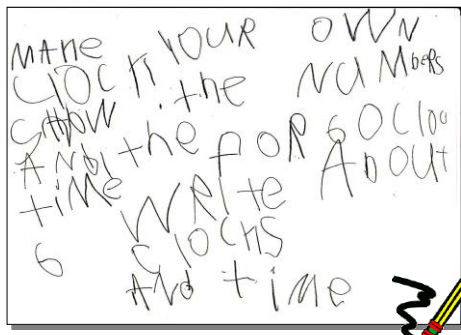
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APR 13, 1999. Show me.

A hand-drawn clock face with numbers 1 through 12. The hands are drawn as simple lines. A cartoon pencil character is at the bottom right.

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I know time is  
easy I know  
to make 0:30  
it is easy  
So as time  
is very special.

A cartoon pencil character with a face, arms, and legs, holding a yellow pencil.

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Tori April 13, 1999.

A hand-drawn clock face with numbers 1 through 12. The hands are drawn as simple lines. A cartoon pencil character is at the bottom right.

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we eat lunch at 11:30  
we eat at of 5 Gal  
at 3:20. we eat  
in sal at 1:00



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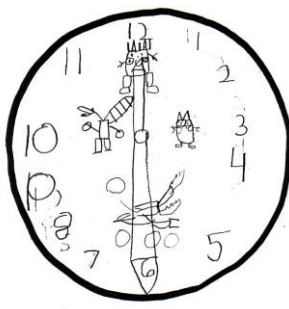
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Shawn R. April 13, 1999



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6:00 Clock moms up  
5:00 Clock Dads up  
7:15 Shawn R up  
9:30 Kayli  
8:30 Bus  
9:00 Clock school  
10:30 Snack  
11:30 Lunch  
4:00 Clock home



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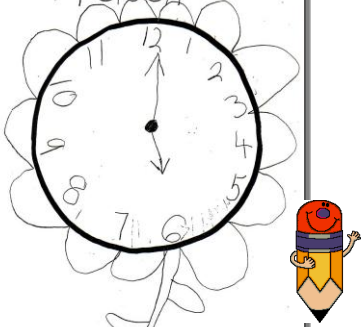
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Name Chelsea

A Clock



A hand-drawn clock with a flower-like border. The clock face has numbers 1 through 12. The hands are drawn, and the time shown is 12:00. A small pencil character with a face and arms is standing next to the clock.

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a clock helps you  
tell time Clocks are  
fun to mix it up  
over I can read  
from the Mike and M  
I work at 6:00  
and my mom was  
late for work



A hand-drawn pencil character with a face and arms, standing next to the text.

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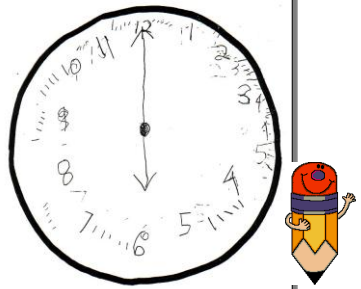
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Lianna April 1999



A hand-drawn clock with a pencil character standing next to it. The clock face has numbers 1 through 12. The hands are drawn, and the time shown is 12:00.

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## Mini Workshop

1. As students work on an assignment, systematically go around the room and spot-check their work—looking for patterns in misunderstanding or gaps in knowledge or skill.
2. Make a quick note of issues you see and students who are having those issues.
3. If you see a problem that's recurring as many as four or five times, call for a mini-workshop.
4. Ask students to stop working and give you their attention.
5. Tell them that as you've been observing their work, you see one problem that a number of students are having—and describe the problem/issue.
6. Tell students they'll be able to succeed with their work more readily if you can help them with the problem.
7. Ask them to come to a place in the room that you designate and to sit with you on the floor for a minute to clear up the problem.
8. Feel free to issue invitations to some students if needed.
9. Hold the discussion—generally for about 3 minutes.
10. Remind students going and coming to shift their positions so that others are not interrupted in their work.



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### The Human Digestive System (The KUDs) Students will: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Science

**(U) Understand** the big idea. In this case, that (a) the human digestive system is an example of a system: a collection of two or more parts that act together to affect the whole thing, and (b) that each part is related to the others in some way.

**(K) Know** the names and functions (jobs) of the major digestive system organs listed below, and include them in a song, story, skit, or diagram:

**Mouth, teeth, saliva**

**Epiglottis** -- The flap of cartilage that prevents food from entering the trachea and lungs.

**Esophagus** (Optional: Peristalsis, the contraction of muscles in/around the esophagus.)

**Stomach** -- Muscles mix and mash the food. Hydrochloric acid breaks food up.

**Small Intestine** -- Place where most of the digestion and chemical change of food to simpler forms occurs.

**Villi** -- Finger-like projections that contain capillaries -- the sites in the small intestine where the broken-down (digested) food nutrients enter the blood stream.

**Large Intestine** -- Where water is absorbed back into the body and the remaining indigestible food passes to the outside.

**(D) Demonstrate** their understanding using the correct structure and function vocabulary to show how a piece of food moves through and provides fuel for the human body -- from the time it enters the mouth to the time waste leaves the body.

Howard Miller

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Kate's diagram explaining how a cookie is digested

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Emma writing a story about the digestion of broccoli

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A group of students practicing their skit on the digestion of a slice of pizza

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<p>Solve this problem. What was easy about it? Not so easy?</p> <p>●</p>	<p>Create and solve a problem similar to this problem.</p> <p>●●</p>	<p>What's one question someone should ask themselves when they first look at this problem?</p> <p>●●●</p>
<p>What's a mistake that someone might make in trying to solve this problem? Why might they make that mistake?</p> <p>●●</p>	<p>What mathematical concepts or terms/vocabulary does this problem show? Be specific!</p> <p>●●●</p>	<p>Write a step-by-step set of directions that tells someone who was absent today how to solve this problem.</p> <p>●●●</p>

H. Alang, A. Mironchuk, & J. Paul (Farragut Career Academy, Chicago IL)

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The teacher can write one problem on the board for everyone to use (undifferentiated),

give a different problem to each small group,

or write different problems on the backside of each card, differentiated for each group.

Can be used as sense-making after the introduction of a new concept/problem type, as a review, or as part of a homework check.



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# 5

## Quality DI

**Requires strong classroom leadership & flexible management of routines.**



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### WE TEND TO PRACTICE LOCKSTEP MANAGEMENT

Convenient for the teacher

Assumes students are "one"

Models a world few would seek

Distrustful of students

Compliance Oriented

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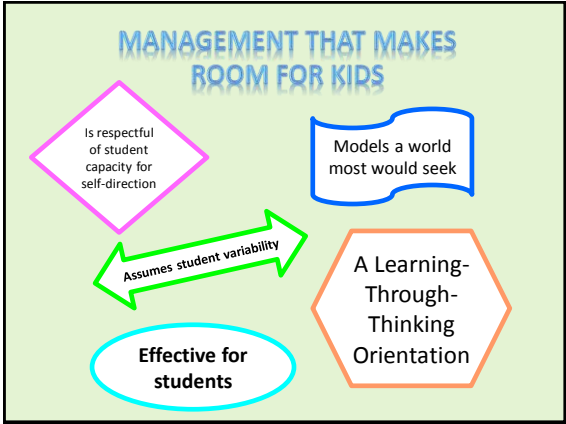
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 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Has a vision for something good</li> <li>•Has the capacity to share the vision &amp; enlist others in it</li> <li>•Builds a team for achieving the vision</li> <li>•Renews commitment to the vision</li> <li>•Celebrates successes</li> <li>•ABOUT PEOPLE</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>First be a leader</b></p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Plans schedules</li> <li>•Handles details</li> <li>•Prepares materials</li> <li>•Arranges furniture</li> <li>•Orchestrates movement</li> <li>•Practices routines</li> <li>•Troubleshoots</li> <li>•ABOUT MECHANICS</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Then be a manager</b></p>
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**An analysis of 100 studies on classroom management revealed that the quality of student-teacher relationships is the most important factor in all aspects of classroom “management.”**

Marzano, R. (2003). Classroom Management that Works. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

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- >Start slowly.
- >Lead your students—make them your partners.
- >Plan the details carefully and at a pace that works for you.
- >Rehearse and review.
- >Be reflective—celebrate successes and learn from rough spots.

Remember what you want to accomplish & why it matters!

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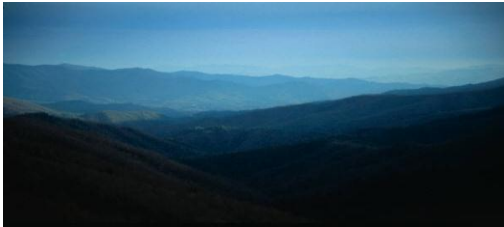
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*The very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for,  
And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof.*

*Animal Dreams*, by Barbara Kingsolver, 1997



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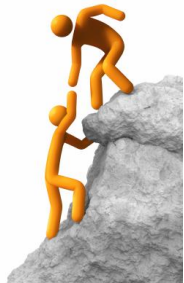
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Meaningful teaching has not only to do with the skills you acquire, but also with the person you seek to be.



Bruce B. Harrison  
Virginia Beach City Public Schools

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