



LESSON ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER DIFFERENTIATING

The idea of differentiating a lesson can seem daunting at first. In order to break down this task, this document outlines ways in which a teacher can differentiate elements of a lesson rather than every part of a lesson or the entire lesson. As a teacher plans differentiated lessons, this table can help determine why it would be beneficial to differentiate a certain element of a lesson and examples of how to do this. When differentiating elements of assignments for students, make sure that the work is meaningful and not just adding extra work or problems. It is best to focus on the quality of the work over the quantity of it.

This document will focus on these five elements of a lesson:

- [Do Now](#)
- [Teacher-led](#)
- [Guided Practice](#)
- [Independent Practice](#)
- [Checks for Understanding](#)
- [Lesson Assessment](#)

| Lesson plan element | Why might this element be differentiated? | Example |
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| <p>Do now</p> <p><i>The questions/tasks provided to students before starting a lesson to help students warm up.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups of students have different sub-skills (foundational skills) that could use sharpening. • A teacher may have students who have mastered the skill they are teaching and are ready to build off of that skill. Giving these students something challenging to work on gives them a chance to test their understanding and show they are ready for complex skills. • Use student responses to dictate student groups for the remainder of the lesson. • The Do Now is meant as a warm up and shouldn't frustrate students, so providing different Do Nows allows students to access the start of a lesson at different places. | <p>Grade & topic: 5th grade math – Adding and subtracting fractions with like denominators</p> <p>Instead of giving all students the same three rote problems, you decide to give:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - your higher learners a word problem involving adding and subtracting fractions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I.e. Jeremiah has $\frac{1}{2}$ of a pizza. If he eats $\frac{1}{3}$ of it for lunch, how much pizza is left? - your struggling learners a few problems with simple common denominators and one with denominators that are a bit more challenging. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1) $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{2}{3}$ - 2) $\frac{5}{6} - \frac{1}{3}$ - 3) $\frac{2}{5} + \frac{2}{7}$ |



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| <p>Teacher led instruction</p> <p><i>The modeling and step-by-step instruction of material</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers might include teaching a separate prerequisite skill for a group that is below grade level before modeling the content for that day.• Teacher might add in any tips and tricks that might be helpful or allow students to easily remember steps• This is a place for teachers to provide notes for students to copy down to refer to later in the lesson as a reference if needed. | <p>Grade & topic: 4th grade English language arts - Using context clues to identify the meaning of a word</p> <p>The teacher will model the same think aloud process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify an unknown word• read the sentence for clues• try substituting another word for the unknown word• read the sentence again to see if it makes sense <p>The teacher differentiates this instruction by modeling this with a different passage and identifying different vocabulary words based on the students current vocabulary levels and strengths/weaknesses.</p> |
| <p>Guided practice</p> <p><i>The scaffolded practice teachers provide students after modeling, but before they attempt to apply the skill or knowledge independently</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data teachers have collected suggests that students may have some basic or foundational understanding required for the learning objective but are unable to be successful without direct teacher support.• This is a place for teachers to provide scaffolds for how to solve the problem and gradually release• Teachers could also model errors that students might make in order to correct them before students practice on their own. | <p>Grade & topic: 2nd grade math - Pairs to ten with number bonds (using whiteboards)</p> <p>T: I'll show a number bond, and you tell me the missing part to make 10. T: (Draw the bond shown to the $10-5 = \underline{\quad}$) S: "Five" T: (Erase the 5 and write 8) $10 - 8 = \underline{\quad}$ S: "Two:"</p> <p>Continue with the following sequence 9, 7, 3, 6, 4, 1, 10, and 0</p> <p>T: With your partner, take turns saying pairs to make 10. Partner A you will go first now</p> <p>(After about 30 second have partners switch roles)</p> |



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| <p>Independent student practice</p> <p><i>Providing students with a chance to independently apply their knowledge is a key ingredient in students internalizing a learning objective. Removing or altering this opportunity will leave students less likely to master an objective.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● If teachers are altering the objectives that groups are learning that day, then their independent practice should be adjusted accordingly.● If the objectives are still the same, the teacher might adjust the amount of independent practice students engage with (i.e. only do the odds of a practice set) but teachers should be mindful to keep the rigor of student practice the same between groups● If some students showed that they are ready for more (during the lesson or previously), the teacher might provide more rigorous independent practice for them | <p>Grade & topic: 5th grade English language arts – Identifying transition words within a piece of writing</p> <p>You noticed during a writer’s workshop lesson that a group of students could not identify transition words, while the rest of your students could identify them easily. You provide the same text to all students with different tasks:</p> <p>Group 1: You ask the group of students you identified earlier to highlight all transition words that they can find. You have highlighted the first transition word in each paragraph for these students.</p> <p>Group 2: For the other students who can easily identify transition words, you ask them to identify the transition words and then change five transition words that they think could be enhanced with better ones in order to practice enhancing their writing during the editing and revising phase of the writing process.</p> |
| <p>Checks for understanding</p> <p><i>Targeted questions a teacher asks throughout a lesson to understand how much students have learned and where they are still struggling before their end of lesson assessment</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● If students do not provide the correct answer, the teacher decides what differentiated support will be best for those students (i.e. correcting the error in the moment, additional information, re-teaching the topic)● Based on data, a teacher knows a certain group does or could struggle with a specific concept. Because of this, the teacher adds specific Checks for Understandings to make sure they demonstrate they understand something before being released to independent practice● If altering the learning objective or pre-teaching another skill in the modeling, then the Check for Understanding should be adjusted to measure success on that objective or those skills. | <p>Grade & topic: 2nd grade English language arts – identify how a character in a text is feeling and how they know this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Group 1: Teacher plans CFUs about each step of the process<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ While reading the text, teacher asks students to describe the pictures they see, probing for facial expressions. After discussing the images, the teacher asks students to describe how the character might be feeling. The teacher then asks them why they know, to help them make the connection between the image and the feeling.● Group 2: Teacher plans CFUs to push students to explain their answer<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ While reading the text, teacher pauses and asks students how the character is feeling. When students give their answer, the teacher asks why the student believes the character is feeling that way |



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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Group 3: Teacher plans CFUs to help students make connections between the text and character feelings<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The teacher asks students to identify how a character is feeling. When students give their answer, the teacher asks why the student believes the character is feeling that way. If students focus on the pictures, the teacher then asks students to find words in the text that illustrate this character's feelings |
| <p>Lesson assessment (Exit ticket)</p> <p><i>A lesson assessment represents what we hope students have learned throughout a lesson. The goal would be that students would be able to demonstrate these skills later on throughout the year once it is mastered.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● An assessment might be differentiated by adjusting:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ the number of questions○ the rigor of questions○ the types of questions (i.e. multiple choice, short answer, fill in the blank, etc.)○ the scaffolds available to answer questions (i.e. picture vs. no picture)● Depending on how students perform on a lesson assessment, teachers may need to reteach certain parts to groups of students | <p>Grade & topic: kindergarten English language arts – Identifying beginning sounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Group 1: You show students a picture and ask them to identify the beginning sound (i.e. you show them a picture of a cat)● Group 2: You make a beginning sound and ask students to identify the picture that matches that beginning sound (i.e. You make a “b” sound and show them pictures of a ball, cat, and dog)● Group 3: You ask students which pictures have the same beginning sound (i.e. You make the “d” sound and show them pictures of a mouse, dog, and desk) <p>Grade & topic: 4th grade math – Adding and subtracting decimals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Group 1: You give them rote and word problems involving decimals to the tenths place● Group 2: You give them rote and word problems involving decimals to the hundredths place● Group 3: You give them rote and word problems involving decimals to the thousandths place |