

GRADES  
**7&8**

# Reach Every Student through Differentiated Instruction



# Meet the diverse needs of young adolescents



## Your Students Need You

Occurring at a time of intense physical, emotional and intellectual growth, grades 7 and 8 are hugely important years. Intermediate teachers see students through an incredible array of developmental changes. By recognizing and responding to the interests, preferred ways of learning, and specific learning needs of individual students, we ensure that we reach every student so they will experience success in the intermediate grades, in later grades, and in their lives beyond school.

## Respond through Differentiated Instruction

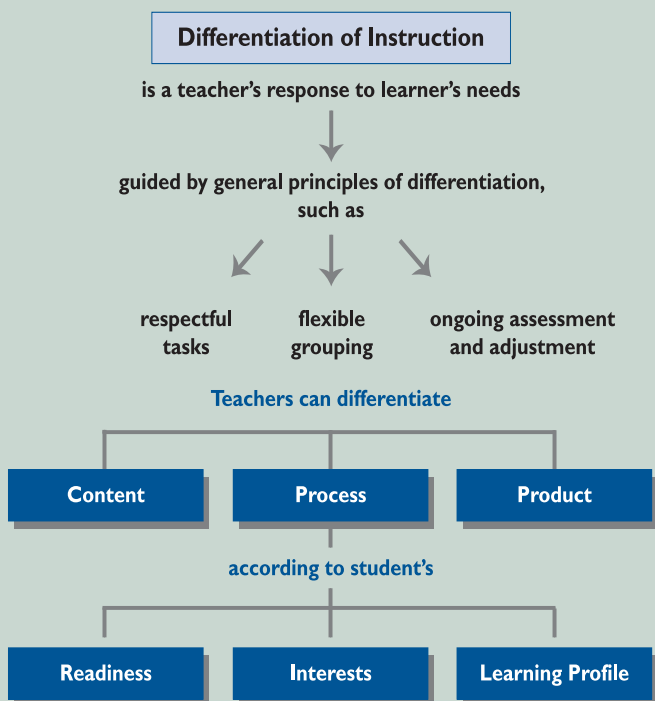
This brochure provides *starting points* for responding to the diversity of our learners through differentiated or responsive instruction. It will be followed by a more comprehensive booklet, regional conferences, and other supportive resources in the spring and fall of 2007. The Ministry of Education and teacher federations are pleased to be your partner in ensuring the success of every grade 7 and 8 student in Ontario.

***“Differentiated instruction just makes sense in today’s diverse classrooms.”***

Teacher

# Essentials of Differentiation

## A Concept Map for Differentiating Instruction



Adapted and reprinted by permission from *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*, by C.A. Tomlinson (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1999) [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)

***“Responsive instruction helps me be successful with more of my students.”***

Teacher

***“I really like getting to know my kids. We enjoy spending time together!”***

Teacher

## Begin with the Student

When we believe that it is our students who are the starting point for our unit and lesson planning, not the course content or textbook, we try to live that belief by getting to know our students' learning needs and preferences and then responding to that knowledge through the opportunities we provide in our classrooms. Most of us do that now, to varying degrees; learning about differentiated instruction helps us to further develop already effective practices.



## Curriculum Expectations

When we differentiate instruction, we are neither forgetting about nor ignoring the curriculum expectations. Indeed, unless modifying for a student with an IEP, we hold expectations constant and begin planning by clearly identifying both the expectations and the appropriate assessments.

# Quick Ways to Know Your Students



***“I like that my teacher knows some stuff about me and wants to make school interesting.”***

**Student**

## **Connect**

- Make meaningful connections by knowing about young adolescent development and popular culture, and taking the time for informal conversations with your students.
- Greet students at the classroom door or in the hall. These simple moments of connection give you a sense of how each student's day is progressing and contribute to a positive classroom environment.

## **Ask**

- Observe the choices students make, such as how they are going to share their learning. Choices speak to student learning preferences and interests.
- Ask your students about their interests and their preferred ways of learning. Confirm your understanding with students and their parents.

## **Diagnose**

- Use formal and informal diagnostic assessments, including interest, reading or learning style inventories, to determine your students' individual starting points and to inform unit/lesson planning.

# Differentiated instruction

Differentiated instruction is not individualized instruction. It is responding to varying student needs by providing a balance of modeled, shared, guided and independent instructional strategies.

## Effective

- Use *Think Literacy (7-12)* or the *Guides to Effective Instruction (K-6)* to explicitly teach strategies that will make your subject content accessible to a wide range of learners. Explicit strategy instruction is the first step in the 'gradual release of responsibility' model referred to in *Education for All*.

## Relevant

- Connect ideas to student interests and to their lives beyond the classroom.

## Responsive

- Use simple graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams or Know/Want to Know/Learned (KWL) charts to have students record what they know about a concept before you teach it so that you know what to emphasize and which students might need support.

## Engaging

- Vary instructional strategies to meet learning preferences. For example, if you are presenting information and having students take notes, add a video clip or ask students to take notes in two columns, using words in one column and visual representations in the other. In other instances, ask students to discuss what they've read or learned with a partner.



# Choice is a Wonderful Motivator

*Consider giving students some choice when they are doing guided or independent work.*

## **Choose How to Work**

- Let students choose the order of completion when they have multiple tasks to do.
- Allow students to choose whether to work alone or with a partner for some tasks.
- Provide students with a wide variety of resources including technology, books at various reading levels, and magazines.



***“My struggling students amaze me with the quality of their work when I give them some freedom in how they demonstrate their knowledge.”***

**Teacher**

***“I really like being able to choose how I do some of my assignments.”***

**Student**

## **Choose How to Demonstrate Learning**

- Allow students to choose their own sub-topic for research and investigation within the larger unit.
- Provide a range of product options for students to demonstrate their learning. For example, let them choose to share what they have learned about a concept by writing a paper; creating a subject dictionary, or producing a radio show. Use a common assessment for all products so the emphasis remains on expectations rather than on product appeal.

# When You Start to Differentiate

*Students need to be taught how to work in a classroom where people are doing different things.*

***“I’m relieved to know that teaching in a differentiated way is both manageable and worthwhile!”***

Teacher

***“I like that the teacher talks to us about what we’re doing. When something goes wrong, we figure it out together.”***

Student

## **Build on Success**

- Anchor activities are activities which all students in your class are able to do independently and with minimum noise or disruption. For example, silent reading is an anchor; as is daily journal writing. Gradually introduce differentiation during an anchor activity. For example, meet with a small group when others are journal writing. Build groupings over time until eventually you have multiple small group activities occurring simultaneously.

## **Anticipate and Prevent Problems**

- Visualize a lesson so you can anticipate possible problems with the process. Make sure students know where to pick up handouts, how to ask for help, or anything else that you think might be an issue. Be prepared to have your students practise new procedures for a while before they become habits.

## **Collaborate with Students**

- Talk with your students. Explain what you are doing and why. Young adolescents need ownership for their learning. They will get some of that through the choices you provide. They, and you, will also benefit from the rapport that is built when you make your thinking and your concerns apparent and you invite their input.





## **For More Information**

Here is a sampling of publications and websites that are available.

*Think Literacy*

*TIPS4RM*

*Education for All*

*Guides to Effective Instruction in Reading and Mathematics K-6*

*Me Read? No, Way! A practical guide to improving boys' literacy skills*

*Supporting Student Success in Literacy, Grades 7-12 – Effective Practices of Ontario School Boards*

*Teaching and Learning Mathematics – the Report of the*

*Expert*

*Panel on Mathematics in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario*

*Leading Math Success – Mathematical Literacy Grades 7-12*

*Literacy for Learning – The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario*

*Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom – A practical guide for Ontario educators*

[www.ontario.ca/6ways](http://www.ontario.ca/6ways)

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/)

The ability to systematically and thoroughly meet the needs of the individual learners in your care is central to the important work you do as an intermediate teacher. Thank you for that work. We look forward to supporting you in your continuing efforts to Reach Every Student.

