



Q: What is "differentiation"?

A: Differentiation refers to a strategy in which learning experiences are designed to address student needs at various levels. It is considered a "best practice" in classroom instruction. Differentiation can be applied to both learning style and academic need.

Q: How will differentiation affect my student?

A: Differentiation is intended to challenge the student at his or her level. This could include students within the same classroom working on different tasks to acquire key knowledge. It could also mean students are working on alternate content if they have demonstrated mastery in key objectives. Differentiation could also involve students moving in and out of different groupings for certain learning experiences. Ultimately, differentiation is intended to make school challenging and rewarding for your student.

Q: What is the teacher's role in differentiation?

A: The teacher's role in a differentiated classroom is threefold:

- to determine students' understandings of key ideas and individual learning styles;
- to create alternate learning situations that best meet the determined needs; and
- to assess student growth.

Q: How does the district support differentiation?

A: The district is engaging in a variety of efforts to support its staff as differentiation becomes more common. These include:

- Differentiation Learning Teams (DLT). These teams meet regularly to provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other professionals. Currently there are various levels of involvement for teachers and staff in the DLTs.
- Built-in professional development opportunities are provided monthly for staff about best practice strategies such as:
 - Response to Intervention (RtI)
 - Guided Reading
 - Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
 - technology implementation
 - curricular unit design
 - mapping of Illinois State Standards
 - development of *essential understandings*
 - creation of assessments matched to standards

Q: What part does technology play in differentiation?

A: Technology provides multiple tools for different learning preferences within a classroom. Teachers can access a wealth of educational resources on-line to help differentiate their lessons. Students are provided a means of researching any number of topics. Technology also facilitates communication, which personalizes the learning experience. All of this serves to prepare students for an information-based economy.