

Teacher's Survival Guide

Differentiating Instruction
in the Elementary Classroom

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1 Differentiation: The Basics



Learning how to learn is life's most important skill.

—Tony Buzan

Key Question

- What must be in place to motivate teachers to differentiate instruction?

The goal of school is for all children to learn on an ongoing basis. Developing lifelong learners must be the priority at all schools and, consequently, for all educators—classroom teachers, specials teachers, counselors, and school leaders.

The Goals of Differentiation

The goals of differentiation are complementary to the goals for school:

1. Every student will make *continuous progress* no matter how old she is or at what levels her knowledge and skills are as she begins the unit of study.

2. Every student will become a *lifelong learner*, the long-term goal for all children and young people. Learning at the appropriate level of challenge is motivating and builds lifelong learners.

These goals are important at each stage of K–12 education, and they are especially important as children begin their formal schooling. A great start in school means that children are enjoying learning. That love of learning happens in classrooms in which children are respected as learners and are engaged in learning on a daily basis. Differentiation is planned to allow for growth in learning capacity. Differentiation increases interest in learning and hones skills for learners. Lifelong learning is the long-term goal of education.

Continuous progress means that everyone has the opportunity to learn regardless of readiness level; whether a weakness needs to be shored up or a strength needs to be developed; a child's reading level is at, above, or below grade level; whatever the student's interests are for the content being studied; or whether the student is an English language learner or native English speaker. Everyone learns when the teacher recognizes differences among children, respects those differences, and accommodates them to engage children in learning.

Definition of Differentiation

Definitions of *differentiation* are numerous. For this book, the definition of differentiation is tied to the match—the match of the curriculum and learning experiences to learners. A teacher who differentiates effectively matches the content (basic to complex), the level of the thinking processes, the sophistication and choice of the product, and/or the assessment to the student or cluster of students. Differentiation is not a strategy but rather a way of teaching that accommodates differences among children so that all are learning on an ongoing basis.

Rationale for Differentiation

Response to Differences

The most basic reason to differentiate is that children differ. Because children are different in their readiness to learn specific content and skills, it is necessary to respond accordingly. Children of the same age who are in the same grade have a range of reading abilities, varied interests and experiences with the content being studied, and different levels of skills for thinking critically and creatively as well as in communicating via writing and speaking. Children seldom come to any class ready for learning at the identical rate and at the same level of complexity.

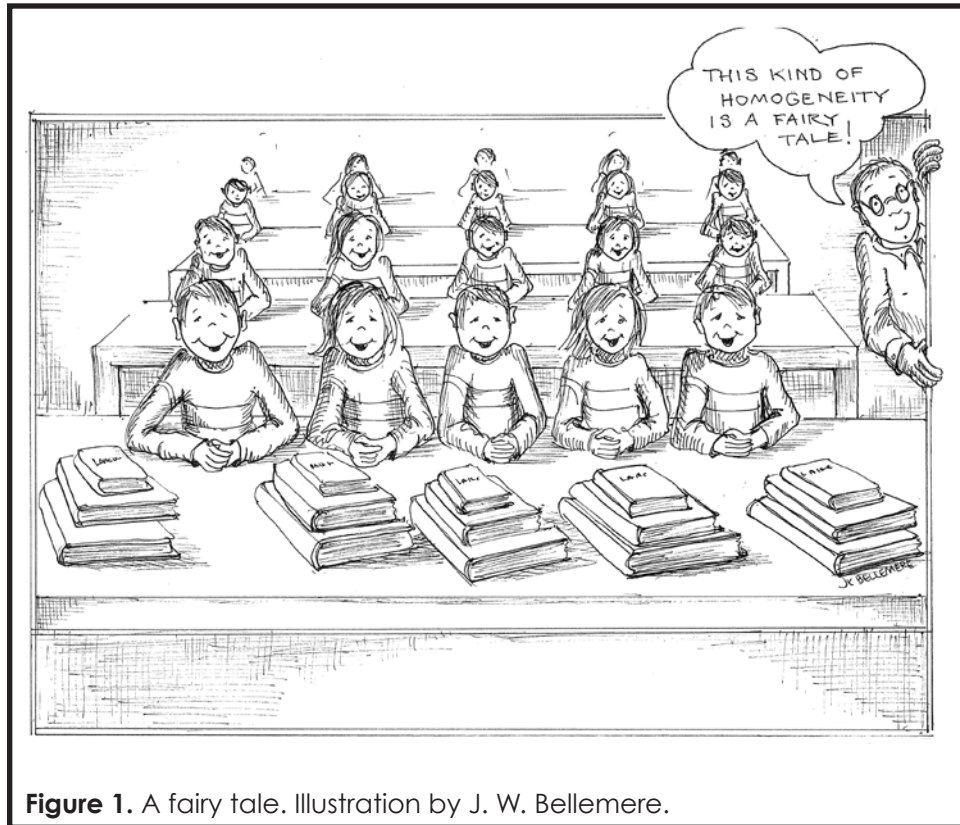


Figure 1. A fairy tale. Illustration by J. W. Bellemere.

As Figure 1 suggests, it is fiction or a fairy tale to assume that all children in a class are at the same level such that a one-size-fits-all lesson will allow all of them to make continuous progress. One lesson for all children will likely be too difficult for a few and not challenging enough to hold the interest of or challenge others.

A Standard of Excellence

For our communities to thrive, elementary, middle, and high schools must be centered on a standard of excellence. A standard of excellence means that all children achieve at levels that are challenging—but not so challenging that they are not attainable. Grade-level learning experiences will provide the correct match for many children at a particular grade level but not for all. All learning experiences for a particular age group will not “fit” all children appropriately any more than one size of shoes will offer the proper fit for all children who are in the second grade or fifth grade. No child should be held back or inappropriately challenged because she is a particular age; rather, learning opportunities must be matched to the children.

Excellence, then, should be a personal standard rather than a grade-level standard. A standard of excellence means that each child makes at least a year's growth in achievement no matter what the starting point for the school year. More than one year of achievement would be even better, and such growth in achievement is quite possible. However, it is unacceptable in a school that is centered on excellence for any child to make less than a year of progress. That includes children whose achievement level is above or way above the grade that they are in just as it includes children who are not yet achieving at grade level.

All children need ongoing opportunities to learn at the highest level at which they can achieve. Learning at an advanced level is certainly within the realm of possibility for a much higher percentage of children than currently are achieving at advanced levels. *Mind the (Other) Gap!* (Plucker, Burroughs, & Song, 2010) described the excellence gap as the "difference between subgroups of students performing at the highest level of achievement" (p. 1). The report stated:

That excellence gaps have received so little attention over the past decade is a major oversight. The existence of such gaps raises doubts about the success of federal and state governments in providing greater and more equitable education opportunities, particularly as the proportion of minority and low-income students continues to rise. The goal of guaranteeing that all children will have the opportunity to reach their academic potential is called into question if educational policies only assist some students while others are left behind. Furthermore, the comparatively small percentage of students scoring at the highest level on achievement tests suggests that children with advanced academic potential are being under-served, with potentially serious consequences for the long-term economic competitiveness of the U.S. (p. 1)

Focus on the achievement gaps among children from lower income families, children from various racial and ethnic groups, and children with special education needs has been on reaching proficiency. Many of these children are capable of reaching advanced levels (because high-ability and gifted children come from all backgrounds), but currently that is not the emphasis in many schools and classrooms.

Fairness

Is it fair for different children to be learning at different levels in one classroom? Definitely. It is unfair to have some children struggling with assignments

that are too difficult, just as it is unfair to have some children waiting for something new to learn. Fairness means matching learning experiences to needs. Although it is not the usual way to think about needs, it is important to remember that needs are created from strengths as well as deficits. Needs also arise from the pace at which children learn. Some students need more time and multiple opportunities to practice a skill or to learn the content, while others need less time and few repetitions (or perhaps no repetition) to master a skill or to learn the content. Fairness means allowing each child opportunities to learn new things every school day. Fairness means matching the level of complexity and the pace of learning to the child's readiness, interest in the concept or topic, and/or learning profile. Ward (1983) stated,

One of the objectives of free public education in a democracy is to provide equal opportunity for all youth to develop their potential abilities to the fullest. In attempting to reach this objective educators have come to the realization that *equal* opportunity does not mean *identical* opportunity. (p. 1)

Ward (1980) coined the term *differential learning* to describe the concept that is now known as *differentiated instruction*.

Differentiation: Not Really a New Concept

Perhaps the best place to start to examine differentiation is with early school practices that differentiated instruction for learners. In rural America, effective teachers in the one-room schoolhouse arranged lessons by grouping children by ability (not by age), so that all children were learning—but not the same thing at the same time. *Understood Betsy* (Fisher, 1917), a novel about a 9-year-old girl, describes her puzzlement as she moves from a school organized by grades to a one-room school. There she finds that the teacher has her reading with the seventh graders, doing arithmetic with the second graders, and spelling with the third graders. When Betsy remarks that she doesn't know what grade she is in, the teacher said,

You aren't any grade at all, no matter where you are in school. You're just yourself, aren't you? What difference does it make what grade you're in? And what's the use of your reading little baby things too easy for you just because you don't know your multiplication table? (pp. 101–102)

Very succinctly, the teacher told Betsy why it is necessary to differentiate instruction for her if she is to learn as much as she can learn that year. The

teacher understood that Betsy was an outstanding reader but was at grade level in spelling and perhaps a bit below in arithmetic. To have Betsy working at the third-grade level in all of the content areas would be holding her back in her reading for no good reason at all. Differentiation becomes very important in order to enhance students' strengths while working on learning on a daily basis.

Later, schools were organized based on the age of the child, and, although this arrangement may be efficient for organizing children, it is not a very effective way to organize children for learning when it is adhered to rigidly. Grouping by age results in a wide range of learning differences in each content area in a classroom. Some children will soar, while others are held back in a heterogeneous class in which the teacher does not differentiate instruction. Other children are pushed too hard if accommodations are not made to make the content more basic and to slow the pace, while others are lulled into complacency when there is a one-size-fits-all curriculum and pace for instruction. Either situation gets in the way of children learning on an ongoing basis, and it clouds the question of whether children even want to come to school.

Perhaps the ideal situation would be to have tutors for students. A tutor tailors lessons to meet the needs of one student. No doubt, it would be helpful to have the one-on-one relationship that a tutor has; however, that suggestion is not practical for schools. Parent or community volunteers can be used when such a relationship is needed for students to demonstrate their reading ability or to discuss interests related to what they are learning. Obviously, tutors cannot be available to deliver instruction to all children today, but differentiation can make it possible for all children to learn on an ongoing basis. Differentiation allows all children to learn and make continuous progress in a classroom.

Spelling: How to Differentiate a Lesson

Spelling provides an example of a content area that can be differentiated easily. The goal for teaching spelling is for children to learn to spell or to become better spellers. If on the Monday preassessment, a child can spell all of the words for the week and another cannot spell any of them correctly, the lesson offers no challenge for one and perhaps too much challenge for another. A differentiated spelling lesson would offer an appropriate level of challenge to each child. Without differentiation, the child who knows all or most of the words already will not really be learning any spelling unless he is given a different list of words. Spelling is a good way to examine differentiation and to begin to think about what differentiation really is and is not.

Is it appropriate differentiation to give Matilda (who can spell the words correctly on Monday) puzzles to solve while other children work on their spelling? No, that strategy is not making Matilda a better speller—the very reason that spelling is in the curriculum. Working puzzles or doing anything other

than learning vocabulary words the child does not already know how to spell and use correctly is merely putting the child into a holding pattern with spelling. No one enjoys being put into a holding pattern on a plane, and the same can be said about learning. Such a situation in school creates frustrated or lazy learners.

Is it best practice to give Matilda a different list of spelling words for the week? Yes, it is, but the “catch” is that the different list must have an appropriate level of challenge for the child. Tamara Fisher (2012) wrote the following scenario, which illustrated why it is not enough for the spelling list to be different.

I had a conversation with a fourth grader the other day and was asking her about her Spelling words. Having spent a little time in her classroom, I’d noticed that the kids took a pre-test on the list and, for whichever of those words they spelled correctly on the pre-test, they got to pick new words from a “shopping list.” But the shopping list words didn’t seem that much more challenging to me.

Marianne agreed and said, “Yeah, I was still getting 100%’s on the final tests, too, and not needing to study the shopping list words much, either. But then Mrs. Shazam started pre-testing me on the shopping list words, also, and she found a bunch of 7th grade words that I could pick from instead.”

I asked her if the words from this “alternative alternative” were more challenging and she enthusiastically agreed, “Yes, I have to study now!” I asked how she was doing on her spelling tests now and she said, “Well, I’m still usually getting 100%’s, but I have to work for them now.” I asked her which 100%’s were more satisfying, the piece-of-cake ones, or the ones she had to work for. “Oh, the ones I have to study for!” she said with a huge smile. “I’m learning new words, now.” (para. 9–11)

Some Kids Will Need an Alternative Alternative!

Is it possible that the fourth-grade spelling list is too difficult for a fourth grader? Yes, that possibility exists, so the list of words may need to be pared back to a reasonable level of difficulty/complexity for some students. How does the teacher know if the grade-level spelling list is an appropriate match for students? Preassessment is the key. Results of the pretest must inform instructional decisions. Pretest results tell the teacher which children need extra support and perhaps a different spelling list just as they inform the teacher who needs

an alternative list to enhance the difficulty and complexity of the words. All children need to be improving their spelling mastery to become better spellers.

Does it take more time for the teacher to differentiate the spelling list? Yes, but the time spent on creating new spelling lists is minimal. The results are exciting as every child is engaged in learning new words—words that are not too hard and not too easy. Differentiation creates classrooms in which children are engaged in learning. If a teacher is concerned about how to check the spelling on Friday if lists differ, that is easy, too. A child can read the list to another child or children to assess for accuracy, and then they can read the list for others with a different list. Such assessment can be low key and speedily accomplished.

Differentiation: Where Is It Happening or Not Happening?

The Regular Classroom Practices With Gifted Students study (Archambault et al., 1993) indicated that most of the more than 7,000 third- and fourth-grade teachers surveyed reported that they did not differentiate within their classrooms to address the needs of gifted students. This study included teachers in public and private schools, teachers in classrooms with various ethnic concentrations, and classrooms in rural, urban, and suburban communities as well as in various regions of the country. Westberg and Daoust (2003) replicated the study 10 years later and reported that “teachers’ differentiation practices in third and fourth grade classrooms have not changed in the last 10 years” (p. 3). Such survey results present a bleak picture of differentiation for advanced learners. Table 1 presents data from the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Survey (TELL Survey), in which teachers surveyed in specific states in 2011–2012 voiced their interest in learning more about special education, gifted education, and differentiation.

The data suggest that teachers continue to want and need professional development that addresses differentiation and provides information and strategies for ensuring that children with special education needs thrive in school. These children include those with disabilities and those with gifts and talents.

Reasons Teachers Do and Do Not Differentiate

It is interesting to see what reasons teachers give for why they do and do not differentiate. When asked why they do differentiate, teachers’ answers tend to focus on the students, while the opposite occurs when teachers are asked why they do not differentiate—those answers often center on teachers themselves.

Reasons educators differentiate are to address the needs of learners in a class, to maximize achievement for all students, and to develop lifelong learners. These reasons sound like motherhood and apple pie. Who would not support

Table 1
Results of the 2011–2012 TELL Survey

State and Number (Percent) of Teachers Who Completed Survey (2011–2012)	Needing Professional Development to Teach Gifted/Talented Students Effectively	Needing Professional Development to Teach Special Education Students Effectively	Needing Professional Development for Effective Differentiation of Instruction
Colorado <i>n</i> = 29,466 (46.78%)	<i>n</i> = 25,057 (57%)	<i>n</i> = 25,191 (56%)	<i>n</i> = 25,172 (56%)
Kentucky <i>n</i> = 42,025 (80.32%)	<i>n</i> = 36,092 (53%)	<i>n</i> = 36,307 (56%)	<i>n</i> = 36,299 (62%)
Maryland <i>n</i> = 45,902 (51.88%)	<i>n</i> = 32,845 (52%)	<i>n</i> = 33,309 (59%)	<i>n</i> = 33,102 (51%)
Massachusetts (2012) <i>n</i> = 42,404 (52.41%)	<i>n</i> = 36,589 (60%)	<i>n</i> = 36,600 (60%)	<i>n</i> = 36,624 (55%)
North Carolina (2012) <i>n</i> = 100,042 (86.22%)	<i>n</i> = 84,569 (47%)	<i>n</i> = 85,150 (52%)	<i>n</i> = 85,277 (54%)
Tennessee <i>n</i> = 57,391 (76.99%)	<i>n</i> = 49,426 (57%)	<i>n</i> = 50,110 (61%)	<i>n</i> = 50,027 (65%)

Note. From New Teacher Center, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2012a, 2012b. Each column shows the percentage of responding teachers who viewed the survey item as being important.

them? Yet if the reasons to differentiate are so compelling, why doesn't differentiation happen more?

The barriers to differentiation are numerous. The first, and perhaps the most cumbersome, barrier is that teachers do not have experiences with differentiation. They do not have role models to build on. Classes in which they were learners were not differentiated, so they lack experience in differentiated learning. Therefore, they need professional development on differentiation strategies.

The myth that children with gifts and talents will “make it” on their own provides an excuse for many teachers to dismiss the need for differentiation for advanced students in their classrooms. If teachers believe that advanced learners will be okay without the extra planning required to differentiate, they likely will stick to grade-level instruction and make a few modifications for children who need more time and more basic content to learn what is expected at the grade level at which they are teaching. Those modifications help some children learn but ignore the needs of children who have mastered grade-level standards.

Another reason that differentiation has not become a priority in many schools relates to the emphasis that has been placed on proficiency. Although there is a push for proficiency as the goal in many schools, Farkas and Duffett (2010) stated:

Teachers want these advanced (some say “gifted” or “gifted and talented”) students to move up the list of education priorities because educating them properly is the thing to do and because it’s good for the nation, but mostly because they see in their own classrooms youngsters whose considerable talents are not adequately challenged or utilized. (p. 50)

This study indicates that teachers know that they should be ensuring continuous progress for their advanced students even when the emphasis in their schools has been on reaching proficiency. Proficiency is an admirable goal if you have not reached it; however, it is no goal at all for children who have attained proficiency or beyond.

Differentiation: What It Is and What It Isn't

Perhaps a good way to answer the question of what is differentiation is to begin by answering what differentiation is not.

- Differentiation is not just different.
- Differentiation is not just offering choice.
- Differentiation is not just doing what the class does plus more or less work.
- Differentiation is not the same as individualized instruction. Individualizing instruction would be very difficult in a classroom with 20 or more students.

Differentiation is *different with a purpose*, and learning experiences should be at an appropriate level of difficulty for the learners. Yes, differentiated

learning experiences are matched to readiness, interests, and learning profile. Differentiation is learner centered. The teacher adjusts instruction to make certain that it is not so difficult that one or more children are frustrated, nor is it so easy that one or more children can complete the assignment without much effort. Jason Johans, a teacher in the Greenbriar County Schools, WV, compares differentiation to pitching and batting.

I liken the teacher in the classroom to a pitcher at a baseball game, and the students are the batters. It is our job to set up the information in a way that will allow for students to knock it out of the park, so to speak. We don't want to make it too easy and lob the information right over the plate. We also don't want to make it too hard, causing the student to "strike out." We want to throw a couple curves at them to make them do their own thinking, so they will eventually see it coming and score a run for the home team. (personal communication, April 29, 2012)

It is important that the curriculum is within a child's zone of proximal development. Vygotsky (1978) defined this zone as the "distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). For a classroom teacher, the zone of proximal development is crucial to understand if children are to be appropriately challenged. As described in the analogy of differentiation and the baseball game, the appropriate match with children and the curriculum must include challenge, but not so much challenge that it produces frustration—the goal is for them to reach to make it to the next level of learning.

The Basic Steps in Differentiation

There are three basic steps in differentiation: planning, preassessing, and differentiating the learning experience. Questions guide each of the three steps (Roberts & Inman, 2009b):

1. *Planning Question:* What do I want students to know, understand, and be able to do?
2. *Preassessment Question:* Who already knows, understands, and/or can use the content or demonstrate the skills? Who needs additional support in order to know, understand, and/or demonstrate the skills?
3. *Differentiation Question:* What can I do for him, her, or them so they can make continuous progress and extend their learning? (p. 9)

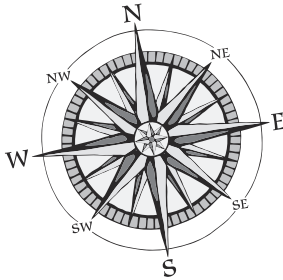
The starting point for effective differentiation must be planning. It is not possible to move to the second step, preassessment, without the teacher establishing what the students are to know, understand, and be able to do at the conclusion of the unit of study—the end goals of the unit. Good planning is essential in effective differentiation. Only after establishing the end goals or objectives can the teacher assess students to see if learning the content or mastering the skills is too much of a stretch for the child or if there is no stretch at all, as the student already knows most of the content and has mastered the skills. Differentiation is appropriate in both cases: The student needs differentiated learning experiences to receive additional support or he needs differentiated learning experiences to ensure that the content is complex enough to be challenging and the pace is rapid enough to maintain his interest.

Ongoing assessment allows teachers to determine what students know and are able to do in relation to the topic or concept being studied. The next step in differentiation is to match learning experiences to children's and young people's readiness and interests in relation to the topic or concept as well as their learning profiles. Children learn when they are engaged in learning at an appropriately challenging level—not too hard and not too easy. That match is the essential ingredient in effective differentiation.

An Overview of This Survival Guide on Differentiation

This book is planned to provide essential information on differentiating instruction for elementary children. It is intended for teachers new to differentiation, whether they are new to teaching or experienced teachers. This first chapter provides the foundation for the model in Chapter 2. The Effective Differentiation Model shows the relationship of various components in a differentiated classroom. Subsequent chapters describe content, process, products, and assessment as dimensions to differentiate for learners; how to establish a learning environment that supports differentiation; and management strategies to enhance differentiated learning. Also included are chapters describing sample strategies that differentiate, ways to meet the Common Core State Standards while differentiating, and how technology can be used to enhance differentiation in an elementary classroom. Each chapter also includes survival tips and a survival toolkit containing useful print and electronic resources. Survival is important for teachers to think about as they embark upon a journey into differentiation. If it were really easy to differentiate, all teachers would be doing so. The book is written for teachers who want the goals of maintaining continuous progress for all students and developing lifelong learners to characterize their teaching. It will be the handbook for starting to differentiate, providing the

guidance to persist in differentiating, and encouraging teachers as they build a repertoire of strategies to differentiate in their classrooms.



Survival Tips

- It may be a great step to get your grade-level team or a group of teachers (the entire staff would be ideal) to engage in a study of differentiation. This book may be your starting point with a book study.
- Interview parents and students about ways to learn that are most engaging (enjoyable for the students). This information would be especially important with parents of students who need extra support and those who already know some, even most, of the content and skills expected for the grade level.
- Think about the definition of differentiation in this chapter and the three questions that are essential for defensible differentiation. How might you get colleagues (grade-level teachers or the faculty) discussing differentiation and routinely posing and answering the three essential questions in their planning?

Survival Toolkit

- Carol Tomlinson on Differentiation: Proactive Instruction (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpy6rDnXNbs>): This talk by Dr. Carol Tomlinson provides insight into differentiation—the rationale and basics for differentiating in classrooms. Invite your colleagues to watch with you.
- Hot Topic: Differentiation of Curriculum and Instruction (<http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=978>): On this page of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) website, there is an overview of reasons to differentiate and links to resources.

7 Common Core State Standards: The Building Blocks of Differentiation



Contributed by Jan Weaver Lanham, Ph.D.

There is no contradiction between effective standards-based instruction and differentiation. Curriculum tells us what to teach: Differentiation tells us how.

—Carol Ann Tomlinson

Key Question

- How and why will teachers need to differentiate with the Common Core State Standards in place?

Standards-based instruction and assessment have become the hallmarks of educational curriculum design as broad-based initiatives established common standards. These standards are intended to be (a) based upon rigorous content with application of high-order thinking skills, (b) consistent and clearly understood, (c) aligned with postsecondary and career expectations, (d) drawn from experts in the field, (e) preparation for success in a global economy, and (f) evidence-based (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a, 2010b). As states, districts, and schools work to implement standards-based instruction, fidelity to rigorous content in the context of higher order thinking within a differentiated classroom sets the stage for a classroom with great potential for all students.

Fundamental to the use of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is the understanding that these standards establish literacy as multifaceted. Literacy links the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the context of all content areas; in literary, scientific, and technical fields; and in technology. Within those areas of literacy, the standards identify broad competencies that all students should possess to be college and career ready. It is important that teachers and administrators continue to develop strong knowledge of the standards and learning targets reflected in the Common Core State Standards and that they understand that the term *scaffolding* used repeatedly in the standards means differentiation! The teacher's question then becomes "How will I adjust my instruction, activities, and assessments to assure that my students meet and exceed the standards?"

Start With the Standards

The CCSS are drawn from the set of skills and content knowledge identified to facilitate transition to college and careers. Those standards reflect both broad and narrow expectations that allow and require educators to define specific learning targets and student performance targets. Decisions about grade-level standards and learning targets may occur at the district or state level, driven by state accountability and curriculum mapping. However, the CCSS were developed with broad competencies in mind. The format assures that teachers have increased autonomy in the development of the range of opportunities and experiences they may provide to facilitate standard mastery.

Once learning targets are defined, differentiation is the logical next step to foster learning for all. Differentiation is essential because any classroom of students will naturally include three groups: (a) those students for whom the targets provide the "just right" match between the skills and competencies they possess and the challenge of the task, (b) those students who will require specific supports or scaffolding to reach the target, and (c) those students who have already demonstrated mastery of the basic target and will require adjustment to provide optimum challenge.

Instructional planning begins with selection of appropriate standard(s) to be addressed. Within the context of the standard, the teacher identifies the content through which the standard will be addressed and the student performance and product that equate with mastery of the standard. Once those facets have been identified, the teacher uses student performance data to address three questions:

- Who is ready to address this standard and the identified learning targets?
- Who will need additional support to meet the standard and learning targets?
- Who will need to address this standard with greater depth or complexity?

Once the teacher has a clear picture of the readiness/instructional need within the group, the fun begins!

Standards-Based Instructional Planning

The CCSS are organized under broad umbrella competencies intended to assure student success beyond K–12 education. They were developed in tandem with a set of core competencies that were identified to reflect what a student who is college and career ready should know or be able to do. Those standards and competencies are broad and open-ended enough to allow teachers to use the standards as keys to planning for quality instruction.

A college-career readiness competency such as Anchor ELA Standard for Reading 10—“Read and comprehend complex literary and informational text independently and proficiently”—is certainly a foundational goal for every teacher (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a). Tied to that competency is the recurring standard, “Read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, proficiently with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the grade level text complexity band” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a). That standard becomes the overarching standard for all reading instruction at every grade level based upon student interaction with text if the intent is for students to interact with that text independently and derive meaning. Therefore, this standard with related learning targets is found at every grade level. See Figure 17 for a breakdown of this standard.

As a teacher addresses this standard, it is imperative to acknowledge and plan for the wide range of reading abilities found in a typical classroom. By beginning with the most “rigorous” basic activities and products possible, the number of students for whom formal differentiation will be needed is reduced and the differentiation strategies incorporated to provide supports can be broadened to reinforce reading and comprehension strategies beneficial for all.

Standards-Based Differentiated Reading/Writing Example

Beginning with two standards—(a) “Read and comprehend literary and informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the third grade text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range” and (b) “Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a, Common Core Standards RI.3.10 & W.3.1)—the teacher plans to use the reading

K–12 Expectation	
College/Career Readiness Read and comprehend complex literary and informational text independently and proficiently.	
Standard Read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the grade level text complexity band.	
Targets Knowledge—Identify/Understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key ideas/details • craft/structure • integration of knowledge and ideas 	Reasoning—Comprehend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key ideas/details • craft/structure • integration of knowledge and ideas

Figure 17. Anchor ELA Standard for Reading 10.

selection from the basal series as the anchor literature for the week. Although analysis of the activities shows that multiple standards will be addressed, it is important to begin the planning process with the key standards to be assessed. Through the use of the two identified comprehension learning targets that support ELA Reading Standard RI.3.10—(1) “comprehend key ideas and details” and (2) “comprehend the integration of knowledge and ideas”—and the related writing target that supports ELA Writing Standard W.3.1—“determine an opinion about the text or topic and reasons that support the opinion”—the teacher builds a set of activities:

- *Day 1:* Introduce story; read independently (some silently with a reading guide and some in guided reading groups); complete story sequencing/cause and effect graphic organizer.
- *Day 2:* Participate in reading stations rotation based on related language arts concepts within the story (figurative language and cause and effect); listening station where students record themselves reading the story and do a fluency self-assessment; vocabulary station; guided reading groups (using basal story or leveled readers).
- *Day 3:* Continue reading station rotation; begin writing activity from the point of view of a story character defending his or her actions (e.g., through journal entries, diary entries, letter to another character); move into guided reading groups (using basal story or leveled readers).
- *Day 4:* Continue reading stations rotation; read nonfiction article about topic related to the story and answer questions. (For example, if the literary reading is a selection from *Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate

DiCamillo, students may be asked to read a nonfiction article about pets or pet care, about the author, about students' experiences moving to a new school, about Florida, and so on).

- *Day 5:* Share and critique character writings; take comprehension test on reading selection.

This sample week reflects a range of activities that are congruent to the identified standards. By using effective questioning in tandem with the student activities, the teacher establishes a set of potentially rigorous activities to address the learning targets and the needs of the majority of students in the classroom. In order to ensure the best match between student needs and delivery, however, the teacher must reflect on student readiness/needs and plan accordingly, as there are students who read and write below level, on level, and above level within the classroom. In order to successfully and efficiently differentiate, clarity about what the student is expected to do to demonstrate mastery is essential.

Based on the standard, the expectation is that students will interact with the grade-level text to derive meaning. However, those students who read below level must have some supports. Reading the story aloud or providing audio texts for read-along with a listening guide can increase access to the text that will serve as an anchor of additional activities through the week. The guided reading instruction for those students would then be differentiated through the use of text at the appropriate instructional level. Additional scaffolding for these students might include provision of instruction of key vocabulary or concepts prior to reading the story to increase access. Additional activities through the week may be scaffolded with Visual Instructional Plans (Jones, 2007), which are illustrated step-by-step instructions that help students navigate independently through multistep directions or processes. Extra support through writing tasks may be provided through differentiated prompts and the use of models, graphic organizers, manipulatives to construct the writing piece, and even a scribe, if needed.

Elementary students who need extra support are the lifeblood of a typical classroom. Teachers tend to intuitively slow down, back up, or reteach when they perceive that a student did not master the standard. Quality differentiation can reduce the need to back up, because the purposeful adjustments made up front keep the student supported while assuring that she is experiencing quality, rigorous standards and activities.

When planning for those students reading above level, the same processes apply, and quality differentiation based on the standards can be designed through some simple adjustments. First of all, a student who is already reading above level will not be served with a standard that focuses on proficiency at the high end of the grade-level text complexity. Teachers must take comfort in the fact that the same standard is in place at *every* grade level, and it is imperative

that, for those above grade level, the standard is restated to: “Read and comprehend literary and informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the appropriately challenging text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.”

Adjusting the week for those students who already read above level does not necessarily mean rejecting the basal entirely, especially when there are other classroom activities through the week—discussions, writing tasks, peer review—that require a working knowledge of the literary selection. It does mean that reading selections must be purposeful to assure growth as a reader. The teacher must constantly consider both *what* the students are asked to read and *why* they are reading it. After students have invested time in reading material, the levels at which they will interact with the text will determine whether the reading material and task are appropriate to the standard and whether they reflect growth.

Looking across the week, differentiation for students reading above level might begin with adjusting the literary content of the reading through activities such as reading the entire book rather than just the basal selection, reading a more challenging story on a similar theme, or participating in an author study by reading one of several books by the same author. As the literary selection is changed, the remaining activities through the week are potentially differentiated through that change in content. Each of these options assumes that the teacher has a strong working knowledge of the basal reading selections in order to identify appropriate new reading selections. Good teacher resources included with a basal series often include suggestions regarding “beyond level” activities that can serve as a starting point in the differentiation process.

Differentiation through quality questioning remains a fundamental strategy within instructional planning based upon standards. Reasoning, using inferences, evaluating, synthesizing, and critiquing are fundamental performance expectations throughout the CCSS. Figure 18 provides an overview of a differentiated reading/writing week. The strategies for differentiation developed in the classroom and taught to students should be readily transferrable to other standards and content areas.

Note that rubric-based tasks can be further differentiated through adjustments of the criteria or performance indicators on the rubric itself, including personalized growth indicators that reflect student needs, goals, or interests.

Standards-Based Differentiated Content/Writing

Just as many of the college and career readiness strands and standards for reading are consistent across all grade levels, the writing standards are consistent in kindergarten through 12th grade. The levels of teacher support typically decrease as students’ ages and abilities increase, but the high-level expectations

<p>Standard—Reading Read and comprehend literary and informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in third grade (appropriately challenging) text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.</p>	<p>Standard—Writing Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.</p>	
<p>Reasoning Target—Comprehend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key ideas/details • Craft/structure • Integration of knowledge and ideas 	<p>Reasoning Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a topic for an opinion piece • Determine an opinion and reasons that support that opinion 	
<p>The student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a book walk using text features to complete prediction graphic Read selection independently Complete story sequencing/cause and effect graphic organizer 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Guided/modeled responses Read along with audio CD, text reader, read aloud with reading guide Modeled responses, sequencing cards, manipulatives to sequence 	<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate text—same activity Same activity; guiding questions for more complex/lengthy text Same activity
<p>The student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Complete figurative language reading station activity Complete cause and effect activity Record him- or herself reading selection and do a fluency self-assessment Complete vocabulary activity Participate in leveled guided reading groups 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Same reading station activity with VIP Same station activity with VIP Same station activity with VIP Same station activity with VIP Same activity with leveled peers 	<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Same reading station activity based on differentiated reading selection Same activity based on differentiated selection Same activity based on differentiated selection Same activity based on differentiated selection Same activity based on differentiated reading selection
<p>The student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue station rotations Write from point of view of character of choice to defend actions Participate in leveled guided reading groups 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Same as second day Guided development of graphic organizer prior to writing Same activity with leveled peers 	<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Same as second day Same activity based on differentiated selection Same activity based on differentiated selection
<p>The student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue station rotations Continue opinion writing Read nonfiction article and complete reading guide Participate in leveled guided reading groups 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Same as second day Use graphic organizer Read aloud, audio CD, or independent Same activity with leveled peers 	<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Same as second day Same activity based on differentiated selection Same activity Same activity based on differentiated selection
<p>The student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Share and critique character writing using rubric Complete comprehension test on reading selections 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Same activity Test administered with needed accommodations 	<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Same activity Test based on differentiated selections

Figure 18. Differentiated reading/writing week.

begin with students' earliest school experiences and continue throughout their schooling. Instructional planning for differentiated content requires decisions regarding both domain-specific (subject/topic) standards and literacy-based standards (listening/speaking/reading/writing). Decisions regarding differentiation within the unit of study must then be based upon knowledge of student readiness or needs within the body of content and within the range of literacy standards addressed.

For example, instructional planning may be based on a social studies standard developed at the state level such as Kentucky's Core Content 4.1 Standard SS-05-1.3.1—"Describe and defend the political principles underlying the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights"—and two literacy standards: (a) "Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content" (Common Core Anchor ELA Standard for Writing) and (b) "Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate" (Common Core Anchor ELA Standard for Speaking and Listening 6). As the teacher begins to plan student products or performances, activities, and the accompanying differentiation, it is imperative that individual student readiness for those activities or tasks is determined through some form of preassessment. Although the U.S. Constitution is not a standard at every grade level, it is addressed annually in all schools in September, making it inappropriate to assume that all intermediate students will know nothing about the topic before it is taught. The teacher must get a picture of student knowledge about the political principles as the basis for the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. This could be accomplished through questioning with individual student accountability, individual T-W-H charts, a written pretest, or examination of appropriate work samples. The teacher must also use performance data regarding student readiness or mastery of the target speaking, research, and writing skills.

The teacher uses the standards and appropriate learning targets for the grade level to establish basic plans for the instructional week or unit.

- *Day 1:* Read chapter in social studies book; begin small-group activity in which students classify rights, responsibilities, facts, and attributes within the U.S. Constitution and government; begin filling out graphic organizer showing branches of government.
- *Day 2:* Use Constitution booklet to prepare a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the government under George III and the U.S. Constitution; continue small-group classification activity; begin Boston Plays (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2010); participate in peer and teacher critique of play performance.
- *Day 3:* Finish Boston Plays; begin letter or speech to citizen of another country describing the roles and responsibilities of the U.S. Constitution

and defending opinions about them (may be early American settler to British family/friend, modern citizen, other).

- *Day 4:* Develop set of questions for Constitution/Bill of Rights *Jeopardy!* game; continue work on speech/letter.
- *Day 5:* Orally share written products for critique; play Constitution/Bill of Rights *Jeopardy!* game in teams.

The week (see Figure 19) represents a set of activities that are both congruent to the identified standards and provide opportunities for all students to explore the concepts of the political principles of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Because of the levels of abstraction within the topic and the interpretive nature of the tasks, the basic activities have the potential to provide practice with higher level thinking for all students. However, the activities and products will require differentiation for those students who do not bring the requisite skills or knowledge background to the tasks and for those students who demonstrate advanced knowledge or skill.

When considering the needs of students who do not bring requisite knowledge background to the unit of study, it will be important to differentiate by providing early and frequent access to key vocabulary. Activities with vocabulary and definition card matches or social studies definition games at transition times during the day may be beneficial in reinforcing concepts. Because some of the conceptual vocabulary within the specific unit is abstract, visual/verbal connections should be established and students must be provided opportunity to establish personal connections to the content (i.e., rights and responsibilities they have at home and at school). Students who are not able to read the textbook do need practice with text approach skills, but may need typical reading supports such as audio CDs or text readers. Buddy reading of content texts with guiding questions is another way to increase student accountability to the text when it might be too difficult to read independently. It is important to note, however, that the reading buddy should be a student who is close in ability, as he will have similar instructional needs.

Writing and presentation products may require differentiation in the form of additional concrete supports for organization and generation of product. The use of graphic organizers with feedback prior to writing is essential to supporting students who may lack the skill or confidence to proceed independently. By allowing the students to make major decisions and plan the writing before being faced with the blank page, the teacher makes the actual writing process more accessible. Students with limited presentation skills will require differentiation in the form of personalized cuing, limiting of audience (opportunity to present to a small group instead of the entire class), and personalized presentation rubrics focusing on growth goals.

Differentiation for students who demonstrate strong content knowledge presents opportunity for content adjustment. Although all students must have instruction and practice with strategies to approach a textbook and effectively use text features, students with mastery of the content within the textbook should be given the opportunity to work with more advanced resources, specifically resources that will provide exposure to problems or issues related to the topic. For example, students who demonstrate a fundamental understanding of the U.S. Constitution prior to instruction could be a part of most class activities while working on a comparative study (of the Articles of Confederation, perhaps) or a chronological study of historical changes to the Constitution.

Students who demonstrate advanced writing or presentation skills will benefit from the basic tasks within the unit with small changes to add depth and complexity. For example, the prompt for the speech might be adjusted to ask the student to defend the Constitution to a proponent of a dictatorship or compare the principles in the Constitution to the government of the Roman republic. These tasks would allow the student to use existing knowledge while requiring some additional reading and analysis to make those comparisons. Students with strong presentation skills can be challenged to assume a specific role and support it with gestures, props, costume, visuals, and so on, and the rubric would be adjusted to reflect those expectations.

Standards-Based Differentiated Math/Writing

Just as standards-based instruction in math is a natural fit, differentiation within math instruction is essential. Students come to math with widely varying experiences and understandings, and it is the role of the teacher to identify strengths and needs to design instruction that ensures continuous progress. The standards for mathematical practice form the foundation for all of the math standards, and they establish an expectation of mathematical understanding and application far beyond computation. The CCSS establish a mathematical progression based on full mastery at each level so that new concepts with greater depth and complexity are the focus of each subsequent instructional level. This structure and sequence may pose specific challenges to elementary teachers who do not necessarily know and understand math at the level it will be measured through the standards. Teachers seeking to implement mathematics differentiation may require strategy support; however, implementation of the CCSS in math has exciting potential as teachers experience exploratory changes with their students and gain comfort with those standards for mathematical practice.

When planning for math instruction, it is vital that the teacher look specifically at the standards and identify the learning targets that are a part of those standards. For example, the third-grade math standard—“Explain equivalence

<p>Standard—Social Studies Describe and defend the political principles underlying the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.</p>		<p>Standard—Writing Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.</p> <p>Standard—Speaking Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.</p>	
<p>Reasoning Target—Comprehend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key ideas/details • Integration of knowledge and ideas • Analyze features and impact 		<p>Reasoning Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose informative/explanatory text to supply information about a topic <p>Performance Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to communicate thoughts, ideas, and feelings clearly 	
<p>The student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Read social studies book chapter with reading guide b. Classify rights, responsibilities, features, and attributes c. Begin branches of government graphic organizer 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Read along with audio CD, text reader, read aloud with reading guide b. Guided/modeled responses; abstract terms may require additional examples or definitions c. Modeled responses, manipulatives to place on organizer 		<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Alternate text—same activity b. Student generated rights, responsibilities, features, etc. to classify c. Use existing organizer to develop opinion piece on which branch is most important
	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity with terminology starters available b. Guided/modeled responses c. Same activity d. Same activity 		<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Same activity with additional attributes requiring more inference c. Write/present original skits to represent each right d. Same activity
<p>The student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting George III monarchy and life under Constitution b. Continue small-group classification activity c. Read and present Boston Plays as simulation of rights represented in Bill of Rights d. Critique presentations using rubric 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Guided development of graphic organizer prior to writing 		<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Same activity may increase level of difficulty by offering additional comparison to other forms of government
	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Use graphic organizer 		<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Same activity (may be based on differentiated comparison)
<p>The student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Finish Boston Plays and critiques b. Write letter or speech explaining/defending political principles of U.S. Constitution and government 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Share and critique writing products b. Play Constitution/Bill of Rights Jeopardy! 		<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Same activity
	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Same activity 		<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Same activity

Figure 19. Differentiated social studies week.

of fractions in special cases, and compare fractions by reasoning about their size. Compare two fractions with the same numerator or the same denominator by reasoning about their size. Recognize that comparisons are valid only when the two fractions refer to the same whole. Record the results of comparisons with the symbols $>$, $=$, or $<$, and justify the conclusions" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b, Common Core Math Standard 3.NF.3.)—represents a dense set of student skills and understandings.

As a teacher prepares to teach this standard, it is vital that planning addresses specific knowledge or reasoning targets that represent the skills and processes that will demonstrate mastery of the standard to be met. The knowledge targets, derived by deconstructing the bullet points representing requisite skills to master Common Core Math Standard 3.NF.3., include (1) "Explain what the numerator in a fraction represents and where to read it;" (2) "Explain what the denominator in a fraction represents and where to read it;" and (3) "Recognize whether fractions refer to the same whole." The reasoning targets for this standard, Common Core Math Standard 3.NF.3., include (1) "Compare two fractions with the same numerator by reasoning about their size;" (2) "Compare two fractions with the same denominator by reasoning about their size;" (3) "Record the results of the comparison using the appropriate symbol;" and (4) "Justify conclusions about equivalence of fractions." This standard and set of knowledge targets is only one of several that would be the basis of a unit of instruction on fractions.

As the teacher prepares the unit of instruction on this standard, it will be important for the student to explain, compare, justify, and defend using both speaking and writing skills. Therefore this unit will also include literacy standards that support those skills: (1) "Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately" (Common Core ELA Writing Anchor Standard 2) and (2) "Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning" (Common Core ELA Speaking and Listening Anchor Standard 4).

- *Day 1:* Use fraction circle models to create and record fractions; use graph paper to create fractions as students draw the numbers for the numerator and denominator; use visual models for side-by-side comparison of fractions of the same whole; write a journal entry describing the role of the denominator in the size of a fraction.
- *Day 2:* Use fraction circle models to create and compare given fractions by laying each fraction on top of the other to check size; record the comparison using correct symbol; complete pizza problems with fraction comparison; write a fraction comparison problem for other students to solve.

- *Day 3:* Solve other students' problems, then present and defend the solution orally; play fraction ordering game; given a fraction comparison that has been solved and explained incorrectly, student will write a letter to the student who solved the problem incorrectly, explaining the roles of numerators, denominators, the comparison symbols, and the correct solution.

The week (see Figure 20) reflects multiple opportunities for the students to use hands-on exploration of fractions and comparisons. The need for differentiation through additional support and modeling will be reflected for those students who do not have a solid understanding of fraction vocabulary and relationships. Those students who demonstrate solid understanding of this basic comparison process and fractional relationships will require extension and compacting to assure growth.

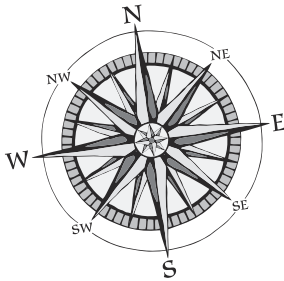
The differentiation identified for above-level students in this week would be for students who demonstrate a good understanding of this particular fraction standard, but who need exposure to the related vocabulary and concepts within the unit. If the pretesting indicated that the students have mastered all of the standards within the unit, it would be appropriate to accelerate that student to the fraction standards at the next level or provide meaningful extension activities that allow the students to apply those fraction standards and concepts in genuine activities in math.

Concluding Comments

Although differentiation appears daunting, it is realistic to plan for ongoing instructional adjustment designed to meet the needs of each student. Carefully aligning objectives, activities, and assessments with attention to diagnostic “tweaks” that match the content, the processes to practice the skill or apply the concept, and the performance tasks to the readiness and needs individual students are the practices that make differentiation a reality. Standards-based differentiation is the foundation of purposeful instruction. By selecting standards that reflect high expectations and designing differentiated instruction that ensures mastery of those standards, teachers are able to reach the goal of education—to ensure appropriate challenge and continuous progress for all.

<p>Standard—Math Explain equivalence of fractions in special cases, and compare fractions by reasoning about their size. Compare two fractions with the same numerator or the same denominator by reasoning about their sizes. Recognize that comparisons are valid only when the two fractions refer to the same whole. Record the results of comparisons with the symbols $>$, $=$, or $<$, and justify the conclusions.</p>	<p>Standard—Writing Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.</p> <p>Standard—Speaking Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.</p>	
<p>Reasoning Target Compare two fractions with the same numerator by reasoning about their size. Compare two fractions with the same denominator by reasoning about their size. Record the results of the comparison using the appropriate symbol. Justify conclusions about equivalence of fractions.</p>	<p>Reasoning Target Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately.</p> <p>Performance Target Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning.</p>	
<p>The student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use fraction circle models to create and record fractions b. Use graph paper to create fractions based on given numbers c. Write a journal entry describing role of denominator in size of fraction 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity with match me/show me b. Guided/modeled responses; immediate feedback c. Modeled responses, word bank; manipulatives 	<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. After understanding, begin process of modeling and adding fractions with like denominator b. Journal entry explaining process of adding fractions with like denominator
<p>The student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use fraction circles to compare; record comparisons using correct symbols b. Complete pizza challenge c. Write fraction comparison problem for other students to solve 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity with match me/show me b. Guided/modeled responses c. Same activity with word bank 	<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity; set challenge to create equivalent fractions b. Same activity c. Write set of real world fraction problems based on comparisons
<p>The student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Solve student written problems b. Present/defend solutions orally c. Play fraction ordering game d. Fraction open response correcting incorrectly solved comparison problem 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Same activity c. Same activity d. Same activity with word bank/models 	<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity with real-world problems b. Same activity c. Same activity d. Same activity with more complex problem
<p>The student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Share and critique writing products b. Play Constitution jeopardy 	<p>Below Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Same activity 	<p>Beyond Level Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Same activity b. Same activity

Figure 20. Differentiated math week.



Survival Tips

- Start with the standards. By identifying exactly what you want your students to know and be able to do, you simplify all of the other important decisions you must make in designing instruction.
- Develop a basic plan. By identifying the sequence of activities and student products that will move students toward mastery of the standards, you have developed the platform from which differentiation can be built.
- Consider your three groups. For whom is this sequence and set of activities just right? (You want the majority of the group to be at optimum challenge so you have to differentiate less.) Who will need adjustments or extra supports to master this? (The supports you design and implement will serve more than your target kids and will help you anticipate their questions.) Who can already do this and will need additional challenge? (The challenges you design will also serve more than your target kids, but will help you raise the rigor of all you do.)
- Use questioning. By planning strong basic activities supplemented with rich questioning and writing opportunities, students have the opportunity to work with high-level thinking and processes.
- Have fun! A differentiated classroom is dynamic and student-centered, making it a great place to be for students and adults.

Survival Toolkit

- Heacox, D. (2002). *Differentiating instruction in the regular classroom: How to reach and teach all learners*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. This is a user-friendly reference for practical application of classroom differentiation strategies.
- Heacox, D. (2009). *Making differentiation a habit: How to assure success in academically diverse classrooms*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. This is another user-friendly reference by Heacox that allows for practical application of classroom differentiation strategies.

- Jones, F. (2007). *Tools for teaching: Discipline, instruction, motivation*. Santa Cruz, CA: Fredric H. Jones & Associates. This resource offers practical tools for enhancing differentiation in classrooms.
 - Tomlinson, C. A. (2000). Reconcilable differences: Standards-based teaching and differentiation. *Educational Leadership*, 50(1), 6–11. This is a great article that may be helpful to other teachers and administrators as you work to build understanding for the need for differentiation in a standards-based instructional program.
 - Common Core State Standards Initiative (<http://www.corestandards.org>): This website is a valuable resource and reference for the standards and supporting documents.
-