



Using Current Data To Differentiate Instruction

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Most of us know that differentiation is easier said than done. The only way to effectively plan and deliver differentiation is through the use of current student achievement data. Learn ways to gather data “on-the-fly” that will allow you to adjust instruction immediately.

Two Types of Differentiation

Pre-planned

In the moment

Assessment

All student learning is driven by regular assessment which determines instructional modifications.	
Students are supported by...	All students are able to...
Data that is used to monitor current understanding and provide feedback.	Understand when they are learning, when they are struggling, and can articulate the difference.
Instruction that is adjusted during the lesson based on current data.	Utilize another instructional strategy to support mastery of learning that they are currently struggling with.

How do you collect in-the-moment data?

A teacher cannot effectively and efficiently check for understanding if he/she doesn't know the learning outcome (*what* the students are expected to learn), the learning demonstration (*how* the students will show that they have learned it), and the learning process (*how* the student will learn this).

A student cannot be part of the process if he/she doesn't know the same information.

Curriculum

All student learning is driven by standards and measurable and achievable objective(s).	
Students are supported by...	All students are able to...
Accessible standards with relevant and measurable objective(s) that drive all learning.	Articulate what they are learning and how they will show that have mastered that learning.

Sample Objectives

In order write a recounting of “How Camel Got His Hump,” students must be able to draw evidence from literary texts.

In order to cite textual evidence to support what the text says and what is implied students will write a summary of how Atticus Finch interacts with other characters.

In order to compare and contrast similar styles of works of art done in electronic media with those done with materials traditionally used in the visual arts students will write an informative/explanatory paragraph that effectively organizes the content.

In order to describe the rise of industrial economies and their link to imperialism and colonialism students will analyze a series of events and determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them on a sequence chain.

Types of Data

- What students produce
- What students say
- What students do

Instruction

All student learning is driven by research-based, highly effective and efficient instructional practices.	
Students are supported by...	All students are able to...
Opportunities for meaningful engagement using structured communication.	Dialogue with each other in a variety of groupings to support mastery of the learning.

Structured Conversation

Stage	Action	Examples
Before the Structured Conversation	1. Teacher provides a Conversation Starter that includes general academic and domain-specific vocabulary.	This can be a question, prompt, learning map, activity (reader-writer workshop)
	2. Teacher provides a Conversation Frame that includes general academic and domain-specific vocabulary.	This can be open ended or closed.
During the Structured Conversation	3. Students take time to think about what they want to say.	Before talking, time is needed to gather thoughts.
	4. Students talk with each other and provide evidence of their thinking.	Depending on the activity this can be 30 seconds or five minutes but must be enough time for all students to share ideas.
	5. Teacher monitors the Structured Conversation for content understand and language usage.	Listen for accurate content understanding and accurate language usage but refrain from correcting students during conversation.
After the Structured Conversation	6. Students share out to class in complete sentences using general academic and domain-specific vocabulary.	Use of Conversation Frame.
	7. Students take notes.	From the question, prompt, learning map, activity (reader-writer workshop)

Thus, in order to differentiate on-the-fly you must be an adaptive learning expert

John Hattie says...adaptive experts listen for when the learning is occurring so that they can work out the point at which to intervene (or not) to advance the learning.

Teacher as Decision Maker

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With the school year just beginning, teachers know that most of their time will be spent making split-second decisions—on everything from content choices to bathroom breaks! We in the education field know that making decisions is the bulk of a teacher’s job. We also know that making the right decisions can lead to success or failure for our students. But which decisions have the greatest impact? Isn’t there some way to prioritize?

Yes, there is. If we agree that the key role of the teacher is to design and deliver effective and efficient lessons for all students, then a teacher must decide the best way to build effective and efficient lessons for all students. This is dependent on the teacher’s ability to determine best practices regarding curriculum, instruction, assessment, and the climate and culture of the classroom.

Decisions to make.

Curriculum: *What will my students learn?*

Curriculum begins with understanding the set of content and skills a student needs to master in order to be successful. In terms of the Common Core, this is the content and skills students must master to be college and career ready. Thus, curriculum includes the standards and the learning objectives constructed from those standards. However, curriculum is more than the standards. It also includes the materials and resources students will interact with to master that content and those skills.

In order to answer the question “What will my students learn?” teachers must decide which standard or standards to focus on, which learning objectives students will master and in what order, what materials and resources students need to use and interact with, and how this learning connects to previous and subsequent learning.

Instruction: *How will my students learn it?*

Instruction begins with understanding that different methodologies can be employed to deliver information to students. Because there is such a variety in the content and skills students need to learn, delivery can fall anywhere on the continuum from structured to open-ended. While the decision regarding the delivery method is the teacher's to make, it cannot be made without a clear understanding of the learner.

In order to answer the question "How will my students learn it?" teachers must decide which delivery method best addresses the content or skill of the standard or learning objective, the needs of the students, the various learning styles in the classroom, and the sequence in which the learning falls (in the lesson, unit, or course).

Assessment: *How will my students show that they have learned it?*

Assessment begins with understanding that mastery of a specific content or skill must be concrete to both the teacher and the student. A teacher will have a difficult (if not impossible) task if they are trying to teach something that does not have a clear and defined end. A student will struggle (if not give up) when the end is unclear or when they are unaware of what they have to do to show that they have learned. However, assessment is more than just the end or end product. It also includes knowing what each step along the way looks like and how supportive each step is to the mastery of the broader content or skill.

In order to answer the question "How will my students show that they have learned it?" teachers must decide what mastery of that content or skill looks like, the different ways students can independently produce this mastery, which way best expresses mastery of this standard or learning objective at a discrete level, and which way best expresses mastery of the standard or learning objective at the application and integration level.

Climate and Culture: *How will my students take an active role in their learning?*

Building a positive classroom climate and culture is crucial if students are to take ownership of their own learning. This positive climate and culture determines how students receive feedback from the teacher and each other, how students work together to enhance each other's learning, and how students support each other to take risks with their learning.

In order to answer the question "How will my students take an active role in their learning?" teachers must decide how to directly teach collaboration and cooperation, how to offer authentic opportunities for students to work together, how to model that making mistakes is an integral part of learning something new, and how to deliver feedback that is respectful and supportive and promotes the student's self-worth while moving the student towards accuracy and understanding.

Now, not one of these decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, assessment, and climate and culture can be made in isolation. Each decision will impact other decisions. It is the teacher's job to decide how these four areas work together to ensure that there is the highest likelihood of a student learning. Thus, the teacher's greatest power is in their decision making. Designing and delivering a course, a unit, and a lesson that is effective and efficient is paramount.

As Chief Learning Officer at Elevated Achievement Group, Robert Crowe supports educators in the complex work of teaching and learning. This work includes being on site: in classrooms working with students and teachers delivering model lessons, co-planning and co-teaching, and offering feedback; in schools mentoring administrators; and at the district office planning and organizing support programs. Robert has supported over 25,000 educators in schools and districts nationwide. His passion is for practical solutions that increase student achievement.