Celebrating the Individual:

Making a Difference – One Child at a Time
Why Differentiated Instruction?
One Size Doesn’t Fit All

- Experience and brain based research indicates that all students are different.
- They learn differently and have different likes, preferences, and needs.
One Size Doesn’t Fit All

In life, kids can choose from a variety of clothing to fit their differing sizes, styles, and preferences to make them more comfortable.
Goal

To optimize learning for everyone against the same standards
What’s Fair?

... Fair is every student getting what he/she needs in order to grow as far/as fast as possible.
Why Differentiate?

- Standards-based classrooms
- High expectations
- Multicultural diversity
- Student diversity
- New cognitive research
- Rapid societal and technological change
• Every student should be required to think at a high level and should find his/her work interesting and powerful

• Good instruction stretches learners

• Best tasks are a little too difficult. Support to achieve the unattainable is there
• Flexible grouping

• Ongoing assessment as source of data

• We do not differentiate State Standards

• We do not differentiate major understandings and essential skills
• We can differentiate knowledge and some skills

• We do not differentiate all of the time
Assessment in a Differentiated Classroom

“Assessment is today’s means of understanding how to modify tomorrow’s instruction.”

Carol Ann Tomlinson
• We don’t differentiate rubrics
  - Rubric is not a grade
  - Rubric is honest assessment of ability to perform a task
• Grades reflect:
  - Quality of work
  - Difficulty of task
  - Individual growth
The conceptual framework for theories of differentiation:

• Gifted Education
• Brain-based Research
• Constructivist Model
  - Active, student-centered meaning making approach
What is a differentiated classroom?

“A differentiated classroom is a place where the teacher proactively plans and carries out varied approaches to content, process, and product in anticipation of and response to student differences in readiness, interest, and learning needs.” - Carol Ann Tomlinson
A Differentiated Classroom

“In differentiated classrooms, teachers begin where students are, not the front of a curriculum guide.”

-Carol Ann Tomlinson
Differentiated Instruction

“All students can learn and succeed, but not on the same day in the same way.”
What do we want students to know, understand, and be able to do?
A “Rack of Learning Options”

In the classroom, we need to do more than “tailor the same suit of clothes.”
• The teacher’s first job is always to ensure a coherent, important, inviting and thoughtful curriculum

• All tasks should respect each learner

• Student deserves work that is focused on the essential knowledge, understanding and skills targeted for the lesson
Elements of Differentiation

- Teachers can modify:
  
  * **Content:** what students need to learn
  * **Process:** the activities provided
  * **Product:** the demonstration of knowledge
Benefits of Differentiated Instruction

- Maximizes students’ capacity as learners
- Attends to individual differences
- Caters to students’ learning preferences
- Considers students’ readiness levels
Differentiated Instruction is:

- Proactive
- Qualitative rather than quantitative
- Student-centered
- A BLEND of whole class, group, and individual instruction
- A way of life
- Dynamic
Glossary:

- **Student Characteristics:**
  - Readiness (entry point to a particular understanding or skill)
  - Interest (affinity, curiosity or passion)
  - Learning Profile (how we learn)

- **Pre-Assessment**
  - (info needed to identify areas of strength and need)
Glossary (continued)

- **Curriculum Compacting**
  - (streamlining, eliminating or condensing grade-level curriculum)

- **Tiered Assignments**
  - (using different learning modalities to emphasize the same essential understanding or skills)

- **Enrichment**
  - (additional learning experiences not included in regular curriculum)
Differentiation can reinforce status, or differentiation can liberate students from stereotypical expectations …

If we reframe the questions that we ask, a tectonic shift might occur in how we make decisions on behalf of academically-diverse learners. Not, what labels but what interests and needs? Not what deficits, but what strengths. Not how do we remediate, but how do we maximize access to the richest possible curriculum and instruction . . . What can we do to support educators in developing the skill and the will to teach for each learner’s equity of access to excellence?