

Differentiated Assessment

Differentiation is **what we do** to enable more students to meet outcomes. It is **the way in which we respond** to the learning differences our students have which means it is also an ongoing reflective process.

We gather data before, during and after instruction in order to choose the right tools in order to reach the needs of our learners. The teacher who plans instruction to accommodate the differences among student's, designs or chooses the best pre-assessment tools. The results are then used to enhance the instruction and learning experiences on the journey.

Differentiated Assessment MUST:

- Measure identical learning goals and outcomes
- Keep the element being measured(content, process or product) the same in each format
- Enable students to demonstrate full proficiency in the goal or outcome
- Require an appropriate level of challenge for all students

Differentiated Assessment MIGHT:

- Offer different products(unless the produce is also a learning goal)based on learning preference
- Reflect lesser of greater levels of challenge or complexity
- Offer concrete or abstract applications
- Provide structured or open-ended tasks
- Provide different levels of support or scaffolding



When to Differentiate Assessments

- What components of an assessment (content, process or product) could I look at based on the goals I need to measure?
- What components of an assessment need to be maintained to ensure alignment with the goal/outcome?
- Is the format of the assessment related to a learning goal, and can students show their learning in a variety of ways?
- Is it possible to provide student choice in one of the components without affecting the focus of the assessment?
- Will I need to give a particular format to particular students based on learning differences?
- Is the assessment a “test prep” experience? If so, all students need to do the same assessment so all are equally prepared when this format is presented in the future.
- Will a particular product prevent some students from effectively demonstrating their learning?
- Will offering student choice in the content, process or product components of the assessment inhibit my ability to effectively assess student learning?



How to Differentiate Assessments

1. First, determine whether you are assessing **content** (knowledge), **process** (reasoning abilities, performances skills) or the ability to create a particular **product** to show learning.
2. **Vary** assessment formats on a continuum as appropriate to the assessment goals by:
 - Demanding lesser or greater levels of task challenge (ex. Bloom's Taxonomy)
 - Demanding lesser or greater levels of application complexity
 - Providing greater task structure(specific) or more open-endedness (ability to create direction with the work)
 - Developing more concrete or abstract applications
 - Provide more or less support or scaffolding(e.g. templates, graphic organizers, word banks)
3. Consider whether or not **student choice** will be provided in the assessment. Determine which element (content, process, or product) may include choice depending on the goal you are assessing. If products are open to choice, they may represent various learning preferences.
4. Consider whether you will be able to match students with a particular assessment or if you will allow students to choose which assessment format they may engage in.

Using Varied Formats in Differentiating Assessments

Once you have determined whether you are assessing content, process or product you begin designing the assessment format, varying tasks by levels of concreteness, complexity, structure, scaffolding and learning preferences. Where is the student? Where are we going and how will we get there?

