

Inclusive Education

Conversation Guide for the video: *Using Differentiated Instruction to Support All Learners*

Differentiated instruction can enhance teachers' abilities to provide instruction that meets the different learning needs of all students in their classrooms.



Key understandings

- The philosophy of differentiated instruction promotes a learning environment that acknowledges and values differences in student learning strengths, needs, interests and abilities.
- Differentiated instruction can take many forms and can help teachers organize learning environments, select learning resources, plan instruction and assess student learning.
- A differentiated approach builds on evidence-based teaching practices such as knowing who students are as learners, choosing multiple instruction strategies, using ongoing classroom assessment and organizing flexible groupings.
- Differentiated instruction can particularly benefit students with disabilities, English language learners, students who are gifted and students at-risk for not completing school, and it also enhances teachers' ability to reach *all* their students.

"To effectively meet the learning needs of students, classroom teachers must begin with an understanding of the needs of the learners, both collectively as a classroom unit and as individual students."

Making a Difference, Alberta Education

Questions for discussion

- How does this video affirm or challenge what you know about differentiated instruction?
- The video highlights the importance of being "intentional and systematic" in building a differentiated approach. What implications does this have for teachers' instructional planning?
- How can school leaders support teachers in enhancing their skills in differentiated instruction?

- Is there something that you still want to learn more about? What is one question you still have about differentiated instruction?

“Differentiated instruction has the potential to create learning environments that maximize learning and potential for success for ALL students—regardless of skill level or background.”

McQuarrie, L., McRae, P. & Stack-Cutler, H. (2008). *Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) Differentiated Instruction Provincial Research Review – Choice, Complexity and Creativity*, Alberta Education, Edmonton. Retrieved from: <http://www.assembly.ab.ca/lao/library/egovdocs/2008/aled/168784.pdf>

Taking the Pulse at the School and Authority Level



- What does student diversity look like in your school/school authority?
- What is the current capacity to support this teaching practice?
- How are current information sources (research, evidence, and lessons learned) informing professional growth activities in regards to differentiated instruction?

Adapted from A Guide to Support Implementation: Essential Conditions (www.essentialconditions.ca)

More information

- [Making a Difference: Meeting Diverse Learning Needs with Differentiated Instruction](#) - This Alberta Education resource provides general information and strategies for differentiated instruction.
- [The 2Learn.ca Education Society](#) provides web resources for Alberta educators on pedagogy and practice in differentiated instruction.

- Carol Ann Tomlinson's website, [Differentiation Central](#), provides information and resources on differentiated instruction.
- In this [2013 TEDx Talk, Todd Rose](#), president of Project Variability, suggests a new way of thinking about education that can make a difference for all students.

Alberta Examples

The following Alberta school authorities are among those who have developed staff resources to support differentiated instruction:

- **Canadian Rockies Public Schools**—The [Assessment and Programming Model for Students with Special Needs](#) pyramid includes differentiated instruction as a learning challenges (pp. 9, 16–17).
- **Medicine Hat School District**—This school authority has developed an interactive [Toolbox for an Inclusive Classroom](#), including information on differentiation.