



## Teaching Today's Students: A Case for Differentiated Instruction



**Evanston, IL.  
Community Presentation  
December 1, 2010**



Carol Tomlinson, Ed.D.  
William Clay Parrish, Jr. Professor  
University of Virginia  
<cat3y@virginia.edu>

What is  
Differentiated  
Instruction??



## What is differentiation?

***Differentiation is classroom practice that looks eyeball to eyeball with the reality that kids differ, and the most effective teachers do whatever it takes to hook the whole range of kids on learning.***

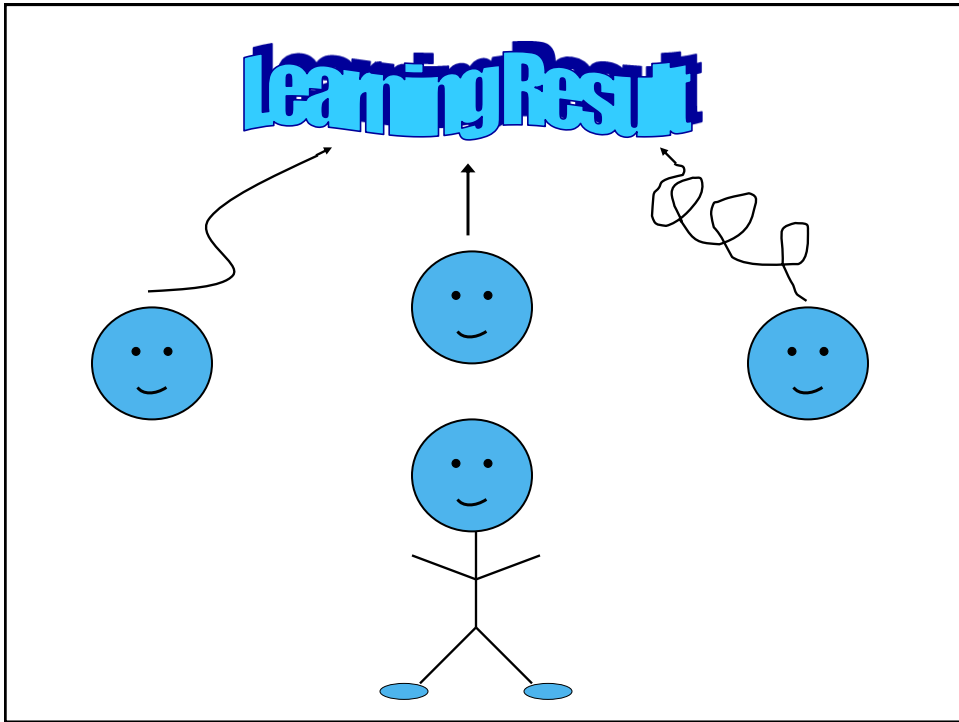


-Tomlinson (2001)



Differentiation is responsive teaching rather than one-size-fits-all teaching.



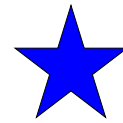


At its most basic level,  
differentiating instruction  
means *“shaking up”* what  
goes on in the classroom  
so that students have  
multiple options for  
taking in information,  
making sense of ideas,  
and expressing  
what they learn.

The text is enclosed in a blue double-line border. Several yellow stars of various sizes are scattered around the text. In the bottom left corner, there is a small illustration of a green hand reaching upwards towards a cluster of yellow stars, with a background of red, white, and blue stripes and stars.



Differentiation is  
planning for the  
unpredictability of a  
classroom.



Differentiation is  
a sequence of common sense decisions  
made by teachers  
with a student-first orientation

Adam Hoppe, 2010

## The Common Sense of Differentiation

Ensuring an environment that actively supports students  
in the work of learning

Absolute clarity about the learning destination

Persistently knowing where students are in relation  
to the destination all along the way

Adjusting teaching to make sure each student  
arrives at the destination (and, when possible,  
moves beyond it)



# Why differentiate instruction??



## Some Demographic Realities that Point to Differentiation



## EQ FOR THIS PART OF THE SESSION

What would we do  
in terms of instruction  
if we made decisions  
based on the  
demographic realities of  
the students we teach?

### **Academically Diverse Students**

- Today's classrooms are typified by academic diversity (Darling Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999; Meier, 1995).
- Seated side-by side in classrooms are:
  - ...students with learning disabilities and reading difficulties
  - ...highly advanced learners
  - ...English language learners
  - ...students who chronically underachieve
  - ...students from broadly diverse cultures
  - ...students from highly diverse economic backgrounds
  - ...students of both genders
  - ...students displaying varying degrees of motivation, interests, skills, etc.

## **Academically Diverse Students**

- In 1970, 12% of the U.S. population was non-white.
- In 2000, 30% were of non-white, non-Anglo-European ancestry.
- In the period from 1980-2000, the white, non-Hispanic population grew by 7.9%.
- The population that identified itself as non-white or Hispanic grew by 88%.

Lynch, E., & Hanson, M., (2004). *Developing cross-cultural competence (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing , p. 7.

## **Thinking about English Language Learners**

- More immigrants arrived in the US in the 1990s than in any other decade on record.
- Today, students in U.S. schools speak more than 450 languages.
- More than 12% of all pre-K-12 students in the U.S. are considered English language learners.
- By the year 2015, more than 50% of all students in K-12 public schools across the U.S. will not speak English as their first language.

Gray, T., & Fleischman, S., (2004). Successful strategies for English language learners. *Educational Leadership*, 62 (4), 84-85.



## Thinking just about Students with Specific Learning Needs

- **96% of general education teachers in the U.S. have students with disabilities in their classrooms.**
- **On average, there are at least 3-4 students with IEPs integrated into each general education class in the U.S.**
- **Three of four U.S. students with disabilities spend 40% or more of their day in general education classrooms.**
- **One in five children in the U.S. suffers from some emotional or behavioral condition.**

US Department of Education (2001). *23rd annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Gov't. Printing Office

National Academy of Sciences (Reported in Time Magazine, 11-01-10 Keeping Young Minds Healthy, p. 41.



## And a Pervasive “Disability” in the U.S.

- In 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 30% of U.S. students read at a level below basic proficiency.
- By 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the figure has improved only slightly. At that point, 25% of U.S. students read below the level of basic proficiency.



National Center for Educational Statistics (2009).

## Thinking just about Students with Specific Learning Needs

- **Approximately 3 to 5 students in 100 in the U.S. have ADHD**
- **Approximately 1 child in 59 in the U.S. is diagnosed with a learning disability**

SOURCE: National Institutes of Mental Health



## Thinking just about Students with Specific Learning Needs

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder prevalence in the U.S. has recently been adjusted from 4 or 5 children in 10,000 to 1 child in about 150**

- SOURCES: CDC, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Surveillance Summaries*; Feb. 9, 2007; vol 56: pp 1-40. Marshayln Yeargin-Allsopp, MD, Chief, Developmental Disabilities Branch, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, CDC. Catherine Rice, PhD, behavioral scientist, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, CDC.



## Poverty in the U.S.

- The U.S. has the highest rate of child poverty in the developed world.
- The school dropout rate is 2 ½ times higher among children of poverty than among students from non-poor homes.
- Children of poverty are 2 ½ times more likely to perform poorly in school than their more affluent peers.
- They are 2½ times more likely to develop a conduct disorder.



## Thinking about Students with Specific Learning Needs

- In almost all classrooms, there are students who want to learn faster and more deeply than one-size-fits-all plans allow— or who could do so if encouraged in that direction—or who would if they believed they were capable of doing so. In each of these instances, individuals, families, and communities are damaged when learning options cramp student possibilities.



**In spite of the great & growing  
variety of students in our classrooms...**



**...and abundant evidence that schools  
do not serve all students well...**

We still teach as though



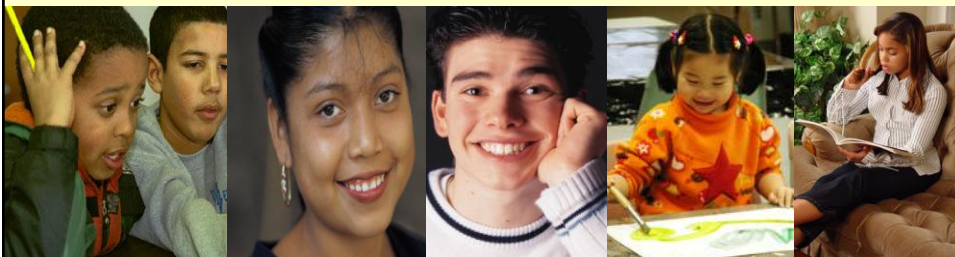
all students of a given age are  
essentially alike!

## EQ FOR THIS PART OF THE SESSION

*What would we do in terms of instruction if we made decisions based on the demographic realities of the students we teach?*

We'd teach with the knowledge that culture, gender, experience, economic status, language, adult support, and a myriad of other factors shape shape student learning!

## Some Human Examples that Point to Differentiation



## EQ FOR THIS PART OF THE SESSION

What would we do  
in terms of instruction  
if we made decisions  
based on the  
realities of the real  
students we teach?

**I used to be a creative person.  
There was something inside me that saw things  
no one else seemed to see.  
I was often silent, but my silence was a thing of peace,  
and inner communication.  
Now my silence is restless and sad.  
Something is dying deep inside of me.  
I have learned that to be wrong is a sin.  
If I speak up, I may commit that sin  
And so I say nothing.  
Maybe there is still something unique and alive deep inside of me,  
I don't know.  
This I do know, however, silence should be used for the breeding  
of creativity,  
But creativity, kept in silence, perishes.**

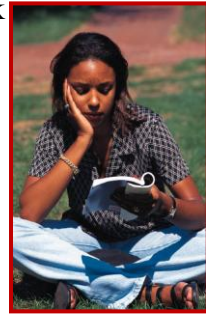


Pam, Grade 8



I knew.  
Standing at the school bus stop  
    When I was eight,  
I knew.  
I had to make a decision.  
I would cling to my friends from the neighborhood  
And let go of aspiration.  
Or I would hold fast to a gauzy dream of learning  
    to become someone who could leave a mark  
And watch the circle of my friends swallow up the  
    place that was mine.  
I understood in an eight year old way  
    something about courage and cost that day.  
And I got on the school bus  
And opened my paperback novel  
And sat alone.

Michelle N.



I know it's been a long time since you heard from me. I wanted to let you know what I am doing now and that I think of you often, even though I have not been a particularly faithful correspondent.

When you last saw me, you must have had some doubt about what I might do with my life. The interesting thing, though, is that if you did have doubts, you never let me know about them. You treated me as though I had all the possibilities in the world in my hands. The fact that I could not pass a vocabulary test seemed incidental to you. What mattered was what I *could* do.

I didn't get that at the time. I was too exhausted from years of lugging around my disabilities.

You need to know that I will be receiving a Masters Degree in just a few days. My mom asked who I wanted to know about that from back home. You need to know. Your belief in me when I had no belief in myself opened the door that led here...

Repp G.



I won't be in class today.  
I don't know where I'll be.  
I just know I can't go home any more.  
I wanted you to know just in case you were worried.  
I wouldn't want you to worry.

Janet

## **Meet Derek Green**

**Derek is one of four children of a single mother who finished high school.**

**He moved to North Carolina as a young boy with his mother, 2 brothers, a sister, 2 garbage bags holding all the family's possessions, and \$80.00, to live with an aunt and uncle.**

**He has since been homeless and has lived five years in public housing.**

**His family has always had serious struggles with money.**

**He has never known his father.**





## My Life as an Illiterate

What is that man talking about? Why is he looking at me that way? What does he want me to do? I want to say something? Why am I ignored? I'm smart, damn it!

These were the thoughts I suppressed during my years of illiteracy. As an 11-year-old Korean boy, I sat in a classroom full of new peers who cared less about my existence. My first American teacher, Mr. Hall, was a tall, gentle, middle-aged white man. He tried to understand, but he couldn't. So what did he do? He gave me a stack of blank paper and a pencil and had me sit at the back of the room and draw.

Being a typical Asian student, I sat there quietly, minding my own business. Six hours a day, 30 hours a week, 1200 hours a year, I sat and drew pictures of my favorite cartoon characters—He-Man, GI Joe, and the Smurfs. What a great year! What a waste of my precious learning time! I don't blame Mr. Hall. I blame the ignorance that continues in school.

Being an illiterate was one of the most difficult growing experiences I had. Not knowing if the other kids were complimenting or cursing me. It was frustrating. Not being able to tell my teacher that I didn't steal his pen. It was frustrating. Suppressed frustration becomes anger. Anger becomes violence. Violence becomes a label. I became the angry Asian boy, getting into fights for "no reason."

No reason except the frustration of being a social illiterate.



Kevin Oh

To: [cat3y@virginia.edu](mailto:cat3y@virginia.edu)

Date: Sun, 2 Sep 2001

Hi, My name is really John...

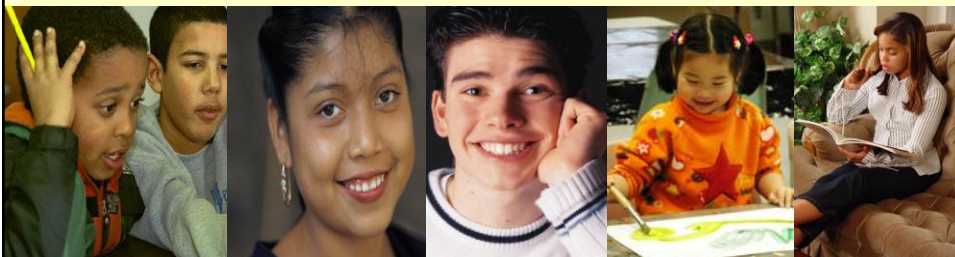
I live in Cedar Rapids Iowa. My friend gave me a tape to listen on a subject that has been with me all my life. I am the Jonathan/Golden you talk about, I have been both at times. I grew up in Rockford, Ill. In 1948, moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1970. Boy, what I could tell you about Golden in my life. Don't write much but I did write to Loretta Sanchez California about the Jonathan and Golden you talked about. I told her I don't know you, just what I hear on the tape, and it make me cry. Thank you for looking after all the Jonathans and Goldens the world. God Bless you I only wish I had you when I was growing up, as a Teacher.

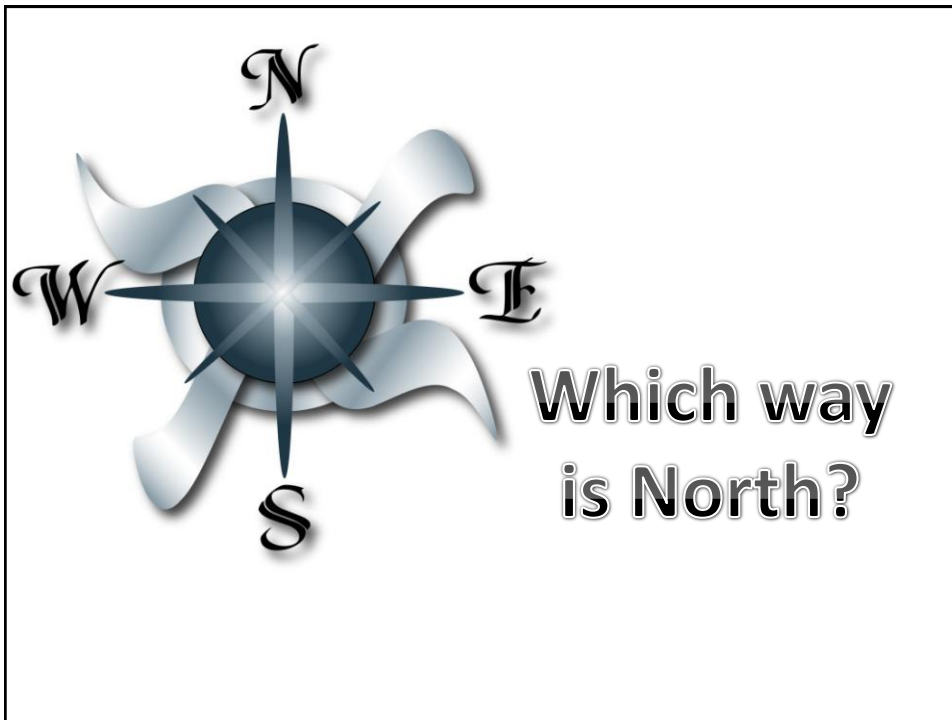
## EQ FOR THIS PART OF THE SESSION

*What would we do in terms of instruction if we made decisions based on the realities of the real students we teach?*

We'd honor their varied differences, build on their varied strengths, & consistently provide varied academic support systems that maximize their growth.

## The Ethics of Education and Differentiation





## EQ FOR THIS PART OF THE SESSION

What would we do in terms of instruction if we made decisions from a position of “advanced” moral or ethical development— if that were our “North”?

## The Predictive Power of Mindset

### Fixed

- Success comes from being smart
- Genetics, environment determine what we can do
- Some kids are smart—some aren't
- Teachers can't override students' profiles

### Growth

- Success comes from effort
- With hard work, most students can do most things
- Teachers can override students' profiles
- A key role of the teacher is to set high goals, provide high support, ensure student focus—to find the thing that makes school work for a student



In today's Information Age . . .  
educators must operate from the premise  
that it is the purpose of schools  
to bring all students to their full potential  
and to a level of education  
that was once reserved  
for the very few.

*Professional Learning Communities at Work:  
Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*  
by Richard DuFour & Robert Eaker  
1998, ASCD • pp. 62

## CHOOSING CONTENT THAT'S WORTH KNOWING

*Who is "all"?*



Whatever the curriculum goals, we must be clear about which students the goals are to serve. When we say all students, do we mean the top 15%, the 50% who might go on to higher education—or do we really mean *all* students?

Choosing Content That's Worth Knowing • George D. Nelson • Educational Leadership, Oct. 2001, pp. 12-16

### A Pedagogy of Poverty

- § giving information
- § asking right answer questions
- § giving directions
- § giving low level tasks
- § monitoring seatwork
- § reviewing
- § giving tests
- § going over tests
- § assigning homework
- § going over homework
- § settling disputes
- § punishing noncompliance
- § grading papers
- § giving grades

M.Haberman • "The Pedagogy of Poverty vs. Good Teaching"  
Phi Delta Kappan, 1991 • 290-294

## A PEDAGOGY OF PLENTY

- authentic tasks
- meaning-driven curriculum
- literacy-rich environment
- quality resources
- connecting school with home, culture and community
- problem-focused learning
- cognitive and metacognition in the context of purposeful activities
- collaborative work on issues of deep concern to the students
- varied social configuration
- engagement in substantive dialogue, discussion, debate about the substance of content
- making meaning

Helen Hodges • Overcoming a Pedagogy of Poverty?  
R.Cole, Ed. More Strategies for Educating Everybody's Children  
ASCD, 2001 \* p. 1-9



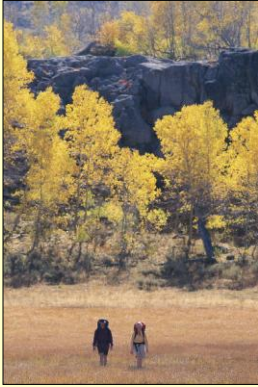
**As long as a curriculum gap exists,  
so will an achievement gap.**

Tracking by its very nature, causes the achievement gap to widen. If one group of students is given an enriched and accelerated curriculum to study and another group's learning is slowed down to a snail's pace by remediation, there can be no other outcome than a gap that widens over time. Providing all students access to the school's best curriculum, with support for those who struggle, gives students the opportunity to achieve based on high learning standards.



*Detracking for Excellence and Equity* by Burriss and Garrity, Pub. ASCD, p 14-15.

### Kathleen- Age 14



*Push me! See how far I go!  
Work me 'till I drop--  
Then pick me up.  
Open a door,  
And make me run to it before it closes.  
Teach me so that I might learn,  
Then show me the Tunnel of Experience,  
And let me walk through it alone.  
  
Then, when, near the end, I look back,  
And see another in the Tunnel,  
with you watching  
  
I shall smile!*

### My Stream of Consciousness

**You think that I don't know that you think  
I got an F because I'm lazy and indifferent.  
But maybe I'm just under-challenged and under-appreciated.  
Deep down I am begging you to teach me  
To learn and create--not just to memorize and regurgitate.  
I'm asking you to help me find my own voice.  
I'm asking you to help me find my own beauty.  
I'm asking you to help me find my own unique truth.  
We need a miracle  
One for every kid who subconsciously wants  
To be pushed to the edge/taken to the most extreme limits.  
I want you to make my brain work in a hundred different  
ways every day.  
I'm asking you to make my head ache with knowledge--  
spin with ideas.  
I want you to make my mind my most powerful asset.**

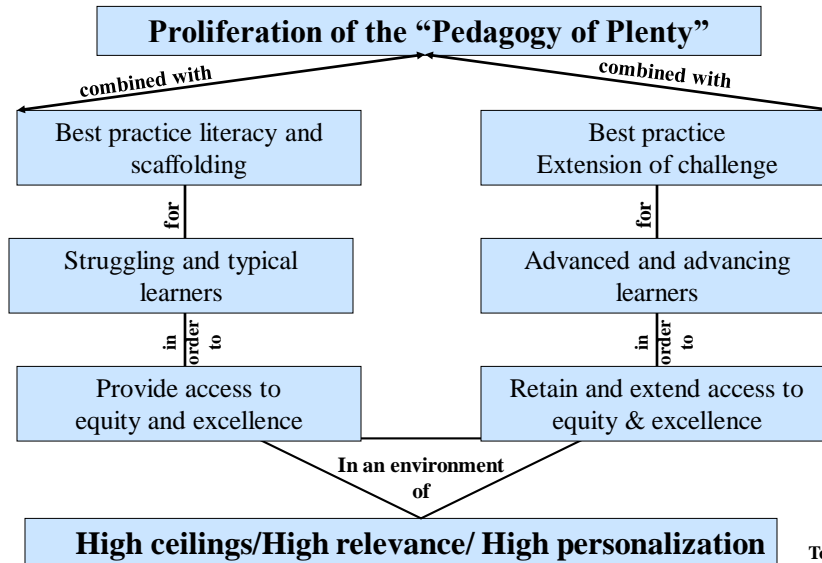


--Siem Tesfaslase, 10th grade, Arlington High School  
Indianapolis, Indiana

In Y. Jackson "Reversing Underachievement in Urban Students: Pedagogy of Confidence"  
*Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking*-p.222

## *Equity & Excellence in Today's Schools*

Will Most Likely Result From:



Tomlinson  
'03

## **EQ FOR THIS PART OF THE SESSION**

*What would we in terms of instruction if we made decisions from a position of "advanced" moral or ethical development— if that were our "North"?*

We'd create classrooms that ensure equity of access to excellence for each student.



# How Does Effective Differentiation Help??

Let's take a look at a few examples...



## **Defensible Differentiation:**

Always

- Teaches Up

Never

- Waters down

## What Does it Mean to Teach Up?

### TASKS:



Clear KUDs

Require careful thought

Focus on understanding

Problems to solve/Issues to address

Use key knowledge & skills to explore,  
or extend understandings

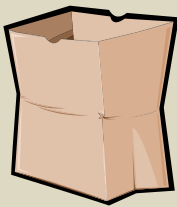
Authentic

Require support, explanation, application,  
evaluation, transfer

Criteria at or above “meets expectations”

Require metacognition, reflection, planning,  
evaluation

## Calling on Students in a High School Class



**Bag of  
Names**

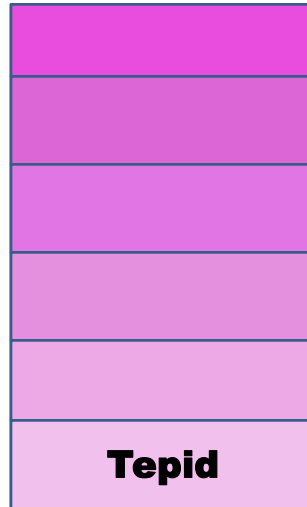
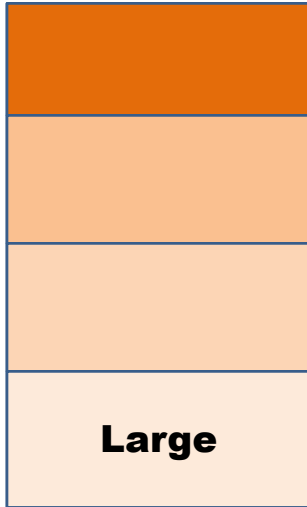


**Volunteers**



**New  
Voices**

# SHADES OF MEANING



Linda Eiler

## STEP BY STEP BOOK REPORT CHECKLIST



Checklists offer scaffolding to students who need support in finishing long-range tasks. Teachers can monitor the progress and evaluate the quality of work until the students gradually learn the process of breaking tasks into substeps themselves.

- I picked out a book.
- I have to read \_\_\_\_\_ pages each day.
- I finished the book.
- I listed the title, author, and illustrator.
- I wrote about story elements (problem, solution, characters, setting).
- I wrote my opinion of the book.

Total number of pages in my book: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of days I have to read my book: \_\_\_\_\_

Total pages ÷ total number of days = \_\_\_\_\_ pages per day

Record the number of pages you read each day.

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.

I read my book and finished my report and I feel

---




---



---

*Winning Strategies for Classroom Management*  
Carol Tomlinson

<p><u>Reading Homework Coupon</u> Name: Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Please ask your child to tell you the story in the book he or she brought home today by looking at the pictures.</p>	<p><u>Reading Homework Coupon</u> Name: Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Please echo read the book your child brought home. (Echo reading means you read a line, then your child reads or echoes the same line.) <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your child to show you some words in the story he or she recognizes.</p>
<p><u>Reading Homework Coupon</u> Name: Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your child to read with expression as if he or she were reading to entertain someone, <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your child to give you several reasons why he or she likes (or dislikes) the book. <input type="checkbox"/> Have your child tell you what feelings the character in the book has. Ask for evidence from the book.</p>	<p><u>Reading Homework Coupon</u> Name: Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your child to read with a different voice for each character <input type="checkbox"/> After the reading, ask how your child decided on how his/her voice could help you know the various characters better. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your child to tell you which character would be most fun to spend time with. Ask for reasons for his/her choice.</p>



Adapted from *Managing A Diverse Classroom* by Carol Cummings - by Tomlinson '02

Super Sentences

The precipitous incline of the tortuous cliff rendered dubious their unhampered descent.

**Translate/verify**  
**Practice (choral read, eyes closed, volunteers)**  
**Define individual words**  
**Test—your sentence plus...**  
**today's sentences plus...**

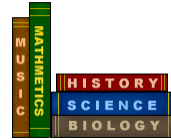
The prodigious prestidigitator purloined the prestige of the pulchritudinous psychic by prognosticating through a presentiment the popular proclivities for the preeminent political pursuant.

## Differentiation By Interest

### Social Studies

Mrs. Schlim and her students were studying the Civil War. During the unit, they did many things -- read and discussed the text, looked at many primary documents (including letters from soldiers, diaries of slaves), had guest speakers, visited a battlefield, etc.

As the unit began, Mrs. Schlim reminded her students that they would be looking for examples and principles related to culture, conflict change and interdependence.

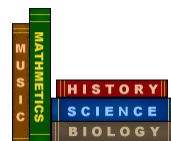


## Differentiation By Interest

### Social Studies (cont'd)

She asked her students to list topics they liked thinking and learning about in their own world. Among those listed were:

*music reading food books*  
*sports/recreation transportation travel*  
*mysteries people heroes/villains*  
*cartoons families medicine*  
*teenagers humor clothing*

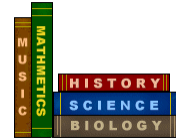


## Differentiation By Interest

Social Studies (cont'd)

Students had as supports for their work:

- *a planning calendar*
- *criteria for quality*
- *check-in dates*
- *options for expressing what they learned*
- *data gathering matrix (optional)*
- *class discussions on findings, progress, snags*
- *mini-lessons on research (optional)*



## New World Explorers

### KNOW

- Names of New World Explorers
- Key events of contribution

### UNDERSTAND

- Exploration involves
  - risk
  - costs and benefits
  - success and failure

### Do

- Use resource materials to illustrate & support ideas



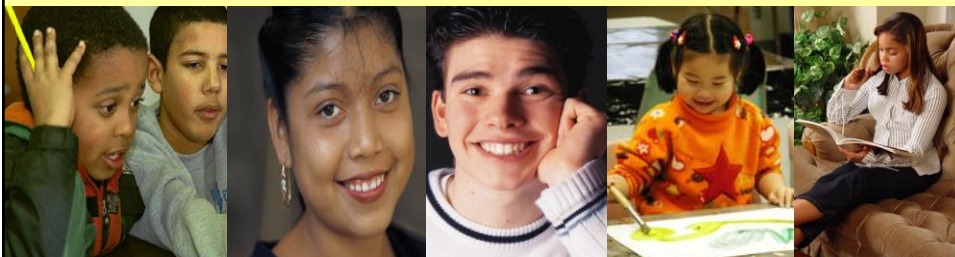
## New World Explorers



Using a teacher-provided list of resources and list of product options, show how 2 key explorers took chances, experienced success and failure, and brought about both positive and negative change. Provide proof/evidence.

Using reliable and defensible research, develop a way to show how New World Explorers were paradoxes. Include and go beyond the unit principles.

There is ample reason—in terms of student demographics, real students, theory and research, & ethics of education to invest in classrooms that effectively attend to learner variance.



## Meet Derek Green

Derek is one of four children of a single mother who finished high school.

He moved to North Carolina as a young boy with his mother, 2 brothers, a sister, 2 garbage bags holding all the family's possessions, and \$80.00, to live with an aunt and uncle.

He has since been homeless and has lived five years in public housing.

His family has always had serious struggles with money.

He has never known his father.



## Derek Green

Derek attended a year of post high school work at a prep school to improve his college options. He was on the honor roll each term, on the varsity football and basketball teams, manager of the varsity ice hockey team, and a member of student government.

He traveled in South Africa in the summer after his sophomore year of college.

He graduated from Duke University where he received a full Bill and Melinda Gates scholarship.

He was a Duke University Teaching Fellow in the Math Understanding through the Science of Life Program.

He was a soloist in the United in Praise Gospel Choir at Duke and served as Vice President and President of the Group.

He completed internships with the Burness Communications Public Relations Group in New York City and with Credit Suisse First Boston Foundation Trust.

He finished Duke with an "A -" average.

Derek has elected to teach this year in the Teach for New York program in an urban school.







## On Hope

“...the kind of hope I often think about...I understand above all as a state of mind, not a state of the world. Either we have hope within us or we don't; it is a dimension of the soul, and it's not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons.

Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but rather, an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed. The more unpropitious the situation in which we demonstrate hope, the deeper that hope is. Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

It is also this hope, above all which gives us the strength to live and continually to try new things...”

*-Vaclav Havel, playwright and defender of human rights, former president of Czechoslovakia*