

Differentiation Strategy Explained: Tiering

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Differentiation Strategy: Tiering

Tiering is an instructional strategy that provides instruction to match students with their individual needs. The teacher creates levels or *tiers* at specific points in a unit to accommodate different learners.

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Differentiation Strategy: Tiering

The rationale for using tiered assignments is that they:

- blend assessment and instruction,
- allow students to begin learning where they are,
- allow students to work with appropriately challenging tasks,
- allow for reinforcement or extension of concepts and principles based on student readiness,
- allow modification of working conditions based on learning style,
- avoid work that is anxiety-producing (too hard) or boredom-producing (too easy),
- promote success and are therefore motivating.

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Differentiation Strategy: Tiering

Guidelines for using tiered assignments:

- The task should be focused on a key concept or generalization essential to the study.
- Use a variety of resource materials at differing levels of complexity and associated with different learning modes
- Adjust task by complexity, abstractness, number of steps, concreteness and independence to ensure appropriate challenge.
- Establish clear criteria for quality and success.

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Differentiation Strategy: Tiering

Tiering can be done by . . .

- area – content, process, product
- type – readiness, interests, learning style
- number of tiers – based on specific students

Consider Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development
and adjust to meet students' needs from . . .

- concrete to abstract
- less independence to greater independence
- structured to open-ended
- simple to complex

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Summing up Tiered Assignments

Decide on concepts, knowledge, and skills.

Consider students in the classroom. (readiness, interests, learning profile)

Choose an area of the unit you will tier.

Create one activity at the "Ready to Go" level.

Think LADDER.

Clone the activity to create different versions, varying the degrees of difficulty, materials, products, etc.

Match the tasks to students based on needs and task requirements.

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Tiering Activity: Try it!

Activity: Tier a lesson or Unit. Use the “Tiering Worksheet” from the Javits Teacher module.

1. Identify and list in the “Outcome/Standard” box those key understandings that all students are to learn during their tiered assignment.
2. Administer a pre-assessment to gauge prior knowledge and skills. Data from this tool will help you choose what to tier and who to put in each tiered group.

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Tiering Activity: Try it!

3. Consider the Whole Group Introduction - What "hook" can be used to get students involved in this unit/lesson? Some examples are: a guest speaker, field trip, instructional video, KWL chart.

It is possible to combine the introduction with the pre-assessment – write, list, or draw all you know about the topic.

What other introduction or "hook" ideas have you used?

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Tiering Activity: Try it!

4. The remaining boxes on the Tiering Handout are the places where tiering usually occurs.

Using your pre-assessment data you may see that some students do not need as much instruction as others, and some will need basic knowledge or skills before reaching this point of instruction.



Tiering Activity: Try it!

Determine which lesson component you want to tier:

- Whole Group Instruction
- Instruction/Learning activities
- Homework
- Assessment or Product
- Resources

Think: Content, process, product

Think: Readiness, interest or learning style

Think: Two, three or more tiers

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Tiering

Activity: Try it!

5. When you've chosen a component to tier, develop it (instruction, task, product or resource) so that fits Ready-To-Go students. This is something you expect all students to be able to do that answers to the standard and appropriate skill of the grade level.
6. On the Tiering Handout develop the component for the Not-Yet-Ready and Ready-To-Go-Further groups. Each of these increases in complexity so students are still working with the content but in different ways.

Think: Rungs of a ladder.

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Tiering

One Important Point

Do not give more or less work, but *different* work.

For example:

The "Not-Yet-Ready" group can list character traits from a story,

The "Ready-To-Go" group can compare/contrast the character traits,

The "Ready-To-Go-Further" group can take the character traits and determine how these traits influence the movement of the plot.

These three tasks still address the same skill but in an increasingly complex manner.

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Tiering Activity: Try it!

10. Share your tiered lesson design with a colleague for feedback and suggestions.
11. Try your Tiered Lesson with students and reflect on the process and results. Ask students for their feedback.



Tiering Activity: Try it!

12. Discuss:

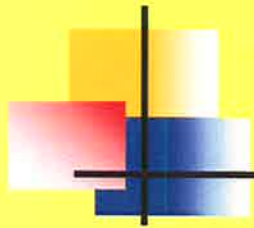
- What did you find the most challenging in developing the tiered lesson?
- How did students react to doing different tasks?
- Discuss how you might use information about student readiness, interests and learning preferences to create tiered lessons.



Tiering Discussion

- What areas in your teaching can benefit from Tiering?
- How can using Tiered lessons assist you in reaching the needs of all learners in your classroom?
- Discuss specific ways you might use Tiering in your classroom.

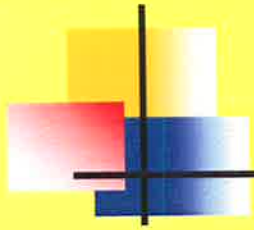
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Tiering

- Consider inviting your coordinator of gifted services, principal, curriculum coordinator or other administrator to observe your students using Tiered Lessons.
- Your observer can use the observation form found under Module Specific Planning Documents in the Facilitator Module.

Tiering Resources



- ASCD video. (2002). *Instructional Strategies for the Differentiated Classroom, Tape 3: Tiering Assignments*. Available from <http://www.ascd.org>
- Winebrenner, S. (1992). *Teaching gifted kids in the regular classroom*. Free Spirit Publishing: Minneapolis, MN.
- Indiana Department of Education has dozens of examples of tiered lessons, K-12 for Math, Science and Language Arts at http://www.doe.in.gov/exceptional/gt/tiered_curriculum/welcome.html

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