

Best Practices Bulletin

Differentiated Instruction: Elementary

Northern
Virginia
Partnership

An Adventure of the American Mind

Joining Educators and Students with Library of Congress Resources



This bulletin explores differentiated instruction to address varying academic levels through tiered assignments using Library of Congress primary sources as learning tools.

In these assignments, all students are expected to develop unit understanding goals, knowledge-based facts, and study skills. To ensure that the curriculum is neither too easy nor too difficult, the content, learning process, or assignment products have been differentiated to engage and challenge learners with a variety of interests and strengths.

“Even though students may learn in many ways, the essential skills and content they learn can remain steady. That is, students can take different roads to the same destination.”

Tomlinson, C. (September, 1999). Mapping A Route Toward Differentiated Instruction, *Educational Leadership*, v. 57, 1.



Differentiated Instruction is like environmentally sensitive land development.

The development begins with an assessment of the current landscape. The underlying bedrock differs from place to place like students' academic levels. There are existing structures or roads (students' prior knowledge), different soil types (cultural origins), and several elevations and drainage patterns (preferred pathways of absorbing and using knowledge). A timeline (the school year) and resource restrictions (curriculum and testing) must be balanced. A successful development uses the assets from the current landscape as the basis for new construction.



Flexible grouping has its roots in the American one-room school house.

In one-room school houses, students participated in several different instructional groups. The groupings changed during the day based on student needs with regard to what was being taught.

Likewise, to use tiered assignments, teachers flexibly group students, meaning students would not always be in the same tier. Students would participate in different assignments based on their instructional needs, strengths, and interests.

Primary Sources and Differentiated Instruction

Primary sources are particularly helpful to educators when differentiating instruction.

For example, primary sources:

- are fragments of history that challenge students to create meaning by interpreting clues.
- come in a variety of formats including pictures, letters, diaries, maps, artifacts, motion pictures, sound recordings, architecture designs, and sheet music.
- vary in complexity with curricular subjects.

The Library of Congress has more than 10 million digital primary sources at <http://loc.gov> waiting for curious students.

Photos:
School children conducting simple experiments, Washington, D.C. 1899 Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs

Overlook Development, 1915 Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs

Same task, 3 different sources of **CONTENT** information

Tiered assignments based on academic level are designed to meet students where they are in terms of readiness and then to extend their learning. All students travel through a learning process:

Tier 1 - Grow: building a foundation to grow understanding

Tier 2 - Extend: connecting knowledge to extend understanding

Tier 3 - Flexible Use: using resources flexibly to create new understanding

Tier 1:

Compare and contrast the way people traveled in this picture with the way people travel in your community. How have communities changed over time?

Street car, Washington, D.C., 1840
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division



Street scene with shops and diner, 1940 Salem, Illinois.
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

Tier 2:

Compare and contrast the stores and services on this street with those in your community. How have communities changed over time?

Tier 3:

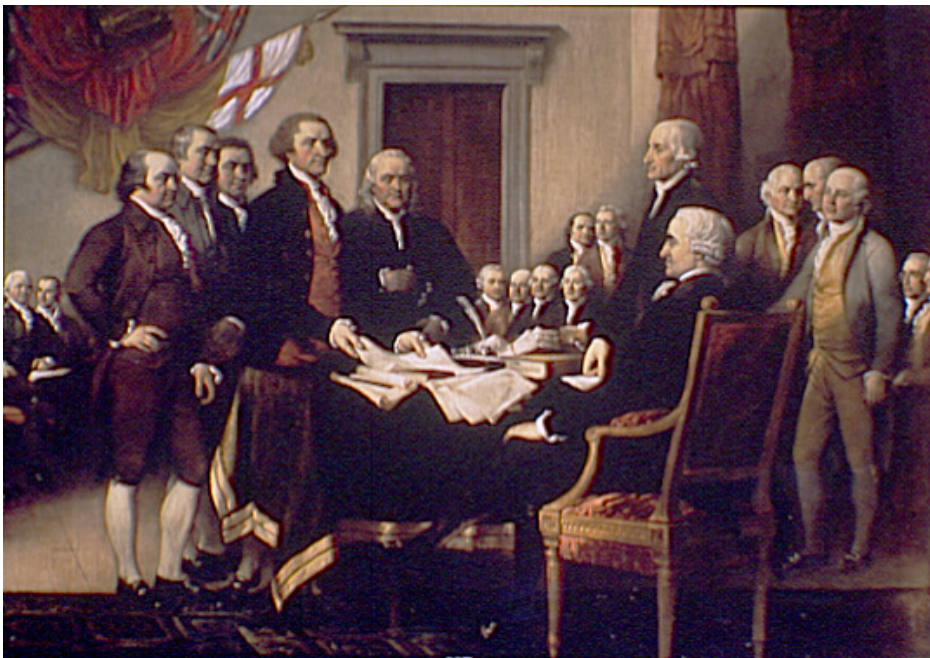
Compare and contrast your day in school to this boy's day in the glass factory. How have communities changed over time?



Rob Kidd, a young boy working in a glass factory in Alexandria, VA. 1911
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

SOL 2.3 The student will identify and compare changes in community life over time in terms of buildings, jobs, transportation, and population.

Same content information, different learning **PROCESS**



U.S. Capitol Paintings. Signing of the Declaration of Independence. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Tier 1:

Knowledge: When and where is this picture taking place? Identify at least three of the people.

Analysis: Select one of the Founding Fathers in this picture. Research his stance on independence. Why did he decide to sign the Declaration of Independence?

Synthesis: Draw a talk bubble that reflects his thinking about the document he is about to sign.

Tier 2:

Knowledge: When and where is this picture taking place? Identify at least one event in U.S. history that took place shortly before and one event that took place shortly after the time of this picture.

Analysis: Choose two of the Founding Fathers in this picture. Compare and contrast their attitudes toward independence. What influenced their positions on independence?

Synthesis: Write a caption for this picture that explains the varying views about independence held by our Founding Fathers.

Tier 3:

Knowledge: When and where is this taking place? Choose at least three of the Founding Fathers in the picture. What was their role in the establishment of our nation?

Analysis: Choose one of the Founding Fathers. Based on your knowledge of his position on independence, how would he feel about Washington, D.C.'s movement to establish statehood?

Synthesis: Write a short speech to D.C. residents sharing that Founding Father's position about independence and D.C. statehood including why he feels that way.

SOL VA VS.5 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the role of Virginia in the American Revolution by: a) identifying the reasons why the colonies went to war with England as expressed in the Declaration of Independence; b) identifying the various roles played by Virginians in the Revolutionary War era, with emphasis on George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry.

Varying the learning **PROCESS** students complete.

Same content information, same analysis process, different **PRODUCTS**

Chorus

You're a grand old rag, you're a high flying flag,
And forever in peace may you wave.
You're the emblem of the land I love,
The home of the free and the brave.
Ev'ry heart beats true under Red, White and Blue,
Where there's never a boast or a brag;
"But should auld acquaintance be forgot,"
Keep your eye on the grand old flag.



You're a Grand Old Rag. Library Congress, I Hear America Singing Collection

Analysis: Examine the lyrics to the song while listening to the song. What words in the song help you picture America? How does this song encourage patriotism?

Product: Complete one of the activities creating a new United States flag.

Tier 1:

Create a new flag for the United States. Explain the symbols you used and how they relate to the United States.

Tier 2 :

Create a new flag for the United States. Write a letter to our President convincing him to make this our new national flag.

Tier 3:

Create a new flag for the United States. Write a song or poem to honor this flag as a symbol for our country.

SOL 1.11 The student will recognize the symbols and traditional practices that honor and foster patriotism in the United States by identifying the American flag,

When students examine primary sources they are working like real historians or scientists. Through observation and analysis, students discover clues and change their thinking to integrate the new information into their knowledge base. This process is part of rigorous learning experiences for all ages.

Successful teaching requires two elements: student understanding and student engagement. In other words, students must really understand, or make sense of, what they have studied. They should also feel engaged in or "hooked by" the ways that they have learned.

Tomlinson, C. (September, 1999). Mapping A Route Toward Differentiated Instruction, Educational Leadership, v. 57, 1.

For more information about professional development using LOC primary sources contact:
Adventure of the American Mind Northern Virginia Partnership
3300 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 212, Arlington, VA 22201
703-294-6270 <http://www.aamnva.org>

Tiered lesson examples were created by: Helen Malone and Wendy N. Cohen
Resource Teachers for the Gifted, Arlington Public Schools



Varying the **PRODUCTS** students create to demonstrate their understanding of the curriculum.