

What is *Differentiated Instruction (DI) Self-Assessment*?

Self-assessment is the process of gathering information about oneself in order to make informed decisions. For teachers interested in making their classrooms places where differentiated instruction benefits *all* learners, self-assessment is an important and ongoing process.

The *DI Self-Assessment* process can help teachers analyze their instructional practices to determine if and how much differentiation is currently taking place in their classrooms. The self-assessment tool can also help teachers determine where to start as they begin to plan and implement differentiated instruction in mixed ability classrooms.

In an effort to improve student performance, teachers can use self-assessment information to make decisions about adjusting classroom instruction and assessment. Self-assessment results can also be used to develop a personalized professional development plan to help teachers acquire additional skills needed for effective differentiated instruction.

The indicators of effective differentiation outlined in the self-assessment are based on four general principles, or guidelines, of differentiated instruction found in current literature (C. A. Tomlinson, 1999):

In differentiated classrooms, teachers...

1. ***Create and sustain a responsive learning environment***, providing the foundation for long-term learning and positive connections to take place among students and adults.
2. ***Have clarity about the learning goals***, sharing, with students, what they should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of their learning.
3. ***Continuously assess student learning***, using information about what students already know, understand, and are able to do to make ongoing instructional decisions.
4. ***Establish flexible student groups and respectful tasks***, providing rigorous and engaging instruction matched to student needs.

How to use the DI Self-Assessment tool

To enhance the value of the *DI Self-Assessment* process, teachers may choose to complete the tool in collaboration with a colleague, such as a grade-level team member, instructional coach, or other professional who has knowledge of differentiated instruction. Additionally, teachers who share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction in a single class should complete the tool together, reaching consensus on each indicator prior to scoring.

The *DI Self-Assessment* is comprised of 20 **quality indicators** aligned with the **four principles** of differentiated instruction listed above. Each **principle** is listed as a heading for accompanying **indicators** and is supplemented with one or more **essential questions** for further clarification.

Some indicators stand alone as **evidence** of differentiation, while most include **more than one** element reflecting evidence of differentiation aligned to those indicators. Each element is rated **separately** to identify and target specific areas of need for differentiating instruction. Teachers rate the evidence of practice for each item according to the following scale and indicate their response by placing a check mark in the appropriate column.

O=Often practiced in my classroom

S=Sometimes practiced in my classroom

N=Not yet practiced in my classroom

To further define evidence of indicators, **examples** are noted in *italics* for specific items. These examples are **not** rated—they are included as additional descriptive information for certain indicators.

At the end of each principle's section, teachers can total the number of check marks in each column (O, S, and N). By analyzing the number of check marks for each section, teachers can identify principles **AND** specific indicators to target for improvement planning. For example, if most check marks in Principle Four are in the "N" column, the teacher can prioritize specific indicators to target for instructional planning, further professional development and/or technical assistance and coaching.

When using the self-assessment tool to analyze and prioritize needs for differentiating instruction, teachers can put the focus on one or two areas rather than juggling a multitude of perplexing strategies and methods. Helping teachers self-assess and prioritize areas of focus can avoid frustration and lead to the implementation of effective instructional practices that benefit ALL students.

Self-Assessment Indicators and Scoring Sheet

Rating Key: **O**=Often practiced in my classroom

S=Sometimes practiced in my classroom

N=Not yet practiced in my classroom

Item	Indicators of Differentiation	Evidence of Indicators	O	S	N
Principle One: Responsive Learning Environment		<i>How do I optimize the learning environment to maximize achievement for all students?</i>			
1.	All students function as a community of learners.	There is evidence of the following in the classroom:			
		• Students use positive social skills			
		• Students are engaged in cooperative learning activities			
		• Students collaborate with teacher(s)			
		• Students help each other without teacher prompting			
		• Students solve problems together			
	• Students engage in activities that build awareness of varying abilities and cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity.				
2.	All students are provided opportunities for choice-making within meaningful learning activities.	<p>Lessons or units of study are designed to include options for students to make choices related to content, process, or product, and according to readiness, interest, and/or learning preferences.</p> <p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reports and assignments on self-selected topics</i> • <i>Self-selected project materials (text sets: magazines, newspapers, books, interviews)</i> • <i>Variety of available multi-media (video, podcasts, slides, music)</i> 			
3.	All students understand that fair does not always mean “equal”.	<p>All students’ behavior reflects their understanding of the meaning of “fairness”.</p> <p><i>For example: Students recognize and accept that instruction and assignments may be different for different students.</i></p>			
4.	All students are physically and emotionally safe.	Student interests and perspectives are acknowledged by others.			
		Students have accessibility to all areas of the classroom (center, stations, bathroom, storage, etc.).			
Totals for Principle One:					

Item	Indicators of Differentiation	Evidence of Indicators	O	S	N
Principle Two: Clarity About the Learning Goal		<i>What do my students need to Know, Understand, and be able to Do?</i>			
5.	All students understand the purpose of the lesson or instructional activities in relation to the real world.	Students can describe the objective and relevancy of the lesson or unit in relation to the real world.			
		Learning goals, with connections to real world applications, are displayed and reviewed during each class.			
6.	All students are engaged in lessons and instructional activities based on key concepts and essential learning.	The lesson or unit of study is based upon clearly defined KUDs (what students must know , understand , and be able to do) aligned with Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, Benchmarks, and/or Access Points (for students on the Florida Alternate Assessment).			
		The KUDs are communicated with and understood by all students.			
Totals for Principle Two:					
Principle Three: Continuous Assessment and Adjustment		<i>How will I determine what students know, understand, and are able to do?</i>			
7.	All students understand what and how they have learned throughout a lesson or unit of study.	Students are engaged in discussions about how they learn and what they are learning.			
		Students can verbalize what and why they need to learn about the concepts presented to solve real world problems.			
		Teachers use effective feedback to help students improve their understanding and learning.			
8.	All students have a variety of options to demonstrate what they know , understand , and are able to do .	A variety of formative (ongoing) assessments are used to determine what students know , understand , and are able to do , including the following:			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations (e.g., oral assessments, whole-group discussions, student-led conferences) 			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations (e.g., labs, performances, audio-visual presentations) 			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products (e.g., individual assignments, group projects, portfolios, pencil and paper tests, quizzes, or assignments) 			

Item	Indicators of Differentiation	Evidence of Indicators	O	S	N
Principle Three: Continuous Assessment and Adjustment		<i>How will I determine what students know, understand, and are able to do?</i>			
9.	All students are graded fairly based on their progress toward mastery of skills associated with standards and benchmarks or access points.	<p>Grades are based solely on individual student performance related to what they know, understand, and are able to do rather than grades based on elements (e.g., effort, attitude, participation) that are not related to standards-based performance.</p> <p>Final grades are not based on student performance during their early stages of learning, practicing, and acquiring new skills.</p> <p>Authentic assessment formats are used to grade student progress. <i>For example, rubrics, portfolios, student-led conferences, student self-assessment, etc.</i></p>			
		<i>How will I use formative (ongoing) assessment information to focus and adjust my instruction?</i>			
10.	All students have opportunities to demonstrate their prior knowledge and skills before beginning a new course of study.	<p>Students are pre-assessed to determine their current level of knowledge, skill, and understanding before beginning a new lesson or unit of study.</p> <p>Pre-assessment data are used to make decisions about instructional content and activities for new lessons or units of study.</p>			
11.	All students receive instruction based upon formative (ongoing) assessment.	Formative (ongoing) assessment is used to obtain information about all students and adjust instruction based on students' readiness, interests, and learning preferences.			
Totals for Principle Three:					

Item	Indicators of Differentiation	Evidence of Indicators	O	S	N
Principle Four: Flexible Grouping and Respectful Work		<i>Learning experiences provide rigorous and engaging instruction that is focused on essential goals and are matched to students needs.</i>			
12.	All students are engaged in respectful tasks and assignments that are facilitated by the teacher.	Tasks/assignments are designed in response to cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity.			
		Classroom structures and routines encourage small and whole group work as well as self-directed, independent study and self-assessment.			
		Students are engaged and interested in the lesson: asking questions, participating in small or whole-group discussions, and interacting with others during instructional activities.			
		There are additional routines, respectful learning activities, and appropriate materials available for students who have completed in-class assignments or need additional practice for learning. <i>For example...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Individual enrichment assignments</i> • <i>Additional practice on and reinforcement of concepts learned during class</i> • <i>Skill-building kits, folders, or baskets</i> 			
13.	All students are engaged in challenging assignments.	The difficulty of learning tasks reflects high expectations for the performance of each student.			
14.	All students are engaged in lessons that are differentiated by content, product, and process, based on readiness, learning preferences, and interests.	<i>Instructional activities, assignments, and materials are varied and adjusted according to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • content 			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • product 			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • process 			
		<i>Based on individual student:</i>			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • readiness 			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning preferences 			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interests 			

Item	Indicators of Differentiation	Evidence of Indicators	O	S	N		
Principle Four: Flexible Grouping and Respectful Work		<i>Learning experiences provide rigorous and engaging instruction that is focused on essential goals and are matched to students needs.</i>					
15.	All students are provided with learning supports as needed.	<p>Learning supports are provided for all students who need them, including instructional, communication, and behavioral supports. <i>For example,</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="634 542 1772 688"> <tr> <td data-bbox="634 542 1201 688"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Graphic organizers</i> • <i>Peer assistance</i> • <i>Manipulatives</i> • <i>Assistive technology</i> </td> <td data-bbox="1201 542 1772 688"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Multi-media</i> • <i>Behavior supports</i> • <i>Visual schedules and other organizational tools</i> </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Graphic organizers</i> • <i>Peer assistance</i> • <i>Manipulatives</i> • <i>Assistive technology</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Multi-media</i> • <i>Behavior supports</i> • <i>Visual schedules and other organizational tools</i> 			
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16.	All students are grouped according to ongoing assessment information.	Student groups are flexible and based on formative (ongoing) and summative assessment data related to readiness, interest, and learning preferences.					
17.	All students understand and use appropriate social skills needed to make groups effective and efficient.	<p>Students receive direct instruction and practice of cooperative group skills, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual accountability: Roles and responsibilities • Group process (e.g., turn-taking, problem-solving, brainstorming) • Conflict management 					
18.	All students have opportunities to move among different and varying groups throughout each lesson or unit.	<p>Students have opportunities to work with every other student in the class.</p> <p>Students have opportunities to choose partners or groups for various learning tasks.</p>					
19.	All students have opportunities to learn within a variety of structures such as learning stations, centers, or independent study.	<p>A variety of learning structures are offered throughout the lesson or unit of study. <i>For example, Learning tasks vary and include whole-group, small-group, and independent activities throughout the lesson or unit.</i></p>					
20.	All students work in groups that are engaging, respectful, and challenging.	Learning tasks within each group are varied to match student readiness, learning preference, and interest.					
Totals for Principle Four:							

Targeted indicators:	Next steps:	Comments:

References:

Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

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