



## Georgia Department of Education Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

### TEACHER ASSESSMENT ON PERFORMANCE STANDARD 4: DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

#### TKES QUICK GUIDE

#### WHY IS DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION NECESSARY FOR AN EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM?

Effective teachers understand that students learn in a variety of ways and at a variety of rates, and they accommodate for student differences by adapting their strategies to meet learners' needs. Differentiation to maximize learning is the cornerstone of effective teaching, because it recognizes that "one lesson, one activity does not fit all". Differentiated instruction is a way of teaching; it's not a program or textbook. It requires teachers to know their students so they can provide each one with experiences and tasks that will improve their learning. It is through differentiated instruction that each student is ensured the opportunity to learn at the depth, complexity, and pace most suited for him or her.

Successful differentiated instruction requires basic structures be in place. Teachers that effectively differentiate instruction have a strong content knowledge and have identified what students need to know, understand, and do to master the

*No two students enter a classroom with identical abilities, experiences, and needs. Learning styles, language proficiency, background knowledge, and readiness to learn vary widely within a single class group; thus we can't teach them all the same way!*

standards. They consistently use a variety of data to identify student-learning needs and to drive instruction. Effective teachers also have established an efficient classroom management system with consistent rituals and routines, so students know what is expected of them in various classroom settings. Instructional planning, including well-organized materials and resources that can be accessed easily for smooth transitions between activities, is a critical component of quality differentiation.

Differentiated instruction doesn't happen automatically. It takes time, effort, planning, and practice; thus requiring committed, motivated teachers. Rather than be overwhelmed by the amount of information, strategies, and options associated with differentiated instruction, teachers need to remember to "start small" by using one or two methods that fit best with what is already being done in the classroom. As teachers become comfortable and successful with one strategy, they should expand to include a new instructional method.

#### EFFECTIVE DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION:

Differentiation is essential to enable ALL students to achieve their optimal levels of learning. Teachers can differentiate content, process, and product, and learning environment.

##### Differentiating Content:

- Re-teach an idea or skill in small group to struggling learners.
- Extend, enrich, or accelerate the thinking or skills of advanced learners.
- Offer multiple modes of learning for students. Expose them to the content through their learning style preferences.
- Provide students with choice in the complexity of content so they can select learning tasks that match their level of understanding.
- Present content in incremental steps to scaffold learning.
- Include tiered learning assignments.

##### Differentiated Process:

- Offer varied instructional strategies and activities for students.
- Monitor and pace instruction based on data that identifies the individual needs of students.
- Use a variety of grouping strategies and instructional techniques (individual, small group, whole group).

##### Differentiated Product:

- Use kinesthetic, hands-on learning opportunities that encourage students to produce their own product assignment.
- Allow students to work alone or in small groups on projects and performance tasks.
- Give students choices or menus with a variety of product options.

##### Differentiated Learning Environment:

- Create an environment where student differences are respected.
- Involve students in identifying learning options, creating rubrics, and determining product menus.