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Guidelines and Sample Lessons for Tiering for Differentiation

Scaffolding vs. tiering

Scaffolding is whatever kind of assistance is needed for any student to move to the next level of knowledge and skill. In a good differentiated classroom, the teacher is constantly raising the stakes for success for any individual, then doing whatever is necessary to help the student succeed in taking the next step

- Make sure students understand the learning goals and how each segment of their work connects to the goals.
- Use multiple modes of teaching and a wide range of strategies– tiered assignments, learning contracts,
- Teach in small groups, reteaching/extending teaching.
- Provide a variety of resource materials, use graphic organizers, manipulatives, study guides.
- Use varied groupings of students– flexible grouping.
- Ask probing and clarifying questions.
- Help students develop effective study groups.
- Describe what quality looks like and guide students in doing so, give clear criteria for success-scoring guides.
- Model processes and procedures.
- Involve learner in establishing goals.

Tiering is a set of activities that are specifically designed with the students readiness, interest, or learning profile in mind. These activities hold the same standards and expectations for all students for the knowledge, understandings and skills that they are to achieve, but are designed to challenge each student according to their personal needs.

Guidelines for tiering

There are 5 major organizational points to tiering instruction:

1. Choose a concept that students should know or understand
2. Choose whether to tier according to readiness, interest, or learning profile. Assess student's profile, readiness, and interest.
3. Choose to tier by content, process or product.
4. Choose materials that equally address the KUD but offer varying levels of thinking skills
5. Create an activity that is clearly focused on the concept.
6. Adjust the activity to provide different levels of difficulty.
7. Match students to appropriate tiered assignment.

Common Questions

Is adapting programs the same as tiered instruction?

Adapting programs is a start, however varying the level of difficulty of questions for certain students and allowing higher level learners to play enrichment games is not enough. The goal is for tasks to appropriately challenge all levels of students so as to meet optimal learning and for all students to achieve success.

Is tiered instruction only for students below grade level?