Professional Association of Georgia Educators
2009 Summer Conference
June 19-21, 2009

Crowne Plaza® Atlanta-Ravinia

The 5 “Ws” of Differentiation

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What’s the main thing?

• We must know our content. If we are uncertain about our content and our learning destination, our students will be lost.

• We must know our students. If we do not know our students, how are we going to know how they learn?

http://literacyworks.org/mi/assessment/findyourstrengths.html
What is differentiation?

- Differentiation is student aware teaching.

- Must differentiate in four different areas:
  - Content – options for taking in information
  - Process – options for making sense of the ideas
  - Product – options for expressing what they know
  - Learning environment - options for setting up your room

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Who needs to differentiate

• Every teacher including regular education teachers, special education teachers, and gifted teachers, who wants to ensure student engagement and understanding.
When do you differentiate?

• The more alternatives and choices we give students for participating and taking ownership in their own learning, the more engaged they become.
Where do you differentiate?

- Across all subject areas
- Both informal and formal assessments
- When beginning a new unit of study in any content area, students bring their prior knowledge to the new learning.
Why differentiate?

- Not all students are alike.
- It is our job to meet students where they are and bring the learning process to them.
- Our goal should be to make our students more successful learners.
- To allow students to be engaged in higher order thinking skills. (Bloom’s) Our goal is to have every student at the synthesis or evaluation level. We want to move them past the knowledge stage.

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Let’s put it to practice!

• Each small group will hold an 8 minute session on a specific differentiation activity. Each 8 minutes, you will rotate through each station.
The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.

~William Arthur Ward

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References

