**Differentiated Instruction Unit and Lesson Planning Tool: Guidelines for Use**

The ***Differentiated Instruction Unit and Lesson Planning Tools*** are used to guide reflective, learning focused conversations between Mentors and Beginning Teachers through the ***process of beginning with the end in mind to design differentiated instruction***, assessment and evaluation based on selected curriculum expectations and a knowledge of their students.

While holding these important conversations, the Mentor will be using his/her flexible coaching

stances (3 C’s: Consult, Collaborate, and Coach.)

These conversations are based on models of *Cognitive Coaching* from Costa and Garmston, *Collaborative Coaching* from West Ed, and [*Appreciative Inquiry*](https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/)as adapted by TeachOntario Canada in Mentoring for All.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an “attributes-based” approach that can be used to facilitate reflective conversations either during formal professional learning sessions or as part of the ongoing dialogue between mentors and colleagues. At the core of AI is the belief that all participants come to mentoring relationships possessing many strengths and that by building on these assets, the answers to the issues and challenges they face can be collaboratively constructed.

This thinking is why the Tools always begin with an examination of what is already know about student(s.) Beginning with what is known will lead to questions the Beginning Teacher may have, and close with what the teacher will do (next steps) to support the student(s)’ learning. This tool is a guide to help the conversation lead to identifying actual strategies to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

# Core Questions

The following questions guide our decision-making as we plan instruction to meet the learning needs of our students. Mentors should use these questions to focus the beginning teacher’s thinking as you plan a differentiated approach—for a single task, a lesson or an entire unit.

#### The Learning Environment

* How can I set up the classroom for differentiation?
* What elements of the learning environment can I differentiate to help all of my students learn?

#### Instruction and Assessment

* How can I differentiate the ways that I help students learn new concepts?
* How can I differentiate the ways I assess student progress towards their learning goals?

#### Evaluation

* How can I differentiate the ways that students demonstrate what they understand and can do?

# Beginning with the End in Mind

When we plan for teaching and learning, whether we are planning for differentiation or not, it is critical to ensure that the focus for instruction, assessment and evaluation is aligned with the knowledge and skills related to the content standards and curriculum expectations chosen for that particular lesson or unit.

Wiggins and McTighe, in *Understanding by Design,* provide a sequence of questions as part of their framework for designing instruction, assessment and evaluation:

* What do I want students to learn?
* How will I know they have learned it?
* How will I design instruction and assessment to help them learn?
* What will I do when students are not learning?

This up-front planning of evaluation tasks is essential to the design of differentiated instruction and assessment. These evaluation tasks include:

1. Clear descriptions of “what it looks like when students demonstrate the intended learning”, as well as,
2. Success criteria that help us judge how well students demonstrate this learning.

Although demonstrations of learning may differ from student to student in a differentiated classroom (e.g., one student may demonstrate understanding of a concept through an oral presentation; another through a written summary), the content standards on which they are based and the criteria on which the demonstrations are judged are the same. “Beginning with the end in mind” guides the overall design of instruction, assessment and evaluation for a unit or lesson.

# Gathering Learning-Profile Data

What helps us differentiate instruction, assessment and evaluation is the **knowledge we have acquired about our students’ learning preferences, interests and readiness** to learn new concepts. Knowing students deeply as individuals or groups and organizing this deep data may seem daunting for beginning teachers. Many teachers may see more than a hundred students in a day. However, there are many sources and strategies for gathering data, framing probing questions about each student as a learner, and developing strategies for differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all learners. ***It would be helpful to the Lesson Planning process if Mentors and Beginning Teachers have already used the Knowing Your Students as Learners (KYSL) Tool before collaborating on the Unit or Lesson Planning Tool*.**

# Before the Conversation

With most tools, the Mentor is the one using the tool, filling it out while the Beginning Teacher has the freedom to think and share. In the case of Lesson Planning tools, the ultimate goal is for the Beginning Teacher to become adept at independently planning instruction, thus, **it is recommended that after working collaboratively a few times, the Mentor should encourage the Beginning Teacher to complete the form.** Gradually release responsibility for using a lesson plan template to the teacher. *Be sure you are listening well, though, so you can effectively guide the teacher through the process.* Remember to use your Mentor Language Stems and Flexible Stances to help guide your conversation.

The Differentiated Instruction Lesson Planner is a **template** to guide teachers through the process of beginning with the end in mind as they plan for differentiation based on their knowledge of students. The template is **not intended to be restrictive or sequential but reflective of prompts for the DI planning process**.

# Beginning the Conversation: Content Standards, Expectations, and Criteria for Success

The differentiated instruction lesson design template helps us:

* + Plan with the end in mind
  + Determine the elements of the lesson that will be differentiated
  + Outline the strategies, structures and processes that will focus the teaching and learning

Ask the Beginning Teacher to identify the content standard(s) for the unit or lesson. Once the expectations and criteria for success have been determined, most frameworks for lesson planning converge on three main parts:

* + An initial phase to focus and engage students by activating prior knowledge and experience, sometimes by generating questions and investigating current understandings (Minds On)
  + A middle phase to introduce or extend learning, and provide opportunities for practice

and feedback (Action)

* + A final phase to consolidate learning and provide opportunities for reflection (Consolidation and Connections)

The length of the lesson may vary from one to a few periods. Differentiation can be built into any phase of the lesson.

# Continuing the Conversation: Core Questions

During the planning conversation, you may want to focus the Beginning Teacher with these Core Questions:

* How can I set up the classroom for differentiation?
* What elements of the learning environment can I differentiate to help all of my students learn?
* How can I differentiate the ways that I help students learn new concepts?
* How can I differentiate the ways I assess student progress towards their learning goals?
* How can I differentiate the ways that students demonstrate what they understand and can do?

You may also want to suggest this simple, ***Sample Three-Part Learning Design Framework***

#### Minds On

* + establish a positive learning environment
  + connect to prior learning and/or experiences, sometimes generating questions and

investigating current understandings

* + set the context for learning

#### Action

* + introduce new learning
  + provide opportunities for practice (e.g., shared, guided, independent), application of

learning and feedback

#### Consolidation and Connections

* + provide opportunities for consolidation and reflection

# Concluding the Conversation: What Will I Do? (Practical Ideas and Next Steps)

Beginning Teachers, as all educators, have very real concerns about finding the time to deal with all curriculum expectations under any circumstance, never mind in a differentiated classroom where we recognize the importance of working with concepts using a variety of strategies, structures and processes. To have the time that we need and to more easily differentiate for our students, there are a number of actions we can take when planning for learning and teaching:

* Identify the big ideas or essential understandings of the unit or lesson; clustering the specific expectations to the related overall expectations.
* Overall expectations are described in Oregon and Common Core Standards, and specify the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of the grade. They speak to the big ideas or essential understandings at the core of the discipline. When we cluster curriculum expectations from these documents and identify the big ideas of the unit or lesson, we can focus on those big ideas rather than on a list of specific

expectations.

* Take an inquiry-based approach to learning whenever possible. When students inquire, they read, experiment, research and discuss, constructing knowledge by pursuing what Wiggins and McTighe (2005) call “essential questions” based on the big ideas. Differentiation is inherent to the inquiry process because students engage at various entry points and demonstrate their learning differently during the inquiry.
* Plan collaboratively, in interdisciplinary or cross-curricular teams, as often as possible.
* Pre-assess students’ understanding, knowledge, skills, and/or attitude prior to planning to know where to start. This is particularly important to help surface any misconceptions. Research shows that misconceptions, left uncorrected, will seriously hamper understanding (Wiggins & McTighe 2005).
* Be flexible in lesson design—plans will need to be adjusted based on assessment data gathered during instruction to support students who are struggling and those who learn more successfully than expected.
* Anticipate these varying needs so that differentiation can happen ‘in real time’ in class

when they occur.

* Continue to use favorite lesson plans, refining them based on the Core Questions above, the lesson design framework and the knowledge acquired about students.

•

## After the Conversation

#### What was the emphasis of the conversation?

The Unit and Lesson Planning Tools serve to document and organize your work together, and provides a tool to reflect on progress during the year. The tool is NOT evaluative. However, many mentors, coaches, and beginning teachers find it helpful to note how their work aligns with and supports the district’s professional teaching standards. It can identify areas of focus for mentor- beginning teacher work. Beginning Teachers may also wish to use the template for future plans.

#### Set a next meeting date?

At the conclusion of the discussion, be sure to set a date and time for your next conversation or follow up on this topic. Be sure to follow up on the things the teacher may have asked for your support with. Offer to observe this lesson or others specifically with an eye for how effectively the teacher carries out his/her differentiated lesson plan.