

# Differentiated Teaching

*Effective teachers use evidence of student learning readiness, learning progress, and knowledge of individual student learning profiles, to make adjustments for individuals so all students experience challenge, success and improved learning.*

## **Strategy overview**

Hattie (2012) found an effect size of 1.07 for Response to Intervention.

## **What is it?**

Differentiated teaching refers to methods teachers use to extend the knowledge and skills of every student in every class, regardless of their starting point. The objective is to lift the performance of all students, including those who are falling behind and those ahead of year level expectations.

Differentiated teaching provides appropriate challenge for all students in a class. It does so by responding to student differences in readiness, interest and learning profile. To ensure all students master objectives, effective teachers plan lessons that incorporate adjustments for content, process (how students make sense of content), and product (how students demonstrate what they know and understand). Teachers use assessment strategies to monitor student learning readiness and learning progress. They apply targeted interventions as components of differentiation.

## **How effective is it?**

Differentiated teaching strategies, consistently applied, offer foundations on which all students can build meaningful learning. Response to Intervention (RTI) combines highly tailored differentiation with evidence-based

# High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS)

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interventions which are monitored constantly (RTI is also known as Multi-Tier System of Supports). Research shows a remarkable effect size of 1.07 for RTI.

## **Considerations**

Differentiated teaching involves teachers supporting students to achieve success as they move through the learning process. It recognises all students have different abilities. It acknowledges and values the effort each student puts into improving their work. Teachers who differentiate effectively call on information that pinpoints what students know now, and what they are ready to learn next. They use formative assessment to monitor learning, and to guide selection of targeted interventions corresponding with individual needs. Teachers implement interventions using fluid groupings to address students' current needs. As students gradually master the required skills teachers adjust groupings and may cease interventions.

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## Personal reflection on my teaching practice...

Reflective practice provides a means for teachers to improve their practice to effectively meet the learning needs of their students. Brookfield succinctly describes the advantages of reflective practice to teachers as:

- It helps teachers to take informed actions that can be justified and explained to others and that can be used to guide further action.
- It allows teachers to adjust and respond to issues.
- It helps teachers to become aware of their underlying beliefs and assumptions about learning and teaching.
- It helps teachers promote a positive learning environment.
- It allows teachers to consciously develop a repertoire of relevant and context specific strategies and techniques.

It helps teachers locate their teaching in the broader institutional, social and political context and to appreciate that many factors influence student learning.

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**This strategy is demonstrated when the teacher:**

- uses pre-assessment of student readiness, interest and learning profile to understand individual student's needs and strengths

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

- sets high expectations for all students

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

- provides students with realistic, challenging goals, and recognise effort

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

- relies on formative assessment to monitor student learning progress toward and beyond learning goals

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

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- uses a range of teaching strategies that support different abilities and ways of thinking and learning

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

- sets open-ended tasks that allow students to work at different levels and paces

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

- uses group and targeted interventions to remediate learning difficulties

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

- assesses student work against prior achievements rather than against other students' work.

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

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**This strategy is not demonstrated when the teacher:**

- sets the same work for all students

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- provides little variation in teaching strategies, resources and groups composition

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

- assesses all student work against general criteria

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

- applies differentiated teaching strategies only for gifted students

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

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- establishes consistently inflexible groupings.

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

**This strategy is demonstrated when students:**

- can choose learning activities based on agreed goals

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- are assessed against prior achievements, rather than against other students' work

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

- are supported and challenged to reach their learning potential.

*Personal reflection on my teaching practice...*

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## **Continuity of practice**

Teachers use assessment strategies to identify what students know, and to monitor learning.

Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to accommodate the range of abilities and interests.

Teachers use a range of assessment activities to identify prior learning, and to diagnose student learning needs.

Teachers modify and diversify their instructional delivery and behaviour management to meet the different needs of students.

Student assessment data is analysed and findings explicitly inform curriculum planning and teaching practice.

Teachers use data to determine the targeted interventions required for individual students.

Teachers 'teach-up' – that is, they teach high quality, rich curriculum to all students and scaffold learning so students achieve high level goals, rather than teach 'down' to students they perceive as having less ability.

After effectively diagnosing individual students' abilities, teachers select and explicitly teach using tailored, appropriately challenging strategies.

Teachers contribute to the ongoing development of whole-school assessment policies and strategies, which support teachers to build their capability to use a

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range of assessment data to diagnose students' learning needs and inform planning for student learning.

Differentiation is central to planning and delivery in all lessons.

**High Impact Teaching  
Strategies (HITS)**