AIG Booster Shot #3

Differentiation for Gifted Learners: Tiered Assignments

Facilitator’s Guide

*Tiered Assignments:*

* Allow teachers to address readiness/ability differences.
* Can occur in any class, even in ability-based classes (for example, special classes for AIG learners, AP, IB, and Honors classes).
* Are assigned by teachers rather than chosen by students.
* Focus on the same objective(s) for all learners.
* Require proactive and purposeful planning.

*Steps in Creating Tiered Assignments:*

1. Identify standards and objectives to be taught
2. Assess students based on these standards and objectives
3. Design or find a quality activity/task that addresses these standards and objectives
4. Design additional tiers (levels) as needed to address varying readiness levels
5. Assign students to the appropriate tiers based on their readiness levels

*Tools for Designing Tiers for AIG Learners:*

* Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (see book below)
* June Maker’s Modifications for Gifted Learners (see attached)
* Carol Tomlinson’s *Equalizer* (see website below)

*Tiers for AIG learners should require them to:*

* Make connections between seemingly unrelated ideas, events, and people.
* Evaluate ideas, theories, and approaches.
* Apply abstract concepts to the world around them.
* Work with open-ended questions and problems.
* Grapple with complex instructions and resources.
* Use and transform their learning.

*Websites for Further Reading:*

* Tomlinson’s *Equalizer*: <http://www.scgifted.org/TomlinsonEqualizer.pdf>

*Books for Further Reading:*

* Anderson, L.W, etal. (2000). *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*.
* Eidson, Caroline C., Iseminger, Robert, & Taibbi, Chris. (2008). *Demystifying Differentiation in Elementary School: Tools, Strategies, and Activities to Use NOW.*
* Eidson, Caroline C., Iseminger, Robert, & Taibbi, Chris. (2007). *Demystifying Differentiation in Middle School: Tools, Strategies, and Activities to Use NOW.*
* Tomlinson, Carol A. (2012). *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners.*
* Wormeli, Rick (2007). *Differentiation: From Planning to Practice Grades 6-12*.

*General Ideas for Next Steps:*

* Continue to explore the exemplary lessons on DPI’s IRP Wiki to determine the types of strategies and materials that are most appropriate for AIGs.
* Look for and evaluate examples of tiered assignments (There are many available on the web!): Are the objectives/goals clear in the lesson? Do the tiers address a range of readiness levels while meeting these objectives/goals? How is the highest tier appropriate for AIG learners? If it’s not challenging enough, how might it be improved?
* Meet with your team/PLC to talk about ways to incorporate tiered assignments in your teaching: Where are tiered assignments needed most? How will they benefit your students, particularly your AIG students? What support do you need in order to successfully use tiered assignments in your classes?
* Set goals for using tiered assignments with AIGs, individually or with your team/PLC.
* Write a tiered lesson and share it with an administrator or colleague to get feedback.
* Teach a tiered lesson and ask the students for their feedback about it.

*Beginning Steps:*

* K-2: Choose 3-4 lessons that you’re about to teach in the next week. Which of them seems most in need of tiering? Why? Brainstorm different ways that you might approach this lesson to address your students’ different readiness levels.
* Gr. 3-5: Look through your textbooks/teacher manuals, and note any suggested modifications for AIG learners. Do these suggestions genuinely address the needs of these learners? How might you use these suggestions or modify them to support your use of tiered assignments?
* Gr. 6-8: Meet with a colleague who teaches the same subject area/material that you teach, and brainstorm ways to use tiered assignments in your classes. Given your objectives, where are tiered assignments most needed? Pick one objective, and come up with a way to address it while also challenging your AIG learners.
* Gr. 9-12: Choose 3-4 lessons that you will be teaching in the next week. How might you pre-assess to find out what your students already know and can do related to these lessons? Create and use a pre-assessment for one of these lessons (or a combination of them) with your students. Use what you learn from it to modify a lesson as needed. Be sure that you’re providing adequate challenge for those learners who demonstrate mastery (or are close to mastery) on the pre-assessment.

**Maker’s Curriculum Modifications for Gifted Learners**

**(Adapted by Caroline Cunningham Eidson)**

**CONTENT**

Abstractness

Highlight concepts, generalizations

Move away from facts and data

Complexity

Address relationships between concepts

Look for interdisciplinary connections

Variety

Move beyond the regular curriculum

Organization and Economy

Organize curriculum around concepts and generalizations

Encourage transfer of knowledge

Study of People

Focus on process and skills

Methods of Inquiry

Examine nature of the discipline

**PROCESS**

Higher Levels of Thinking

Bloom’s Taxonomy

Emphasize use rather than acquisition of knowledge

Open-endedness

Encourage many student responses

Ask provocative questions

Importance of Discovery

Allow students to reach own conclusions

Encourage more active learning

Citations of Proof and Evidence of Reasoning

Encourage metacognition

Freedom of Choice

Incorporate independent study, learning and interest centers, contracts

Group Interactions and Simulations

Build social and leadership skills

Pacing and Variety

**PRODUCT**

Real Problems and Real Audiences

Encourage application of understanding to real-world situations that students can relate to, analyze, and define

Appropriate Evaluation

Use a variety of evaluation types

Use true evaluation criteria

Transformation vs. Summary

Encourage perspective taking, elaboration, reinterpretation, extension, and combination of ideas