Carol Ann Tomlinson
Cindy A. Strickland

Differentiation in Practice

A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum

Grades 9–12

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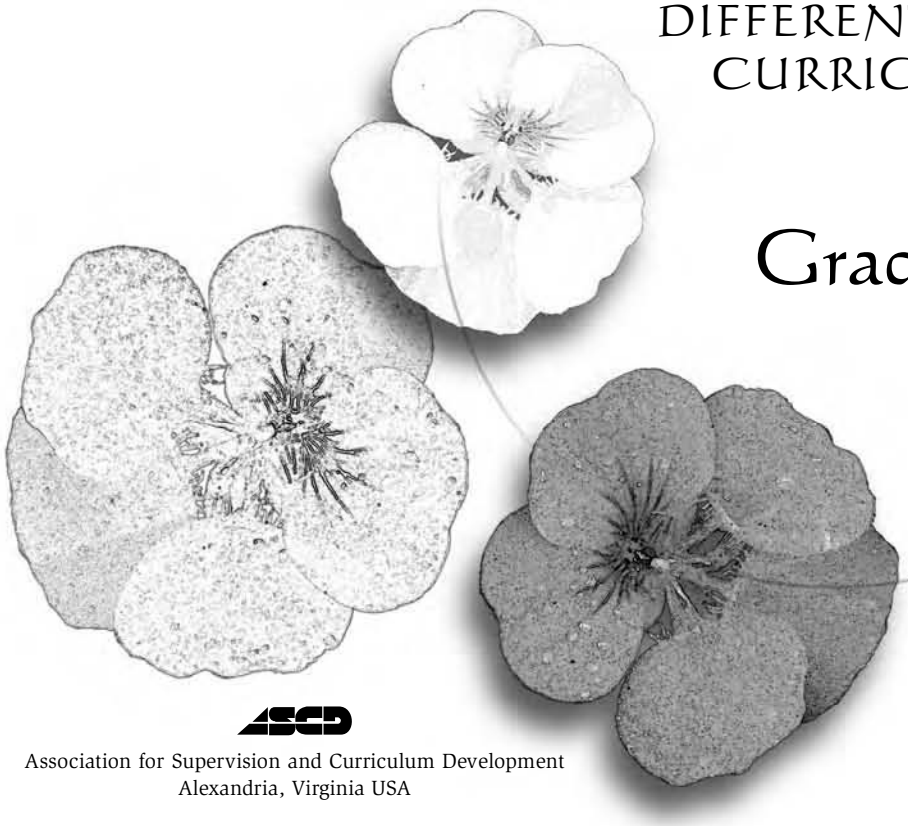

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For the high school students
who remind us, relentlessly and creatively,
that they are individuals seeking to find
themselves and discover purpose in learning

✷

For the high school teachers who remain
convinced that they must connect with students in
order to teach them well and to ensure that each
learner sees academic success as worthy of investment

✷

And for the high school principals who have the
courage to ask, "Why do we do this in this way?"
and seek solutions that make the best sense
for the young people in their care.

Differentiation in Practice

A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum, Grades 9–12

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Acknowledgments

This book, like all books, represents the efforts and insights of many people. There are many hands, minds, and classrooms reflected in its pages.

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exploration of curriculum and instruction for adolescents.

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Of course, what we have assembled here with the help of those we have noted and others who have contributed in ways small and large amounts to little more than an exercise without educators who will use the work. We hope this book serves you—and your students—well.

Introduction

This book is part of a series of ASCD publications on differentiating instruction. Each is designed to play a particular role in helping educators think about and develop classrooms that attend to learner needs as they guide learners through a curricular sequence.

How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms (Tomlinson, 2001) explains the basic framework of differentiation. Such a framework allows teachers to plan in consistent and coherent ways. *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners* (Tomlinson, 1999b) elaborates on the framework and describes classroom scenarios in which differentiation is taking place. *Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom: Strategies and Tools for Responsive Teaching* (Tomlinson, 2003) explores the connection between affect and cognition in teaching and learning. It also provides examples of and tools for developing differentiated classrooms in which teachers link affect and cognition. A fourth book, *Leadership for Differentiating Schools and Classrooms* (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000), discusses how to use what we know about change in schools with goals of differentiation and seeks to provide guidance for educational leaders who want to be a part of promoting and supporting responsive instruction.

In addition to these books, an ASCD Professional Inquiry Kit called *Differentiating Instruction for Mixed-Ability Classrooms* (Tomlinson, 1996) guides educators, in an inductive manner, to explore and apply key principles of differentiation. Five video programs, all produced by Leslie Kiernan and ASCD, give progressively expansive images of how differentiation actually looks in the classroom. *Differentiating Instruction* (1997) shows brief applications of differentiating content, process, and products according to student readiness, interest, and learning profile in primary, elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. It also illustrates a number of instructional strategies used for purposes of differentiating or modifying instruction. A three-video set, *At Work in the Differentiated Classroom* (2001), shows excerpts from a monthlong unit in a middle school classroom as a means of exploring essential principles of differentiation, examines management in differentiated

settings from primary grades through high school, and probes the role of the teacher in a differentiated classroom. *A Visit to a Differentiated Classroom* (2001) takes viewers through a single day in a multi-age, differentiated elementary classroom. *Instructional Strategies for the Differentiated Classroom, Part 1* (2003) and *Instructional Strategies for the Differentiated Classroom, Part 2* (2004) illustrate how teachers at varying grade levels and in a variety of subjects use seven instructional strategies to ensure academic success for a wide range of students. Each of these materials attempts to help educators think about the nature of classrooms that are defensibly differentiated and move toward development of such classrooms. Each of the publications plays a different role in the process of reflection, definition, and translation.

This book uses yet another lens to examine differentiation and support its implementation in classrooms. It presents educators with a series of actual curricular units developed by teachers who work hard to differentiate instruction in high school classrooms. The book thus moves from defining and describing differentiation to providing the actual curriculum used to differentiate instruction. It is the third book in the *Differentiation in Practice* series, joining earlier volumes exploring differentiation in grades K–5 (Tomlinson & Eidson, 2003a) and grades 5–9 (Tomlinson & Eidson, 2003b).

What the Book Is (and Isn't) Intended to Be

As we prepared to write this book and its companions, we had numerous conversations between ourselves, with editors, and with many colleagues in education. Each conversation helped us chart our eventual course. Our primary goal was to provide models of differentiated units of study. We wanted to move beyond episodic descriptions of differentiation to show how it might flow through an entire unit. We also wanted to present units at a range of grades and in a variety of subjects, and elected to do so in grade configurations that are reflective of most schools. In this book, we have included differentiated units in mathematics, science, history, language arts/English, world languages, and art in order to demonstrate how differentiation might look in high school classrooms focused on different disciplines.

And while we have developed the book with a high school focus, our intent is that it be useful to a broader range of teachers than the grade levels and subjects it specifically represents. This is a book designed to teach anyone who wants to learn how to differentiate curriculum how to do so—or how to do so more effectively. To that end, we intend that each of the units be more representative than restrictive. That is, an 11th grade history teacher should be able to look at a 9th grade science unit, see how it works, and use similar principles and formats to develop a differentiated history unit for high school juniors. A technology teacher should be able to study several of the units included in the book and synthesize principles and procedures she finds to guide development of a differentiated unit for 7th graders. In sum, we intend this book to be a vehicle for professional development.

What this book is *not* intended to be is off-the-shelf curriculum for any classroom. It is not possible to create the "correct" unit, for example, on teaching Shakespeare within a historical context. A teacher in one classroom will conceive that process differently than will teachers in other classrooms or teachers in a different part of the country, in a different type of community, or responsible for

a different set of academic standards. In the end, then, we are presenting educators with a learning tool, not a teaching tool. If teachers and other educators can read this book and say, "There's something I can learn here," then we will have succeeded.

How the Book Is Designed

Because we want the book to be a learning tool for a maximum number of teachers, we have made key decisions about its presentation. First, we decided to begin the book with Part I's primer on differentiation—an essential piece for readers new to the topic and a helpful refresher for those already familiar with it. We also opted to include an extended glossary (page 349), which explains terms and strategies that might not be familiar to all readers. Collecting this information in the back of the book, we thought, was preferable to interrupting the units themselves with "sidebar" explanations.

Part II, the body of the book, is devoted to instructional units. We think it will be helpful to share some of our thinking about the layout and contents of the units, each of which is presented in four parts.

• **Unit Introduction.** The first component of every unit is the introduction, which includes a prose overview of the unit; a list of standards addressed in the unit; the key concepts and generalizations that help with teacher and student focus; a delineation of what students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the unit; and a list of the key instructional strategies used in the unit. Some of the units also make links across units and disciplines and promote connections with students' lives and experiences. Note that because of our desire to make the book a learning tool and not a set of lesson plans, we have listed the subject area for each unit, but not a specific grade level. Similarly, our references to the specific standards around which teachers constructed the units do not include grade-level designations.

• **Unit Overview Chart.** The second component is an overview chart, designed with three goals in mind: 1) to provide orientation in the form of a "big picture" snapshot of the unit's steps or events; 2) to provide an estimate of the amount of time each step or event requires; and 3) to clarify which portions of the unit apply to the class as a whole and which are differentiated. Note that time designations vary from unit to unit; some are designed for 90-minute blocks and some for 45- or 50-minute periods, reflecting the original work of the teachers.

• **Unit Description.** The third component is the unit description itself. It appears in the left-hand column of each unit page and gives a step-by-step explanation of what takes place in the classroom during the unit. A starburst symbol (✷) in the margins highlights differentiated components. All referenced supporting materials (samples such as worksheets, product assignments, rubrics, and homework handouts) appear at the end of the unit.

• **Teacher Commentary.** The fourth component is an explanation, in the voice of the teacher (or teachers) who created the unit, of what she was thinking as she planned and presented instruction. For our purposes, this is a particularly valuable element. To listen to the teachers who developed and taught these units is to move well beyond what happens in the classroom and to begin to analyze why teachers make decisions as they do. At one point in the writing and editing process, we thought we should reduce the teacher

commentary sections to the fewest possible words; we quickly discovered that when we did so, we lost the magic the book has to offer. We hope you enjoy listening to the teachers as much as we have.

We tried to balance two needs in our editing of the units. First, we wanted to maintain the integrity of each teacher's unit without providing so much nitty-gritty detail as to risk distracting from the larger purpose of the work: the illustration of differentiation practices and principles. Second, we wanted to be sure to have both consistency (of terminology, format, essential philosophy, etc.) and variety (in instructional strategies, use of groups, assessment methods, etc.). The teachers who created the units have approved the changes we made or have helped us see how to make necessary modifications more appropriately.

Also, please note that we have opted to make the units somewhat more generic than specific. As teachers, we sometimes have the habit of looking for exact matches for our classroom needs and jettisoning whatever doesn't match. As authors, we can't eliminate the habit, but we wanted to make it a little harder to exercise. For example, although we have taken great care to list state standards reflected in each unit, we have intentionally not listed the name of the state from which the standards came. (It's amazing how similar standards on the same topic are across states.) We hope to make the point that good differentiation is attentive to standards and other curricular requirements, but we want to help readers avoid the inclination to say, "Oh, these aren't *my* standards, so this would not work in my classroom."

Finally, we decided to include solid units rather than "showcase" ones. What's here is more roast beef than Beef Wellington. We wanted to include units that demonstrate coherence, focused instruction, thoughtful engagement of students, and flexibility; we *did not* want to include units that dazzle the imagination. After all, although it may be fascinating to watch someone tap dance on the ceiling, few of us are inclined to try it ourselves. Hopefully, the units in this book are familiar enough to be approachable, but venture far enough into the unfamiliar to provide challenge for future growth. In this regard, our aim for readers is similar to what we recommend for students: pushing them a little beyond their comfort zones. If all readers feel totally at ease with the units, we've lowered the bar. If we send all readers running, we've set the bar too high. (In the latter instance, some judicious rereading over a period of professional growth just might be worthwhile.)

It may well be that the greatest pleasure of teaching comes from learning. It is our hope that this book—and the *Differentiation in Practice* series as a whole—will serve as one catalyst for helping teachers become the very best professionals they can be.

PART I

A Brief Primer on Differentiation

Today's high schools serve a more academically diverse student population than at any other time in history, and this diversity will only increase in the decades to come. The Educational Research Service (Marx, 2000) has identified 10 trends likely to shape the educational future in the United States; four of these frame much of the teaching and learning challenges in contemporary high schools:

1. *The United States is moving from a nation constituted by a majority population and a number of minority populations to a nation of minorities.* Multiple cultures, races, and language groups will be the norm in our classrooms, and the range of competency or "readiness" levels within every subject will expand. Yet many teachers are still operating as if diverse backgrounds and readiness levels had no relation to learner success.

2. *In order to teach culturally and academically diverse populations effectively, schools will have to move from standardized instruction to personalized instruction.* Our best knowledge of effective teaching and learning suggests clearly that teacher responsiveness to race, gender, culture, readiness, experience, interest, and learning preferences results in increased student motivation and achievement. Yet we are prone to feel as if we are somehow being unfair—unegalitarian—when we plan differently for different students.

3. *The vast majority of students in a diverse population will need to master the sorts of high-quality curriculum once reserved for advanced learners.* An increasingly complex society in which nearly every career and profession requires problem solving and flexible thinking means that students must learn to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, and producers of knowledge (rather than just consumers of knowledge). Yet high school enrollment practices—our manner of determining which students will take which courses—ensure that only a small percentage of students will be expected to acquire these skills, competencies, and characteristics.

4. *To help more students master high-quality curriculum, schools will need to move away from defense of the status quo and seek new ways of thinking about "doing school."* Our personal experience and the research we see in educational journals underscores the need to revise instructional

practices to promote greater personal investment in learning and higher achievement for a broad range of adolescents. Yet too many teachers cling to the comfortable patterns of the past. Despite abundant and mounting evidence to the contrary, our high school classes still evince the belief that teaching is telling, that the teacher is the teller, that learning is repeating, that curriculum is coverage, that students are unmotivated and dependent, that assessment happens at the end of large blocks of teaching, that grades serve the purpose of "separating the sheep from the goats," and that "classroom management" is just a synonym for control. At the very least, high school teachers fear that if we don't "teach like the colleges do"—primarily through lecture and independently completed assignments—our students will be ill-prepared to succeed at the college level.

Calls for Reflection

For some time now, educators who have invested their professional lives in improving schools—particularly those who have focused on improving high schools—have called on colleagues to break free of past paradigms of teaching and invent new ones that reflect the realities of the students we serve and the professional knowledge at our disposal.

• Theodore Sizer (1992) reminds us that while it may be inconvenient that students differ, it is an irrefutable fact of life in the classroom. He goes on to issue a challenge: If we want productivity, high standards, and fairness for the students we serve in high schools, we have to attend to their diversity, not ignore it.

• Psychologist Robert Glaser (in Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Ort, 2002) argues that high schools must shift from modes that reflect only minimal variations in conditions for learning to modes that allow a range of opportunities for success—modes of teaching that adjust to each student's talents, interests, backgrounds, and readiness levels.

• Researcher Adam Gamoran (2003) demonstrates that when teachers try to respond to student differences through tracking, the students in low-track classes are inevitably shortchanged—taught in ways that provide them with less opportunity and ask less of them. Perry, Steele, and Hilliard (2003) remind us of the price of tracking paid by minority students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. High school teacher Joan Cone (1992) has spent her career demonstrating that it is possible to present and support high-level learning opportunities to a wide range of students without lowering expectations.

• Researcher Seymour Sarason (1990) notes that students themselves are calling for new ways of teaching. It is evident to them that one-size-fits-all delivery systems are failing them.

• The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2004) reminds us that high-level professionals recognize individual differences in students and adapt instruction accordingly. Failure to do so results in ineffective instruction and evaluation for students who lack prerequisite skills as well as for students who are ready to move beyond prescribed outcomes.

• The National Association of Secondary School Principals' *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform* (2004) encourages emphasis on essential learning (instead of coverage), teachers connecting with students as a means to increased student achievement, classroom adaptations for students' learning differences, and flexible use of classroom time to encourage application

of instructional strategies that are consistent with how students learn best.

The high school teachers whose work constitutes the majority of this book lend their voices to the chorus as well. They have accepted the challenge of change and are working to craft classrooms in which responsive instruction attempts to ensure that more students than ever learn at high levels of quality and achieve high levels of success. We are particularly excited about sharing their voices with a wider audience.

The journey to responsive instruction is neither short nor formulaic. Indeed, it calls to mind Nietszche's idea of a "long obedience in the same direction." Our success as high school teachers in this modern age rests upon our willingness to look closely at where we've been, where we are, and where we need to go in the light of the full range of students we teach and our own escalating skill in addressing academic diversity. Perhaps a good first step in that direction is to examine the realities of a few students and teachers in high schools—and then to begin to examine a framework for thinking about teaching that responds to human beings as well as to the demands of a curriculum.

The Students

Lavon is very bright. He generally takes basic-level classes, and his work there is adequate. No one at school seems to know how smart he is. *He* knows it, but he doesn't know what to do with it—at least not in productive ways. There's hardly enough money at home to pay the rent, let alone pay for college. Besides, none of his friends talk about college. In fact, Lavon really doesn't know anyone who has been to college except for his teachers, and his life isn't like theirs.

Carlos is quiet in his classes. He began high school in this country just two months ago. Carlos misses his friends back home. He doesn't understand the teacher. He can't read the books. He fails the tests. He can't tell his parents how unhappy he feels. In school, it's like no one knows he's there.

Danielle has a learning disability. She likes the heated discussions that are sometimes part of her history class because she has strong opinions about history and she expresses them well. She can tell that people listen when she talks. She can't manage the books, however, and she's awful at taking notes. Danielle works on homework, but deep down, believes that it's pointless. Even when she finishes it, it's usually wrong—or muddled in her head. Danielle doesn't expect to do well in school. It's been that way for a long time.

Heather translates the words she reads into pictures in her mind. Poetry and history and science and math all become images. The images are interpretive and help her sort out ideas and meanings. Words don't work that way for her. They are heavy and awkward—not at all like the mental gallery she can call up at any moment. But in her classes, it's only the words that count.

Michelle is one of a small population of black students in a primarily white school. Sometimes she's the only black student in her advanced classes, and sometimes she's one of just two or three. Her parents value education and encourage her to learn. Nonetheless, Michelle's school feels like a pair of shoes that's the wrong shape and size. To go there is to leave the world in which she belongs and to enter one where she's at best a stranger and at worst an unwelcome stranger. Language, habits, the ways of working, textbook content, the push and pull of peers, the lack of eye contact from some of her teachers, and a hundred other elements send Michelle coded messages that

she doesn't really belong. Anyhow, what is she supposed to *do* with what she learns in school? No one from the world where she does belong seems to use this stuff.

Jacob has a hard time with reading. He tried to get better at it for years, but it seems like he and his teachers gave up on that at about the same time. Now, teachers tell him what to read, but no one works with him on how to read. Jacob tries to get by without reading, but it's getting harder and harder to bluff his way through. He wonders if anyone knows how bad his reading really is.

Andrea is a graduate student living in the body of a 16-year-old high school junior. Her reasoning and writing are stunning. She wants to pursue her interest in genetics, but there's so much schoolwork to do. It's not challenging for her, but it's incredibly time consuming. Andrea knows she has to get excellent grades in order to get into the kind of college she dreams of attending—so she does the work and hopes there'll be a time when school is actually interesting.

Damon gave up on school so long ago he can't remember when that was. He hates the long days of sitting and listening. He hates what the teachers talk about. He hates most of the kids in his classes—and they return the favor. He comes to school pretty regularly—he gets grief at home if he skips—but he has no intention of investing himself in his classes. It's too painful to try over and over and fail over and over. School is pointless anyway.

Phaedra is incredibly creative, with a mind that continually manipulates ideas and asks questions. She wonders why things are they way they are. She ponders alternatives to nearly everything. She can do the work in school okay. Mostly she completes what's required to get respectable grades, but she's hungry for a place where she can move beyond "right" answers.

Jenna feels trapped. She's a straight-*A* student. Her parents and teachers praise her, but she feels like a hamster on a wheel. On the one hand, she's terrified of losing her class rank. On the other hand, she feels like a fraud for getting high grades in classes that don't actually challenge her to do much more than follow directions and memorize textbook facts. Jenna can't let people down, but she knows she's somehow letting herself down.

For *all* of these students, there are also incessant "distractions" that fill their time and draw their minds away from classroom demands. There are after-school jobs, boyfriends and girlfriends, school offices, team sports, drama club, and music groups. Things like video games, Web logs, skateboarding, and hanging out with friends nearly always seem more alive, compelling, and relevant than what goes on in the classroom. Add to all of that the inevitable emotional turbulence and physical changes that in many ways *are* adolescence, and it's easy to understand that being an adolescent student is something of an oxymoron. It also clarifies the need for teachers of adolescents to account for both the complexity of their students' lives and the variety of their individual learning needs. To do less is to lose ground as a teacher before teaching even begins.

The Teachers

Mr. McArthur has loved science for as long he can remember. Ten years into his teaching career, he's reconciled to the fact that many of his students don't share that enthusiasm. Still, he hasn't given up. Mr. McArthur works hard to make his lectures interesting and continues to develop them further each year. He sets high expectations for his students, even though he knows it's difficult for them to live up to those expectations. Increasingly, he

has students who can't or won't read homework assignments and who don't know how to take notes effectively.

Ms. Ellison's general math class has 21 students, representing 4 different languages. She speaks only English, and she's uncertain about how to communicate with six students who speak little English. Some of Ms. Ellison's second language learners are proficient readers in their native languages. Some aren't. In addition, even though her students have a wide variety of gaps in their math knowledge, she's expected to cover the entire math text with them *and* make sure that they have the basic skills they need to pass the mandated exit exam.

Ms. D'Archangelis teaches history. She particularly enjoys her honors and AP classes, where students are bright and generally focused on success. Nonetheless, she feels driven by a curriculum that is too extensive to "do right" within the time she shares with these students. When she plans class activities, she often feels like she's sacrificing a degree of complexity that her students would really enjoy. Ms. D'Archangelis worries both about the students who struggle with the convergent thinking her class requires and about those students who are *too* comfortable with convergent thinking. She is also aware that at any given time, some of her students need greater challenge than she is providing while others are just barely keeping up.

Mr. Ortiz's Spanish classes includes students who speak Spanish as a first language but don't know its grammar; students who know English grammar well and those who don't; students who are great memorizers of patterns but shy about risking oral production; students with a great ear for language and no patience for homework; and students who somehow seem to be learning to speak, read, and write the language faster than he's teaching it. As more and more of his students are required to take foreign language, the range of competencies and needs is growing accordingly.

Nearly all of these teachers feel escalating pressure to prepare their students for a high-stakes test—a test that reveals no concern for students who struggle with school or for students eager to learn at a more challenging pace or in greater depth. Even as classrooms are becoming more heterogeneous, the message from the test-makers seems to be one of mandated homogenization.

The dilemma is clear: How does a high school teacher who teaches nearly 150 students honor the uniqueness of individuals in classes that are likely to be overpopulated, undersupplied, perpetually short of time, and under the gun for test performance? Besides, high school students are nearing adulthood, leading some teachers to worry that doing too much to accommodate students' unique needs will leave them ill-prepared for life beyond high school, where they'll be expected to achieve without special supports.

There is no add-water-and-stir solution, of course. Complex challenges like this never have simple solutions. But those of us involved with writing this book hold tight to two beliefs. First, we believe that every teacher is a learner, and as such, every teacher can become better and better at the effective instruction of academically diverse student populations. Second, because all indications are that classrooms will continue to diversify, we believe there is no choice but to learn to teach well the students who trust us—voluntarily or involuntarily—to prepare them for the future. Based on these two beliefs, we find that the best response to the complex challenges today's schools present is differentiated instruction.

What Is Differentiated Instruction?

As we use the term in this book, "differentiated instruction" refers to a systematic approach to planning curriculum and instruction for academically diverse learners. It is a way of thinking about the classroom with the dual goals of honoring each student's learning needs and maximizing each student's learning capacity.

This approach to effective instruction of heterogeneous student populations—and in truth, all student populations are heterogeneous—suggests that teachers concentrate on two classroom factors: the nature of the student and the essential meaning of the curriculum. If, as teachers, we increase our understanding of who we teach and *what* we teach, we are much more likely to be able to be flexible in *how* we teach. After decades of educational research and classroom experience, we simply have no evidence that we teach as effectively as we might—as effectively as our students need us to teach—unless we teach in ways that vigorously seek to address the variety of student needs that are a reality in our classes.

There are five classroom elements that teachers can differentiate—or modify—to increase the likelihood that each student will learn as much as possible, as efficiently as possible:

- **Content—**What we teach and how we give students access to the information and ideas that matter.
- **Process—**How students come to understand and "own" the knowledge, understanding, and skills essential to a topic.
- **Products—**How a student demonstrates what he or she has come to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of a segment of study.
- **Affect—**How students link thought and feeling in the classroom.
- **Learning environment—**The way the classroom feels and functions.

In addition, there are three student characteristics to which teachers can respond as they craft curriculum and instruction:

- **Readiness—**The current knowledge, understanding, and skill level a student has related to a particular sequence of learning.
- **Interest—**What a student enjoys learning about, thinking about, and doing.
- **Learning profile—**A student's preferred mode of learning.

Let's take a few moments to focus on these characteristics.

Readiness is not a synonym for ability; rather, it reflects what a student knows, understands, and can do today in light of what the teacher is planning to teach today. It is very difficult to maximize the capacity of some learners if we are unaware of their learning gaps or if we are impervious to the fact that other students have already mastered the material we are planning to teach for the next week. The goal of readiness differentiation is first to make the work a little too difficult for students at a given point in their growth—and then to provide the support they need to succeed at the new level of challenge. Differentiation in response to student readiness does not suggest we abandon the curriculum, but rather that we adapt our teaching in ways that make the curriculum appropriately challenging for a range of learners.

Interest is a great motivator. A wise teacher links required content to student interests in order to hook the learner. The goal of interest

differentiation is to help students connect with new information, understanding, and skills by revealing connections with things they already find appealing, intriguing, relevant, and worthwhile.

Individual *learning profile* is influenced by learning style, intelligence preference (see Gardner, 1993, 1995; Sternberg, 1988, 1997), gender, and culture. There is neither economy nor efficiency in teaching in ways that are awkward for learners when we can teach in ways that make learning more natural. The goal of learning profile differentiation is to help students learn in the ways they learn best—and to extend ways in which they can learn effectively.

It is not the purpose of this book to teach the key elements of differentiation; that has been done in other places. Nonetheless, a quick review of what it means to differentiate the five classroom elements in response to the three student characteristics should facilitate a common understanding among our readers.

Differentiating Content

Content is what students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of a segment of study. It's the "stuff" we want students to learn, and therefore, it's the "stuff" we teach. Content is typically derived from a combination of sources. Certainly, national, state, and local standards provide guidance about what we should teach. That said, a set of standards is unlikely to provide complete and coherent content. Some standards documents emphasize knowledge and skill and largely omit the concepts and principles that lead students to genuine understanding of subject matter. Some standards documents are so general in nature that they omit the specific knowledge necessary to illustrate the principles identified.

Content is further defined by local curriculum guides and by textbooks. However, one of the most critical factors in determining content is the teacher's knowledge of both the subject and the students. The teacher is the source of synthesis for standards, texts, and guides. It's the teacher who must ask questions such as, "What matters most here?" "What is this subject really about?" "What will be of enduring value to my students?" "What must I share with them to help them truly understand the magic of this subject in their lives?"

When the teacher answers these questions, he or she is ready to specify what students should know, understand, and be able to do in a particular subject as a result of instruction presented over a day, a lesson, a unit, and a year. The teacher's overarching goal is to hold the essential knowledge, understanding, and skills steady for most learners. In other words, if the intention this week is to help students learn to solve quadratic equations, this will be the goal for all learners. Some may need to work (at the process stage) with more complex formats and more independence; others may need to work with greater scaffolding from the teacher and peers. In general, however, the knowledge, understanding, and skills related to solving quadratic equations belong to everyone.

There are exceptions to this guideline, of course. If a student already knows how to solve quadratic equations and more complex ones as well, it makes no sense to continue teaching him to solve quadratic equations. Likewise, if a student has serious gaps in number sense and basic operations, the solutions to quadratic equations are likely to be out of her reach until she can build the necessary foundation of knowledge, understanding, and skill.

Once the essential knowledge, understanding, and skills of a unit or topic are clear, the teacher

also begins thinking about the second facet of content: how to ensure student access to that essential knowledge, understanding, and skill set.

Students access content in many ways. Teacher talk is one—and one of the most common in lots of high school classrooms. There are also textbooks, supplementary materials, technology, demonstrations, field trips, audiotape recordings, and so on. A wise teacher asks, "What are *all* the ways I might help my students gain access to new knowledge, understanding, and skills as we move through this topic or unit?"

Because students vary in readiness, interest, and learning profile, it is important to vary or differentiate content in response to those student traits. Figure 1 illustrates just a few ways in which teachers can differentiate content in response to student readiness, interest, and learning profile.

Differentiating Process

The line between process and content is a blurred one, but for purposes of discussion, we'll think of process as beginning when the teacher asks students to stop listening or reading and to begin making personal sense out of information, ideas, and skills they've accessed. Under this definition, process begins where students stop becoming consumers and start making meaning in earnest.

Process is often used as a synonym for "activities." Not all activities are created equal, however. A worthwhile activity is one that asks students to use specific information and skills to come to understand an important idea or principle. Furthermore, a worthwhile activity is unambiguously focused on essential learning goals. It calls on students to work directly with a subset of the key knowledge, understanding, and skills specified as content goals. It requires students to think about ideas, grapple with problems, and use information. It moves beyond "giving back information" to seeing how things work and why they work as they do. Finally, a worthwhile activity is one that snags students' interest so that they persist at it, even when the task is difficult.

Figure 2 illustrates just a few ways in which teachers can differentiate process in response to student readiness, interest, and learning profile.

Differentiating Products

A product is a means by which students demonstrate what they have come to know, understand, and be able to do. In this book, we use the term *product* to refer to a major or culminating demonstration of student learning—that is, one that comes at the end of a long period of learning, such as a unit or a marking period, rather than a demonstration of learning at the end of a class period or a two-day lesson, for example.

As with activities, effective product assignments are likely to have certain hallmarks. Product assignments, too, should focus on the essential knowledge, understanding, and skills specified as content goals. They should call on students to use what they have learned—preferably working as much as possible as a professional would work. Product assignments should have clear, challenging, and specified criteria for success, based both on grade-level expectations and individual student needs. They should endeavor to capture student interest. Finally, high-quality product assignments are written and guided in ways that support student success with the process of working on the product.

Products can take many forms. In fact, their flexibility is what makes them so potentially powerful in classrooms sensitive to learner variance.

FIGURE 1

Strategies for Differentiating Content

Student Characteristic	Strategy
Readiness	• Provide supplementary materials at varied reading levels. • Use small-group instruction to reteach students having difficulty. • Use small-group instruction for advanced students. • Demonstrate ideas or skills in addition to talking about them. • Provide audiotaped materials. • Use videotapes to supplement and support explanations and lectures. • Use texts with key portions highlighted. • Use reading partners to support understanding of text or supplementary materials. • Provide organizers to guide note-taking. • Provide key vocabulary lists for reference during note-taking.
Interest	• Provide materials to encourage further exploration of topics of interest. • Use student questions and topics to guide lectures and materials selection. • Use examples and illustrations based on student interests.
Learning Profile	• Present material in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modes. • Use applications, examples, and illustrations from a wide range of intelligences. • Use applications, examples, and illustrations from both genders and a range of cultures and communities. • Teach with whole-to-part and part-to-whole approaches. • Use wait time to allow for student reflection.

FIGURE 2

STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENTIATING PROCESS

Student Characteristic	Strategy
Readiness	• Use tiered activities (activities at different levels of difficulty, but focused on the same key learning goals). • Make task directions more detailed and specific for some learners and more open for others. • Provide resource materials at varied levels of readability and sophistication. • Provide small-group discussions at varied levels of complexity and focused on a variety of skills. • Use both like-readiness and mixed-readiness work groups. • Use a variety of criteria for success, based on whole-class requirements as well as individual student readiness needs. • Provide materials in the primary language of second language learners. • Provide readiness-based homework assignments. • Vary the pacing of student work.
Interest	• Use interest-based work groups and discussion groups. • Use both like-interest and mixed-interest work groups. • Allow students to specialize in aspects of a topic that they find interesting and to share their findings with others. • Design tasks that require multiple interests for successful completion. • Encourage students to design or participate in the design of some tasks.
Learning Profile	• Allow multiple options for how students express learning. • Encourage students to work together or independently. • Balance competitive, collegial, and independent work arrangements. • Develop activities that seek multiple perspectives on topics and issues.

If, as a student, I can show the teacher that I have come to know, understand, and do the non-negotiables of the unit, *how* I do so may be open. Stellar product assignments are examples of teaching for success versus "gotcha" teaching. For example, a student with a learning disability that makes writing laborious (if not impossible) may do a better job of showing what he has learned in science by creating a high-quality museum exhibit, complete with tape-recorded narration, than he would by writing an essay.

Tests are certainly one form of product. In today's high schools, all students need guidance in how to take tests effectively. Nonetheless, when tests are the only form of student product, many students find that their ability to show what they know is restricted. With tests, it's important to remember that the goal should not be regurgitation of information, but demonstration of the capacity to use knowledge and skills appropriately. It's also important to remember that tests should *enable* a student's ability to show how much he or she has learned, not impede it. Thus, some students may need to tape-record answers to tests. Some may need to hear test questions read aloud. Some may need additional time to write their answers. When the goal is to see what a student has learned, those adaptations are "fair" for students with learning difficulties just as using Braille is "fair" for students who cannot see.

Figure 3 illustrates just a few ways in which teachers can differentiate products in response to student readiness, interest, and learning profile.

Differentiating Affect

Students, simply because they are human beings, come to school with common affective needs. They need to feel safe and secure, both physically and emotionally. They need to feel that they belong to the group and are important to it. They need to feel a sense of kinship with the group—a sense that they share common ground with their peers. They need to feel affirmed and receive assurance that they are valuable just as they are. They need to feel challenged and to know that they can succeed at a high level of expectation (which helps them develop a sense of self-efficacy). Humans have these needs in common. Nonetheless, our particular circumstances cause us to experience these needs in different ways.

For example, a student who struggles to learn has a need to belong and to contribute to the class—to feel important to the "wholeness" of the group. That need may go unmet if she finds herself always on the outskirts of class discussions and cast as a failure in most endeavors. If the teacher sees this student as a "fringe" member of the class, it is likely that other students will see her that way as well. To help this learner achieve a sense of belonging, the teacher must understand the student's need to be a legitimate contributor and must orchestrate class proceedings with the legitimate participation of this student in mind.

A highly able student also needs to feel a sense of belonging and importance to the group. This learner may already be a part of the social fabric of the group and may be recognized as an achiever. However, if he feels uneasy asking questions or making alternative proposals important to him because the teacher is impatient with or threatened by them, even this highly able student can feel uncertain about his status in the group. He may elect to act out a role that maintains the status quo, feeling that he is not free to be himself in the classroom. In a case like this, the teacher may not have to plan activities in ways that integrate this learner, but in order to address his need to belong, the

FIGURE 3

STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENTIATING PRODUCTS

Student Characteristic	Strategy
Readiness	• Provide access to bookmarked Internet sites at different levels of complexity. • Lead optional, in-class, small-group discussions on various facets of product development (e.g., asking good research questions, using the Internet to find information, conducting interviews, citing references, editing, etc.). • Use similar-readiness critique groups during product development (especially for advanced learners). • Use mixed-readiness critique groups or teacher-led critique groups during product development (particularly for students who need extra support and guidance). • Develop rubrics or other benchmarks for success based on both grade-level expectations and individual student learning needs.
Interest	• Encourage students to demonstrate key knowledge, understanding, and skills in related topics of special interest. • Help students find mentors to guide product development or choice of products. • Allow students to use a range of media or formats to express their knowledge, understanding, and skill. • Provide opportunities for students to develop independent inquiries with appropriate teacher or mentor guidance.
Learning Profile	• Encourage students to work independently or with partner(s) on product development. • Teach students how to use a wide range of product formats. • Provide visual, auditory, and kinesthetic product options. • Provide analytic, creative, and practical product options. • Ensure connections between product assignments and a range of student cultures/communities.

teacher must make the class a place where legitimate questions and alternative approaches are sought, valued, and celebrated.

A student whose first language is not English cannot feel integral to the group when he can never read the text, understand directions, or make a real contribution to the work of groups to which he is assigned. The teacher in this instance must see the link between communication and belonging and develop multiple ways for the learner to have a voice in and make a contribution to the class.

A student from a minority culture feels anything but central to the operation of the group when all of her cultural peers are consistently placed in low-achieving groups and are assigned work that looks dull. Belonging is not a reality when the teacher is more likely to call on, chat more affably with, and make eye contact with students from cultures other than your own. Your importance diminishes when the teacher shows she expects less of you by settling for incomplete work, overlooking missed assignments, or failing to coach you on how to enhance the quality of a product.

These are just a few examples to make the point that every learner in a class needs the teacher to help him or her grow in affective competence, just as every learner needs the teacher to help him or her grow in cognitive competence. (In fact, the two are inextricably linked.) It is essential to remember that although our affective mileposts are similar, our journeys toward them may take many different routes. In a differentiated classroom, the teacher is continually attuned to student feelings, just as she is to student knowledge, understanding, and skills. She repeatedly asks herself, "What can I do to ensure that students of all readiness levels feel safe, integrated, affirmed, valued, challenged, and supported here?" "What can I do to ensure that students know their interests and strengths are important to me as a person, important to their peers, and important to our success as a class?" "How can I increase the likelihood that each student comes to a better understanding of his or her particular learning patterns, finds opportunities to work in ways that are comfortable and effective, and respects the learning needs of others?"

A wise teacher takes a number of measures to support the affective climate of the classroom. These might include

- Modeling respect.
- Teaching about and for respect.
- Helping students develop an escalating awareness of and appreciation for the commonalities and differences among their classmates.
- Helping students see themselves and their peers in the important ideas and issues they study.
- Helping students examine multiple perspectives on important issues.
- Helping students learn to listen to one another so that they hear not only the words, but also the intentions behind the words and the implications beyond them.
- Helping students to develop empathy for each member of the class.
- Ensuring consistently equitable participation of every student.
- Providing structures that promote and support student success.
- Seeking and responding to legitimate opportunities to affirm each student.
- Establishing shared and individual benchmarks for success at the appropriate levels.
- Coaching students to work for their personal best.

• Celebrating growth.

• Helping students to be more reflective and effective in peer relationships.

• Helping students to be more reflective and effective in decision making.

• Helping students to become effective problem solvers, both personally and interpersonally.

In the case of affect, the teacher differentiates both proactively (in ways that are planned) and reactively (on the spot). She does both based on her understanding of the shared affective needs of all humans, the reality that we experience those needs in both similar and dissimilar ways, and her continued reflection on how each student's readiness levels, interests, learning style, intelligence preference, culture, gender, economic status, home experiences, and general development shape his or her affective needs.

Affect is, in large measure, the weather in the classroom. Its lights and shadows, sun and storms profoundly influence everything that a learner experiences within that classroom. The teacher's role is often that of "weather-maker." At the very least, it is the teacher's job to help students learn more effectively given the classroom weather.

Differentiating Learning Environment

It's helpful to think about learning environment in terms of both visible and invisible classroom structures that enable the teacher and the students to work in ways that benefit both individuals and the class as a whole. A *flexible* learning environment is a hallmark of a differentiated classroom. The teacher's guiding question for a differentiated learning environment is, "What can I do to allow students of varying readiness levels, interests, and modes of learning to grow most fully in this place?"

One way of thinking about a differentiated learning environment is to examine how space, time, and materials can be used flexibly. It's also critical to understand the rules and procedures that must govern a flexible learning environment. Although it is the teacher's responsibility to engineer a flexible classroom, a wise teacher involves students in decisions about how to make the environment work. This is smart not only because it gives students a sense of ownership of their classroom, but also because students are often able to see what needs to be done more quickly and creatively than the teacher, who may be bogged down with other responsibilities and pressures.

Decisions About Space

The goal of flexible space is to enable the teacher and the students to work in a variety of configurations and to do so smoothly and efficiently. To that end, teacher and students might ask questions such as

• What are the various ways we can rearrange the furniture to allow for individual, small-group, and whole-group work?

• How can we arrange space for conversation and movement as well as space for quiet concentration?

• What is the appropriate way to deal with student materials when students move from one place to another in the room?

• Who may move around the classroom? For what purposes? When? In what manner?

• What signal will we receive when it's time to move from one place or task to another?

• What will happen if someone's movement in the classroom is disruptive to others?

Decisions About Materials

Goals related to flexible materials in a differentiated classroom include making sure students have both what they need to pursue their own learning goals in preferred ways and what they need to work toward class goals individually, in small groups, and as a class. To make decisions related to classroom materials, teachers and students might ask questions such as

- What materials and supplies should always be available in the classroom?
- Which materials and supplies should students have ready access to and which should be accessible only to the teacher?
- How will students know which materials and supplies are appropriate for their tasks at a given time?
- What constitutes appropriate care for materials and supplies?
- What will happen if someone uses materials or supplies in ways that are inappropriate or disruptive to others?

Decisions About Time

Time is perhaps the most valuable classroom commodity. It enables or inhibits learning at every turn—and there is never enough of it. Because time is always nipping at our heels, it's easy to assume that the most efficient way to use it is to carve it into chunks distributed to everyone in an equal manner. When there is academic diversity in a classroom, however, that is seldom the judicious choice. Some students will need additional instruction from the teacher in order to move ahead. Some will finish work more rapidly than others, even when the work is appropriately challenging. Some will need more time on a few tasks. Some will need more time on most tasks. It often makes sense for the teacher to teach a small group while other students are working alone or in small groups. Everyone knows what to do, how to do it, and everything works (at least most of the time—but that's true of classroom functioning in general). To enable flexible use of time, teacher and students might ask questions such as

- When will it be best to work as a whole class?
- When will it be helpful to work in smaller groups or independently?
- How will we know where to be in the classroom and at what times?
- How will we manage ourselves when we work without direct teacher supervision?
- What rules and procedures will govern our work at various places in the room and for various tasks?
- How will we get help when we need it and the teacher is busy?
- How will we let the teacher know we need help?
- What do we do if we finish a task before others do (even though the task was challenging and we worked at a high level of quality)?
- What do we do if we need additional time for a task (even though we have worked steadily on the task)?
- What do we do with our work when we finish it? Where and how do we turn it in?
- When is it appropriate to move around the room and when is it not appropriate to do so?
- How will we know which tasks to work on and which part of the room to work in at a given time?
- How can I tell if I'm succeeding in my work at a high level of quality?

• How do I keep track of my goals, work, and accomplishments?

There are, of course, many other questions related to flexible learning environments beyond those about space, materials, and time that we've listed. The reality is that students of any age can work both flexibly and successfully as long as they know what's expected and are held to high standards of performance. Ironically, we're most likely to see smoothly operating, flexible classrooms in kindergarten. Beyond that point, we teachers often convince ourselves that *our* students aren't capable of independent and flexible work. If that were really the case, it would be one of the few demonstrations of learners becoming *less* able to accomplish complex tasks as they get older! Besides, if we expect young people to become competent, self-guided adults, evidence that they are not moving in that direction should only serve as an impetus to ensure that they do.

Essential Principles of Differentiation

There are a number of key principles that typify a defensibly differentiated classroom, and they have been described in detail in other places. Still, at the outset of this book, it's important to review a few of them. These principles should be at the forefront of teacher planning and should serve as measures of the effectiveness of differentiation for teachers and administrative leaders alike.

Principle 1: Good Curriculum Comes First

There is no such thing as effective differentiation devoid of high-quality curriculum. Multiple versions of ambiguity will net only ambiguity. Multiple avenues to boredom will only lead more students to an undesirable place. Multiple routes to trivia and irrelevance will never enhance learning in the long run. The teacher's first job is always to ensure that curriculum is coherent, important, inviting, and thoughtful. Then and only then does it make sense to differentiate that curriculum.

Principle 2: All Tasks Should Be Respectful of Each Learner

Let's be frank: Dull drills *do* have an occasional place in the classroom. They are the adult equivalent of balancing a checkbook or filling out tax forms. The vast majority of the time, however, student work should be appealing, inviting, thought provoking, and invigorating. And it should be all these things for *all* students. Every student deserves work that is focused on the essential knowledge, understanding, and skills targeted for the lesson. Every student should be required to think at a high level and should receive support when doing so. Every student should find his or her work interesting and powerful. Differentiation won't work (and shouldn't work) when some students are assigned tasks that look "privileged" while others are assigned tasks that merit avoidance.

Principle 3: When in Doubt, Teach Up!

The best tasks are those that students find a little too difficult to complete comfortably. Good instruction stretches learners. Differentiation should never be used as a way to mollycoddle or "protect" learners. If a student wants to tackle something you think may be too demanding, it might be wise to let him give it a try (with the understanding that once begun, the task must be finished). The student's efforts may have something important to show you. At worst, next time, you and he will both know a

little more about what represents an appropriate challenge. Certainly when the teacher assigns tasks, it's critical to ensure that the tasks are tiered to provide meaningful challenge. Likewise, rubrics or other indicators of student success should push the individual student beyond his or her comfort zone. Be sure there's a support system in place to facilitate the student's success at a level he or she doubted was attainable.

Principle 4: Use Flexible Grouping

Before beginning a unit, a teacher needs to think about when it will be important for the class to work as a whole, when students will need to work and demonstrate competence alone, and when it makes most sense for students to work with small groups of peers. There must be time for the teacher to instruct small groups and time for conversations between the teacher and individual students.

Think about the ebb and flow of students in a classroom. Plan times for similar-readiness groups to work together—and times when mixed-readiness groups can work on tasks, with each individual making a meaningful contribution to the work of the group. Plan times for groups of students with similar interests to work together—but also plan times when students with varied interests can meld those into a common task. Likewise, plan for both similar and mixed learning profile groups. The former allows students comfort when working; the latter is one means of extending student awareness of working modes. Use randomly assigned groups too. Finally, be sure to provide both teacher-choice and student-choice groups.

There is little doubt that each of these configurations will benefit many students in the class in a variety of ways. Most certainly, using only one or two types of groups causes students to see themselves and one another in more limited ways. It also keeps the teacher from "auditioning" students in varied contexts and limits potentially rich exchanges in the classroom.

Principle 5: Become an Assessment Junkie

Everything a student says and does is a potential source of assessment data. Teachers are surrounded by assessment options. Trouble is, we often think of assessment narrowly—as something we do *after* learning ends so that we will have numbers to put in the grade book. It is far better to think of assessment as an ongoing process, conducted in flexible but distinct stages. First, there is pre-assessment, which is essential to a differentiated classroom. Whether a formal quiz, a journal entry, an exit card, or any of a dozen other means of determining student knowledge, understanding, and skill set related to an upcoming unit or lesson, it's critical for the teacher in a differentiated classroom to have a sense of student starting points. Throughout the unit, take notes in class discussions, as you check homework, and as you walk around the room to monitor student work and coach for quality. Again, use quizzes, journal prompts, exit cards, concept maps—whatever you like to use—to figure out students' level of knowledge, understanding, and skill at key points in a unit. Then differentiate instruction based on what you find out. When it's time for final assessments, plan to use more than one assessment format—for example, a product *and* a test. Think about ways you can modify even the final assessments to maximize the likelihood that each student will open the widest possible window on his or her learning.

Principle 6: Grade for Growth

A portion of a teacher's grading may necessarily reflect a student's standing related to grade-level benchmarks. A portion of grades, however, should reflect a student's *growth.* A very bright learner who gets consistent *A*s and never has to stretch or strive will become a damaged learner. A struggling student who persists and progresses will likely give up the fight if grade-level benchmarks remain out of reach and growth in that direction "doesn't seem to count." The most we can ask of any person—and the least we ought to ask—is that they be accountable for being and becoming their best. It is the job of the teacher to guide and support the learner in this endeavor.

* * *

We hope this primer on differentiation provides you with tools for reflecting on the units of differentiated instruction in Part II of this book—and on practices within your own classroom! Additional clarification on terms and strategies is available in the Glossary, beginning on page 349. To learn more about any of the topics discussed here, please consult the Resources on Differentiation and Related Topics, beginning on page 359.

PART II

Differentiated Units of Study

Readers read as they wish, of course, and there's great merit in that. We take away from a source what we are ready to take away, and we gather what we can in accordance with how we learn best. We would not deny our readers this freedom even if we could. Nonetheless, we offer a few suggestions and questions to guide your learning from the units that follow:

- See if you can find colleagues to read, analyze, and discuss the units with you.
- Read all of the units—or at least several of them—not just ones that address the grade levels or subjects you teach. Look for similarities and differences. Record what you see. What seem to be the non-negotiables in these units?
- Think about how the unit developers have included mandated standards and yet moved beyond them. What's the difference between "covering the standards" and the ways these teachers are incorporating standards?
- After you read and study a unit, go back to its list of standards and the teacher's listing of what students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the unit. Check off those standards and goals you feel the unit addresses effectively. Develop ways to intensify the focus on any goals or standards you feel have not been addressed adequately.
- Look for the links between the learning goals (the standards plus what students should know, understand, and be able to do) and the individual lessons within these units. In what ways have the teachers used the learning goals to design the specific steps in the unit?
- What benefits for students are likely to occur when a teacher organizes a unit by concepts rather than teaching a list of goals without one or more organizing concepts?
- Think about some students you teach. Try to include students with a range of learning needs, not forgetting students who could be described as "typical." Jot down ways in which these specific students might benefit from the differentiated units versus nondifferentiated versions of the same units.
- For which students in your classes would you need to make additional adaptations in order to facilitate optimal learning? How might you make

these adaptations if you were to revise one of the units? Would it be easier to make the additional modifications in these differentiated units or in nondifferentiated ones?

- How effective do you feel the various units are at
  - — Beginning with sound curriculum prior to differentiating?
  - — Making assessment a pervasive and useful element in instructional planning?
  - — Providing respectful tasks for all learners?
  - — "Teaching up"?
  - — Using flexible grouping?
- How did the teachers who developed these units seem to have decided when to use whole-class instruction and activities and when to differentiate instruction and activities?
- Where in each unit might you incorporate additional ways to differentiate content for particular students in your classes? What about additional ways to differentiate process? Products? Which instructional strategies that you currently find effective would you want to integrate into these units?
- Where in each unit might you incorporate additional ways to address student readiness? Interest? Learning profile?
- In what ways do these units call for flexible use of space, materials, time, and teacher contact?
- In what ways do these teachers seem to circumvent the constraints of short class periods?
- In what ways do these teachers exploit the benefits and avoid the pitfalls inherent in block scheduling?
- What classroom guidelines would you want to establish to ensure effective and efficient work in one or more of these units? How would you begin the process of developing a flexible but orderly learning environment? How might you enable your students to be your partners in establishing a flexible and differentiated classroom?
- Think about connections between student affect and differentiation as it's reflected in these units. In what ways is the general classroom tone likely to influence student affect? Why? In what ways is the differentiation likely to influence student affect? In what ways might differentiation enable teachers to develop connections with their students?
- What is the role of the teacher in these differentiated classrooms compared with classrooms in which whole-class instruction predominates? What opportunities do teachers have with flexible teaching that may not be so readily available in more traditional classrooms?
- Which elements of these units do you particularly like? Which do you question? Talk with colleagues about what you see as positive in the units and what is less positive for you. In each instance, be sure to explore why you feel as you do.
- Try adding your voice to a unit you have created by explaining why you have crafted the unit as you have—or why you might now think about modifying the unit in some way.
- How do you suppose the teachers who developed these units think about grading in a differentiated high school classroom?
- Apply in your classroom something you learn from the units in this book. It's wise to move at a pace and in a sequence that seems manageable to you—but it's important to grow as a teacher in ways that benefit your students.

* * *

Our great hope, of course, is that you will be "stretched" by the time you spend with these nine units. As educators, we invest our professional lives in the belief that learning is both dignifying and humanizing. We hope this will be your experience in the pages to come.