

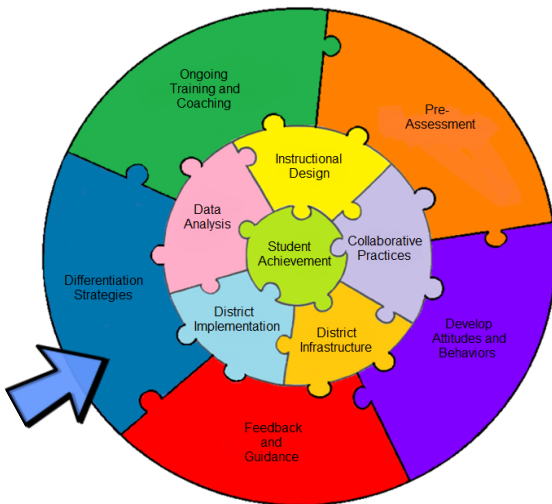
# Critical Question: How do we teach effectively to ensure students are learning? (DO)

How does the work of  
leaders support an  
effective educational  
system?

**Fundamental Practice 9.** *Effective best-fit classroom instruction includes multiple opportunities to learn through differentiation strategies.*

In order for students to have access to all the curriculum with meaningful opportunities to learn, classroom instruction must be designed to provide multiple and varied opportunities within the classroom for students to reach mastery. Recognizing that not all students come to school with the same experiences, language, vocabulary, cultural expectations, or academic background, nor do they learn in the same fashion, at the same pace or are equally motivated; teachers must be able to adapt their instruction to individual needs of students with accommodations, scaffolding strategies, and modifications to meet the needs of individual or groups of students.

Once the classroom capacity for differentiation with individuals or groups of students has been maximized, only then should school-level or district level interventions, delivered by qualified specialists, be provided to students to maximize the opportunity to learn at a mastery level.

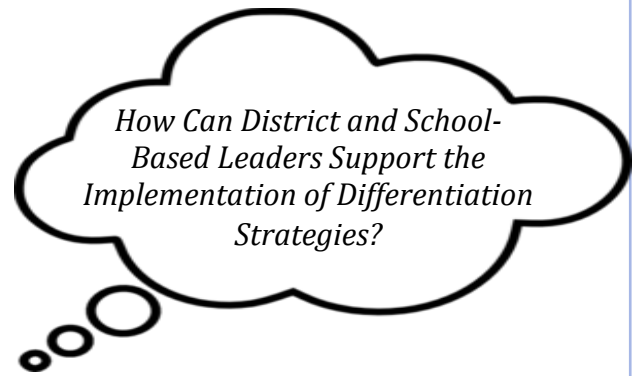
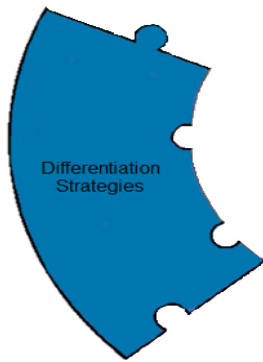


## Guiding Questions:

- How do instructional strategies accommodate diverse learners and their needs within their classroom?
- What is the evidence that teachers are providing students with multiple opportunities to learn and perform within their classroom, their grade level, or department?

## Reflections:

1. As a leader, what is my role in ensuring this fundamental practice is taking place in my district and schools?
2. What are current barriers that are getting in the way of successfully implementing this fundamental practice systemically in my district and schools?
3. When I return to my district/school, I will complete the following three action steps to begin enhancing our (my and my staff's) application of this fundamental practice:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_



In an article featured in the The School Superintendents Association's Journal, Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999) discusses how district and school- based leadership at six different school districts across the country are supporting their teachers in the pursuit of differentiation for all students. Several themes emerged when observations were made within each of these districts where differentiation was strong. A few of these themes are:

#### **Mixed Abilities**

- Promotes equity and excellence
- Focused on best- practice instruction in mixed-ability classrooms
- Administration serious about developing more responsive classrooms as a long- term change process for students with varied abilities

#### **Informed Leadership**

- District leadership that is expert or becoming expert in the practices and theory of differentiation
- Committed building- level administration – ongoing conversations- seen as on-site source of support
- Nurtures teacher models and coaches

#### **Leaders Model Differentiation**

- Reflecting on the nature and needs of schools and teachers and being responsive to the variance that exists on those levels, just as it does in classrooms
- Establishing clear goals, but remaining open to varied ways of achieving those goals
- Providing support to teachers based on their particular needs
- Crafting staff development to respond to a wide range of levels of teacher comfort with differentiation
- Basing teacher evaluation, at least in large measure, on the degree to which individual teachers set and achieve differentiation goals appropriate for their level of professional development.

#### **Training for Transfer**

- Providing substantial and ongoing staff development rather than one-shot wonders
- Ensuring multiple staff development options linked to teacher readiness, interest and learning profile
- Making available time and coaching as teachers develop differentiated curriculum and instruction
- Encouraging peer collaboration among teachers for planning, carrying out and assessing the effectiveness of differentiated instruction
- Setting expectations for classroom implementation of ideas gained through staff development
- Making certain that definitions, terms, principles and practices of differentiation are spoken of in common language in all staff development options as well as observations
- Establishing teacher-administrator understanding and collaboration for mutual growth through observations.

#### **Generalist/ Specialist Teams**

- ESE, Reading Teachers/ Coaches and ELL Teachers are paired with Regular Education teachers to work together with the students and to provide training to each other.
- Both partners work together for all students- they don't "own" one group or the other.
- Specialists work together to become differentiation specialists

<http://aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=14956>

#### **Connect to Resources**

For additional resources on this topic, visit the critical question 2, fundamental practice #9 section of the toolkit.

*Revisiting Standards and the Learning of Students: Improving the Work of ALL Adults Who Serve Them*