Module N

Differentiating—Tailoring the Learning Plan to the Learners

Purpose: To develop unit plans that are tailored to the needs of individual learners.

Desired Results:

Unit designers will understand that

- The most effective curriculum designs are tailored to the learners they are meant to serve.
- Only certain aspects of a UbD unit should be differentiated.
- Pre-assessments and formative assessments provide information to enable teachers to adjust instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

Unit designers will be able to

- Tailor (differentiate) their unit plan to respond to the learners they serve.
- Include pre-assessments and formative assessments in their unit design.

Module Design Goals: In this module, you will refine your Stage 3 learning plan by incorporating ideas for differentiation to address the nature and needs of your students.

You should work on Module N if you have not yet (1) planned for differentiation or (2) included pre-assessments and formative assessments.

You might skip Module N if you have planned for differentiation and included pre-assessments and formative assessments as part of your Stage 3 learning plan.

In Module K we considered the WHERE elements and their implications for the Stage 3 learning plan. In this module we examine the first of the two remaining

letters of WHERETO—*T* for *Tailoring* the learning to the learners—and an associated set of questions: *How will my unit design address the differing levels of readiness, learning profiles, and interests of my students? What's the best way to motivate a reluctant, timid, or detached learner to produce his or her best work?*

Considering the Learners

Until now you have probably been designing units for a somewhat generic class of students. Now the question becomes more contextualized: *How can I make my unit work with this particular group of students?* It is time to shift from thinking about what we want to accomplish as the teacher-designer to thinking about who the actual learners are—the end users of our unit design—and what they need, individually and collectively, to achieve the desired results of Stage 1 and to perform well at the tasks proposed in Stage 2.

Consider a simple analogy. The alpha version of software is designed just to get all the basic code working. The beta version involves testing with real users for usability. Like a software designer, we have to do more than ensure that all the features of the unit are going to work properly. We must ensure that the *users* of our design (our students) will be maximally engaged and productive. In other words, unit design, like good software, must be truly user-friendly, not just defensible in the abstract. That means attending to the learners and adjusting the unit design accordingly.

Making this admirable goal difficult, of course, is the likelihood that your students have fairly different needs, interests, and abilities. How, then, should your unit plan reflect that diversity? How much flexibility have you built into the draft unit, and how might you build in more—without compromising the unit goals (or driving yourself crazy with variations)? In the first part of this module we consider differentiation options in general through the lens of backward design and the UbD Template. Then we examine the use of pre-assessments and ongoing assessments in Stage 3 to inform needed differentiation of our unit plan.

Differentiation and Backward Design

Although we want our curriculum plan to be responsive to the diverse learners we serve, not everything in a UbD unit should be differentiated. As we design with both content and students in mind, the UbD Template can helpfully inform those aspects of our unit that may be differentiated and those that should not. With this point in mind, let's consider, stage by stage, the following question: what and when should we differentiate?

In Stage 1 of backward design, we identify desired results, including relevant content standards and other established goals, long-term transfer outcomes, and related big ideas that we want students to come to understand via essential

questions. If appropriately and defensibly selected, these various goals should remain a constant target for *all* students, despite differences in students' background knowledge, interests, and preferred ways of learning. (The obvious exceptions involve students with individualized education plans. The particular goals of the IEP is added to, or substituted for, the course-level or grade-level expectations.) The goals are the goals, regardless of where we start. In other words, the transfer goals, big ideas, and related essential questions provide the conceptual pillars that anchor meaningful learning, and we do not arbitrarily amend these based on whom we are teaching in a course or grade level. (Of course, the nature and needs of learners should certainly influence how we teach toward these targets.)

The more specific knowledge and skill objectives in Stage 1 are linked to the desired standards and understandings—yet some differentiation may well be needed here. Because students typically vary in their prior knowledge and skill levels, responsive teachers tailor their instruction to address significant gaps in content. Such responsiveness follows from effective pre-assessments that reveal if gaps or misconceptions exist and formative assessments that reveal a need for some reteaching. Thus there is a place for sensitivity to student needs in Stage 1 without compromising the established standards or the integrity of subject areas.

In Stage 2, the logic of backward design dictates that we collect appropriate assessment evidence derived from the goals identified in Stage 1. Although the needed evidence, in general, is determined by these desired results, the *particulars* of an assessment can be differentiated to accommodate the uniqueness of students. For example, consider a social studies standard that calls for learners to analyze the causes and effects of a major historical event. Teachers could allow the students to demonstrate this capability in various ways—for example, a graphic organizer poster showing causes and effects, a newspaper article, or a podcast of a simulated radio program. Do remember our cautionary note in Module J: although options for students' products and performances may be offered, we would need the *same* criteria for evaluation. In this example, our primary criteria would be *accuracy*, *completeness*, and *justification* of stated causes and effects.

Of course, feasibility must be considered. Teachers will need to find the practical balance point between individualized assessments and standardized, one-size-fits-all measures. Nonetheless, we believe that classroom assessments can indeed be responsive to students' differences while still providing what is needed—sound evidence and telling information about student learning against common goals.

Finally, we come to Stage 3, where we develop our learning plan to help students achieve the desired results of Stage 1 and equip them for their "performances of understanding" in Stage 2. In Stage 3, differentiated instruction flourishes as we consider variety in the background knowledge, interests, and preferred learning methods of our students. A variety of specific approaches and techniques for responsive teaching are discussed in the following sections. In the meantime, we use the UbD Template to provide a summary of how differentiation fits within the context of backward design (see Figure N.1).

Figure N.1

Backward Design and Differentiation

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Stage 1—Desired Results</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Established Goals
The content standards and other goals do not change; that is, these are what we want all students to attain. (Exception: Students with an authorized IEP pursue the goals specified in their unique plan.)</td><td colspan="2">Transfer</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Students will be able to independently use their learning to . . .
The long-term transfer goals do not change; that is, these are what we want all students to attain. (Exception: Students with an authorized IEP pursue the goals specified in their unique plan.)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Meaning</td></tr>
<tr><td>UNDERSTANDINGS
The big ideas of content do not vary. In reality, some students will be able to go into greater depth, but the desired understandings should remain a fixed target for all.</td><td>ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
Essential questions should reflect the big ideas that we want all students to come to understand. Because essential questions are open-ended, they allow various entry points, as well as different depths of response.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Acquisition</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Students will know . . . Students will be skilled at . . .
Although knowledge and skills are linked to the goals or content standards, some differentiation may be needed to address knowledge or skill gaps or to extend learning for those students who demonstrate mastery. Pre-assessments are necessary to reveal these needs.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Stage 2—Evidence</th></tr>
<tr><td>Evaluative Criteria</td><td colspan="2">Assessment Evidence</td></tr>
<tr><td>Although students may be given options to show their learning in varied ways, the criteria for evaluating their performance need to remain constant in order for the assessment to be a valid measure of Stage 1 goals.</td><td colspan="2">PERFORMANCE TASK
In Stage 2, teachers collect evidence of learning based on the goals of Stage 1. Some differentiation of the assessments may be appropriate. For example, students may be allowed to develop varied products and performances to demonstrate their understanding and proficiency.

OTHER EVIDENCE
In addition, teachers may allow certain modifications (e.g., allowing oral rather than written responses), as long as acceptable evidence of the targeted learning is obtained.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Stage 3—Learning Plan</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Pre- and ongoing assessments are critical to reveal the need for, and nature of, differentiated instruction.</td><td>Pre-assessment
Progress Monitoring</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Differentiated instruction is appropriate in Stage 3 to address student differences in background knowledge and experience, skill levels, interests, talents, and learning profiles. Designers need to consider ways in which lessons, activities, and resources might be personalized without sacrificing unit goals.</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Tailoring the Learning Plan

How will the learning plan reflect the range of abilities, styles, and interests of your students? How will the work be personalized and differentiated in order to achieve the Stage 1 goals (without compromising them)?

A hallmark of good instruction is a learning plan that reflects the typical diversity of students as opposed to one that only suits the strengths and comfort level of the teacher. In even the smallest and most select classes, students have a diversity of background experiences, interests, abilities, and preferred learning styles; in the average classroom the differences are often significant—and typically overwhelming to novice or ill-equipped teachers. Yet it is our professional obligation to design a learning plan in Stage 3 mindful of who the learners are, not who we wish them to be.

Differentiation expert Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999) offers a useful framework for tailoring instruction and assessment where appropriate. She proposes that we can differentiate input (how content is presented and accessed), process (how students work), and products (of student work and assessments). Our decisions are determined by learners' differences in their readiness (background experiences, prior knowledge, skill levels), learning profile (preferred style, culture, gender), and interests. The relationship between these elements can be shown as a grid that suggests the possibilities of the intersection of these variables.

	INPUT	PROCESS	PRODUCT
Readiness			
Learning Profile			
Interests			

An example of tailoring the learning plan via inputs is a social studies unit on colonial America in which the teacher provides different source materials on the topic at various reading levels (textbook, reference books, picture books, videos, web-based resources), and allows students some choice on how they learn the material (e.g., computer simulation, independent reading, cooperative group activity, interactive notebook), as the *X*s on the grid suggest.

	INPUT	PROCESS	PRODUCT
Readiness	X		
Learning Profile	X		
Interests			

Here's an example of tailoring the learning plan via process and products. In a unit involving research and statistics, students are asked to collect, organize, and communicate data on trends for a particular topic to a target audience. As the *X*s on the grid suggest, students could chose a topic of interest (e.g., sports statistics, fashion trends) to research and then present information in a way that suits their learning preferences and interests (e.g., visual display, quantitative chart, written summary).

	INPUT	PROCESS	PRODUCT
Readiness			
Learning Profile		X	X
Interests		X	X

Alternatively, in speech class we could hold the product constant (e.g., an oral presentation) while allowing choice on process (e.g., topic of the student's choice).

Figures N.2 and N.3 provide many possibilities for tailoring the learning plan to address the diversity of your learners.

Design Tip: Feasibility must be considered when tailoring a unit plan to meet the diverse needs and interests of learners. Because there are typically more options than can realistically be implemented, you are encouraged to choose those variations that are most manageable and likely to have the highest yield for the greatest number of learners based on the desired results stated in Stage 1.

Using the Facets for Differentiation

The six facets of understanding were originally conceived as indicators of understanding for use in assessment (Stage 2), yet they have proven to be a useful frame for developing alternative activities and approaches to learning in Stage 3. You can use the six facets to brainstorm possible learning activities (mindful, of course, of the desired results of Stage 1 and the needed assessment evidence of Stage 2). Here is an example for a middle school unit on the Civil War.

> *Explanation*—Explain the key causes and effects of important events in the Civil War. Compare to other incidents of civil strife.
>
> *Interpretation*—Interpret the war through the main character in *Red Badge of Courage* or the images chosen by Ken Burns in his video series on the war.
>
> *Application*—Debate the legacy of the war in North-South relations today. (Is it over? Has a cold war been going on ever since? Are there

still significant differences in Southern and Northern views of the relation of individuals, states, and the country?)

Perspective—Discuss the war from the perspective of the Northern side, the Southern side, a European, a Native American, a rich landowner, a poor worker.

Empathy—Imagine the experience of a Southern family whose home and farm was destroyed by Sherman's army. Write their journal entries.

Self-Knowledge—Reflect: What do you believe is worth fighting for? Can you imagine your family torn apart by political issues?

Figure N.2

Strategies for Differentiating Input

Consider the various possibilities for differentiating *input* (how you will present and how learners will access content). Check those options that will be effective and feasible for your learning plan.

READINESS

____ Provide texts at varied reading levels and in students' primary languages.
____ Provide supplementary materials at varied reading levels.
____ Provide audiotaped materials.
____ Use videos to supplement and support explanations and lectures.
____ Use texts with key portions highlighted.
____ Provide organizers to guide notetaking.
____ Provide key vocabulary lists for reference.
____ Use reading buddies or partners to work with text materials.
____ Use flexible groupings to address knowledge and skill gaps.
____ Other: _____

LEARNING PROFILE

____ Present information orally, visually, and in writing.
____ Use applications, examples, and illustrations from various intelligences.
____ Use materials, applications, examples, and illustrations from both genders and a range of cultures and communities.
____ Use materials that connect content to students' cultures.
____ Teach from both whole-to-part and part-to-whole approaches.
____ Demonstrate ideas in addition to talking about them.
____ Use wait time to allow for student reflection.
____ Other: _____

INTERESTS

____ Provide interest centers to encourage further exploration of topics.
____ Provide a wide range of materials related to student interests and cultures.
____ Use student questions to guide lectures, materials, and assignments.
____ Other: _____

One option for using the facets for differentiation is to give students choices (e.g., "Work on two of the listed activities") and then have students "jigsaw" their parts with other students who worked on different activities.

Design Task: Use the six facets worksheet in Figure N.4 to brainstorm ideas for differentiating your learning plan.

Pre-assessments and Formative Assessments

As we noted earlier, these initial ideas about differentiation are somewhat general. They reflect the idea that our class is diverse and provide suggestions for accommodating that diversity. But we need to push further and ask more concrete questions.

Figure N.3

Strategies for Differentiating Process and Product

Consider the various possibilities for differentiating *process* (how learners will make meaning of the content) and *product* (how they will show their learning). Check those options that will be effective and feasible for your learning plan.

Readiness

____ Use tiered activities (activities at different levels of difficulty, but focused on the same learning goals).
____ Provide detailed and highly structured task directions for learners who need it, while leaving the task more open for the more capable and independent students.
____ Provide resource materials at varied levels of readability and sophistication.
____ Provide teacher-led miniworkshops on needed skills at varied levels of complexity based on student needs.
____ Provide tailored homework assignments based on readiness.
____ Provide materials in the primary language of second-language learners.
____ Other: _____

Learning Profile

____ Allow multiple options for how students express their learning (varied products and performances to allow learners to work to their strengths).
____ Balance competitive, collegial, and independent work arrangements.
____ Allow students to have choices regarding their preferred working mode (e.g., visually, orally, kinesthetically, in writing).
____ Other: _____

Interests

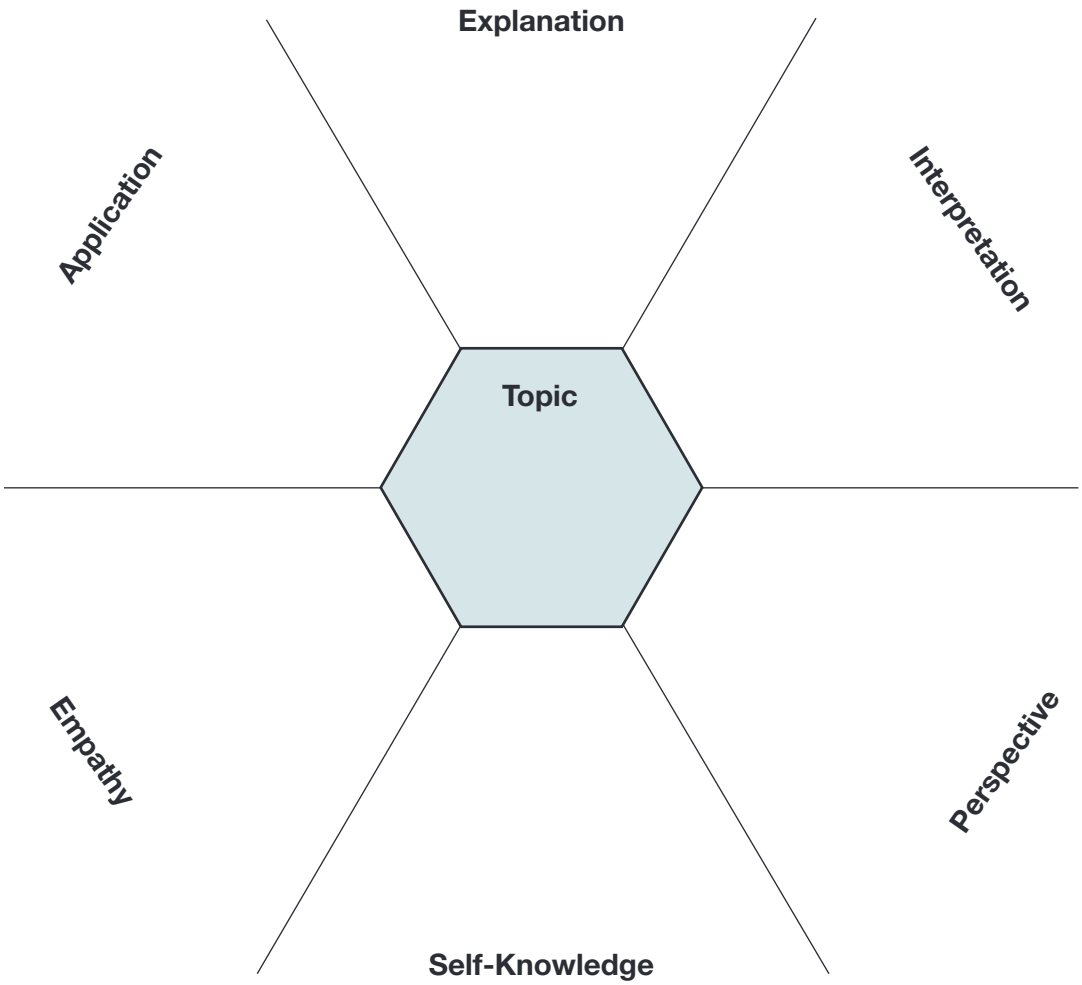
____ Establish interest-based work groups and discussion groups.
____ Use both like-interest and mixed-interest work groups.
____ Use the jigsaw cooperative strategy to allow students to specialize in aspects of a topic they find interesting.
____ Allow students to propose interest-based projects and independent studies (related to the content being learned).
____ Develop activities that seek multiple perspectives on topics and issues.
____ Other: _____

For example, *Who is in this class* this *year? What do these specific children need? Given where we want them to end up, from what point are they starting? What changes are* likely *to be required in the learning plan if the desired results are going to be met by this group of individuals?* These questions underscore the vital importance of including pre-assessments and formative assessments into unit designs, especially units to be taught early in the year or that involve completely new content. We need to pre-assess students' current ability levels, needs, and interests if we are to achieve our unit goals, and we need to get feedback throughout the unit if we are to help them attain the Stage 1 goals. In the new UbD Template, we make an explicit and deliberate effort to call designers' attention to this need by adding space for pre-assessment and ongoing formative assessment ideas to the framework of Stage 3.

Figure N.4

Differentiating Using the Six Facets

Use the six facets of understanding to brainstorm ideas for differentiating your learning plan.



Why is formative assessment in Stage 3 and not Stage 2? Stage 2 asks us to determine the needed *summative* evidence for assessing attainment of the desired results (Stage 1). Although summative assessments often receive the most attention, pre-assessments and formative assessments provide critical "along the way" feedback to guide instruction in response to the nature and needs of the diverse learners. In other words, we are arguing that getting and using feedback during the unit is an instructional move more than an assessment move. Pre-assessments and formative assessments have little to do with formal evaluation or grades of achievement related to Stage 1. Rather, they are part of the learning process—for both teacher and students. Waiting until the end of a unit to find out how well students are learning and how they might learn better is too late. In short, in Stage 3 we consider assessments *for* learning, whereas in Stage 2 we consider assessments *of* learning.

Misconception Alert

A caution about the meaning of "formative assessment" is in order, based on common misuse of this term. An assessment is only formative if it is an interim look at how much progress has been made against a future long-term goal, and if we can therefore use the feedback to adjust in time. (It is "formative" because we can be helped by the feedback going forward; "summative" assessment is over and done with.) Thus asking students to write various papers each month is a formative assessment against the long-term goal of masterful writing. However, a typical midterm test or quiz is rarely a formative assessment because it looks only backward—did you learn what was taught in the previous weeks?—and is thus really summative. This is also clear when we consider the aim of a pre-assessment in which we will use the same test later in the course, perhaps multiple times, to see if adequate progress is being made toward a long-term goal. All genuine formative assessment is about seeing where we are en route so that we know where we stand now against a later goal, and so that we can make adjustments, if needed, in time.

Plan to Adjust

As the discussion thus far suggests, the unit plan is not finished, paradoxically, until there is a *plan to adjust*. A unit will rarely succeed if we only implement it the way we wrote it before finding out who the students are and—especially—how they react to initial instruction and assessment. Learning is most successful when performers get lots of feedback against goals and have opportunities to use that feedback in time. This is as true for teachers as it is for students. Think of the football coach who changes the game plan, based on the unfolding of the game. He typically consults a large laminated card of all possible plays and calls new ones in light of developing game conditions and results. Although teachers always have an urge to stick to the schedule they wrote, it makes little sense to do so if the goal

is achievement as opposed to coverage and rigid and arbitrary pacing of content delivery.

Now let's examine each of these types of Stage 3 assessments—pre-assessments and formative assessments—in more detail.

Pre-assessments

Pre-assessments typically precede instruction and are used to check students' prior knowledge and skill levels, and to identify misconceptions, interests, or learning style preferences. Such pre-assessments provide information to assist teacher planning and reveal any differentiated instruction or assessment that may be needed. Examples of such assessments include skill checks, knowledge surveys, interest or learning preference checks, checks for misconceptions, and many other tools. Note: The results of pre-assessments should not count in a student's final grade (even if the work is sometimes marked to note where students stand at the outset).

Here is a set of low-prep, high-yield pre-assessment techniques that provide efficient diagnostic checks of student prior knowledge and misconceptions:

- *K-W-L*—Before introducing a new topic or skill, ask students what they already *k*now (or think they know) about the topic or skill. Record their responses on a board or piece of chart paper in the *K* column. (Sometimes students make statements that are incorrect or reveal misconceptions.) Next, ask them what they *w*ant to know (or *w*hat questions they have) about the topic or skill. Record these responses in the *W* column. (Their questions often reveal interests or "hooks" to the topic. In some cases, their questions reveal misconceptions that will need to be addressed.) As the lesson or unit proceeds, summarize *l*earnings and record them in the *L* column as they occur. (This point provides an opportunity to go back and correct any misconceptions that may have been initially recorded in the *K* column.)
- *Pretest (Nongraded)*—Give students a pretest to check their prior knowledge of key facts and concepts. Use the results to plan instruction and selection of resources. Make sure that students know that the results will not count toward final grades.
- *Skills Check (Nongraded)*—Have students demonstrate their proficiency with a targeted skill or process. It is helpful to have a proficiency checklist or developmental rubric to use in assessing the degree of skill competence. Students can then use the checklist or rubric for ongoing self-assessment.
- *Web/Concept Map*—Ask students to create a web or concept map to show the elements or components of a topic or process. This technique is especially effective in revealing whether students have gaps in their knowledge and the extent to which they understand relationships among the elements.

- *Misconception Check*—Present students with common errors or predictable misconceptions regarding a designated topic, concept, skill, or process. See if they are able to identify the error or misconception and explain why it is erroneous or flawed. The misconception check can also be presented in the form of a true-false quiz in which students must agree or disagree with statements or examples; or a multiple-choice ungraded quiz in which the distractors reflect misconceptions. The Force Concept Inventory in physics is such an assessment, widely used in schools and colleges, administered pre-instruction and post-instruction, to see if common misconceptions are overcome.

Design Task: Use the worksheet in Figure N.5 to identify pre-assessments and possible ways to differentiate your learning plan.

Figure N.5

Using Information from Pre-assessment

Identify one or more pre-assessment techniques to check the readiness levels of students for the identified knowledge and skills in Stage 1. Use the Knowledge and Skills columns to plan possible approaches for meeting the needs of struggling and advanced learners.

<table>
<tr><th>Pre-assessments to Check for Readiness</th><th>Knowledge</th><th>Skills</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">☐ K-W-L for _____
_____
☐ Pretest on _____
_____
☐ Skills check for _____
_____
☐ Web/concept map on _____
_____
☐ Misconception check for _____
_____</td><td colspan="2">Ideas for building needed background knowledge or addressing skill gaps for struggling learners</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Ideas for extending knowledge/skill learning for advanced learners</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Formative Assessments

Formative assessments occur concurrently with instruction. These ongoing assessments provide information to guide teaching and learning for improving achievement. Formative assessments include both formal and informal methods, such as ungraded quizzes, oral questioning, observations, draft work, prompted think-alouds, student-constructed concept maps, dress rehearsals, peer response groups, and portfolio reviews.

Any successful athletic coach or sponsor of an extracurricular activity (e.g., yearbook, orchestra, debate, or theater) recognizes the value of ongoing assessment and continuous adjustment in achieving maximum performance—and so do the best teachers. Accordingly, we have to "design in" formative assessments and opportunities to act on the feedback if achievement is to be optimized.

Whole-Class Formative Assessments

The following ongoing assessment techniques can be used to obtain a quick check of a whole class or group of students.

- *Hand Signals*—Ask students to display a designated hand signal to indicate their understanding of a designated concept, principle, or process.

  Thumbs up = I understand _____ and can explain it.
  Thumbs down = I do not yet understand _____.
  Wave hand = I'm not completely sure about _____.

- *Responses Using Paddles or Whiteboards*—Have students record a response on a paddle or small whiteboard and hold it up.

  Prediction—*What number should appear next in the sequence?*
  Agree (A) or Disagree (D)—*Does this example belong in this pattern?*

- *Learner Response System*—Use LRSs, or clickers, to have students record a response to a question or a prompt. The results can be tabulated on the teacher's computer to provide immediate feedback on individuals and groups within a class.

- *Misconception Check*—Present students with common or predictable misconceptions about a designated concept, principle, or process. Ask them to agree or disagree. Students can respond using hand signals, whiteboards, LRSs, or on paper.

- *Anonymous Exit Card ("Ticket to Leave")*—Periodically distribute index cards and ask students to complete the cards at the conclusion of a class period, end of the week, or other regular interval. Here are some examples of questions to ask:

  What are the most important things you learned about _____?
  What do you understand about _____?
  What don't you understand yet? What questions do you have?

  Upon collecting the cards, scan them, looking for patterns (e.g., areas where many students have questions).

- *Observations*—Carefully observe students as they work or respond to questions. Observe the work they produce. What areas of strength and weakness do you notice?

Individual Formative Assessments

The following ongoing assessment techniques provide a quick check of the knowledge, skill levels, and degree of understanding of individual students. Of course, oral questioning and observation can be used to provide ongoing assessment of individuals as well.

- *Exit Card ("Ticket to Leave")*—Periodically distribute index cards and ask students to complete the cards at the conclusion of a class period, end of the week, or other regular interval. Students must include their names.

  Example 1: I.Q. Card
  Side 1—Based on our study of (unit topic), list a big idea that you understand in the form of a summary statement.
  Side 2—Identify something about (unit topic) that you do not yet fully understand (as a statement or a question).

  Example 2: 3-2-1 Summary
  List 3 things that you learned about _____ (topic or skill).
  List 2 examples or applications of _____ (topic or skill).
  List 1 question that you have about _____ (topic or skill).

  Example 3: What's Working?
  Side 1—List the things that are helping you learn.
  Side 2—Identify things that have been difficult or are not working for you.

- *Weekly Letter*—Have students write a letter to the teacher and parents summarizing what they have learned during the past week. Students are asked to reflect on their progress during the week and set a learning goal for the upcoming week.
- *Web/Concept Map*—Ask students to create a web or concept map to show the elements or components of a topic or process. This technique reveals if students understand relationships among elements.
- *One-Minute Essay*—Periodically have students complete a brief essay summarizing what they think they understand about a given topic.
- *Question Box/Board*—Establish a location, such as a question box, bulletin board, or e-mail address, where students may post questions about things that they do not understand. (This technique may be preferred by those students who are uncomfortable admitting publicly that they do not understand.)

Design Tip: Readers of this *Guide* may be using learner response systems (clickers) for formative assessment. These are particularly well suited to ongoing feedback that is informative to you without being embarrassing to students because only you need know who gave which

answer to a problem. Small whiteboards, answer paddles, or index cards serve as low-tech equivalents of the clickers.

Design Tip: Try to build in at least one day in your unit plan when nothing is planned. Because adjustments are inevitable (based on results of formative assessments), you have to "design in" time to adjust. In other words, the best designs are not overpacked and set in stone but are modifiable and adjusted as needed to cause the desired results. You have to plan to adjust. At the very least, that means not overplanning and then convincing yourself that there is no time to adjust.

Design Tip: Don't consider a unit design to be finished until it has been edited based on pre-assessment results. Set aside time in planning periods to discuss results from diagnostic-type assessments at the beginning of each year, semester, or course; and finish unit design accordingly.

Design Task: Review the suggestions for differentiating instruction and assessment presented in Figures N.2 and N.3, as well as the online assessments listed in the next section. Given your unit goals and your knowledge of your students, mark an *X* next to each suggestion or idea that you believe would support their learning *and* be feasible for you to implement. Then insert the selected ideas into your learning plan.

Further approaches can be found online in Figure N.6, General Ideas for Differentiating Instruction and Assessment; Figure N.7, Ideas for Differentiating Instruction and Assessment for Reading; Figure N.8, Ideas for Differentiating Instruction and Assessment for Writing; Figure N.9, Ideas for Differentiating Instruction and Assessment for Math and Science; and Figure N.10, Ideas for Challenging High Achievers.

Self-Assessment—Review Criteria for Module N

Review your current Stage 3 learning plan against the following self-assessment questions. Revise the learning plan as needed.

- Does the learning plan make clear to students where they're going (the learning goals), why (reason for learning the content), and what is required of them (performance requirements and evaluative criteria)?
- Does the learning plan include one or more hooks to engage learners around the unit's important ideas?
- Does the learning plan provide adequate opportunities for students to explore big ideas and essential questions, and to receive instruction to equip them for the required performance?
- Does the learning plan provide sufficient opportunities for learners to rethink, rehearse, revise, or refine their work based upon timely feedback?
- Does the learning plan include opportunities for students to self-evaluate their work, reflect on their learning, and set future goals?

- Is the learning plan tailored in response to differences in learners' readiness levels, learning profiles, and interests?
- Is the learning plan organized and sequenced for maximum engagement and effectiveness?

Further Information on the Ideas and Issues in This Module

Understanding by Design, 2nd ed. (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Chapter 9, pages 218–222. An overview of the "macro" (course planning) and the "micro" (lesson planning) aspects of design, in light of a focus on unit planning.

Understanding by Design: Professional Development Workbook. (McTighe & Wiggins, 2004). Pages 212–227. Worksheets on how to construct, sequence, and self-assess the flow of the unit plan.

Schooling by Design: Mission, Action, and Achievement (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007). Chapter 5, "What's My Job When I Am with Students?" A discussion of how to think about one's obligation as a planner of work and a reviewer of results.

Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids. (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Offers greater detail on how to integrate understanding by design and differentiation.

Guide for Instructional Leaders, Guide 2: An ASCD Action Tool (Wiggins, Brown, & O'Connor, 2003). Pages 1–22. A constructed dialogue about how to think through the design of curriculum, mindful of learning goals.

References

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