



*"It is the supreme ART of the teacher to AWAKEN JOY in creative expression and knowledge." – Albert Einstein*

## CAN IT BE THAT SIMPLE?

Creating professional development presentations for the schools, has forced me into a world in which I have the opportunity to study DI from multiple vantage points and perspectives. I can look at it as a former teacher, an administrator, a student, a parent, and as an evaluator. I can see it as it lines up with instruction and teacher standards. It flows into assessment results, school ratings, community perception, and on and on. How can one thing affect so many different pieces? How can DI be the answer? Why does it work? Is it worth the time? Who is it for?

It is really very simple; DI is all about the students. It is, simply put, just your response to what your students need to learn. It does not need to be creative and fancy. It doesn't require big projects or presentations. It is not just for gifted learners. DI does not have to be complicated. We over complicate this BIG idea because it affects so many facets we think it needs to be complex, but it comes down to your passion to connect your content to your student's learning needs. DI is just good instruction for all learners.

The tools we can use to accomplish this feat, often referred to as strategies, do not represent differentiation alone. They are just that, tools, we can use to make student learning manageable and meaningful. Alone, they do not make instruction differentiated. So how do we use these tools to create meaningful and purposeful differentiated instruction in the classroom? The answer is with assessment.

## KNOWING YOUR STUDENTS

In the last newsletter, I outlined the backbone of DI, environment. The next, and possibly most important, step is getting to know your students with assessment.

### 3 Types of Assessments:

#### • Pre-Assessments

- Used to collect evidence on student readiness, interest and learning profile
- Used to plan instruction



#### • Ongoing/Formative Assessments

- Used to generate evidence:
  - To monitor student and class progress for the purpose of documenting what students know, understand and can do
  - For teacher self-reflection to improve teaching competence for the purpose of instructional effectiveness
  - For student self-reflection to emphasize metacognition for the purpose of developing skills to monitor what they are learning

#### • Summative Assessments

- Provides evidence of:
  - Teacher instructional effectiveness
  - Student mastery of KUDs (knowledge, understanding and do)
  - Gaps in student knowledge base suggesting areas for additional targeted instruction.

#### Resources:

Heacox, D. (2002). *Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Tomlinson, C., & Moon, T. (2013). *Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

## PRODUCTS AS ASSESSMENTS

Teachers often have the mindset that students need to take a “traditional” assessment in order to show mastery. If properly planned, a product can produce the same results and be more meaningful and relevant for students. It could save you time and grading if you are open to the idea of using products for assessments instead of requiring students to do both. Products may not be the best choice for all learners so having the option of “traditional” tests will allow for differentiation among your assessment choices. Below are the steps to creating powerful product assessments:

1. **Identify the essentials of the unit.**
  - a. What students must know, understand and be able to do.
2. **Identify one or more formats for the product.**
  - a. Required (e.g., poetry, experiments, graphing, etc.)
  - b. Hook
  - c. Exploratory
  - d. Talent/passion driven
3. **Determine expectations for quality in content, process and product.**
  - a. Content (information, ideas, concepts, materials)
  - b. Process (planning, goal-setting, defense of view-point, research, editing)
  - c. Product (size, construction, durability, expert-level expectations, parts)
4. **Decide on scaffolding needed to promote success.**
  - a. Brainstorming for ideas, rubrics for success, timelines, planning/goals setting, storyboarding, critiquing, revising/editing



5. **Develop a product assignment that clearly says to the student:**

- \*You should show you understand and can do these things
- \*Proceeding through these steps/stages
- \*In this format
- \*At this level of quality

6. **Differentiate or modify versions of the assignment based on:**

- a. Student readiness
- b. Student interest
- c. Student learning profile

7. **Coach for success**

If your product clearly aligns with your learning target and goals for essential knowledge, it can measure student mastery. For a list of “Assessments A to Z” and “Product Possibilities” resources, see the resources section in this newsletter.

Resources:

Heacox, D. (2002). *Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.



## READY TO USE MATERIALS/RESOURCES

- [Product Possibilities](#) from “How to Differentiate in Mixed Ability Classrooms” by C. Tomlinson
- [Assessments A to Z](#) by Kathy Glass
- ["Dipsticks: Efficient Ways to Check for Understanding"](#) by Todd Finley
- [Students Matter: 3 Steps for Effective Differentiated Instruction](#) by John McCarthy
- [5 Fantastic, Fast Formative Assessment Tools](#) by Vicki Davis
  - Online formative assessment tools listed towards the bottom of article.

Knowing your students – resources you can use

- <https://jobseeker.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/> - Ohio Means Jobs – Students learn more about themselves and what they are interested in. Connects to careers

- <http://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=475167> – Know Your Students: Live binder full of information to build positive relationships
- <http://literacynet.org/mi/assessment/findyourstrengths.html> - Online multiple intelligence inventory (there are tons of these online)
- <http://surfaquarium.com/MI/inventory.htm> - printable multiple intelligence survey (there are tons of these online)

## DI: CONNECTING THE REAL WORLD TO YOUR CLASSROOM LESSONS WITH THE SUPERBOWL

Looking for a way to spark some excitement and interest to motivate your students? Why not use the Super Bowl and bring some of the real world into your classroom to enrich and challenge your students. Check out these activities. There's a range of lessons from media studies, to math, science and the arts.

[Ideas for Teaching the Super Bowl Across the Curriculum:](#) The Learning Network provides fun and interesting ways to bring the excitement of the Super Bowl into the classroom in this resource. There are ideas for all the different subject areas, including history, language arts, and science. Topics like Super Bowl history and football economics are covered, and links to useful *New York Times* content are included.

[Videos: The Science of NFL Football:](#) These insightful and engaging video lessons feature several lessons for students, covering topics like geometry, nutrition, and Newton's laws of motion. On the newly launched Gooru Learning website, there's also a great [list of accompanying lesson plans](#).

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[Super Bowl Mania -- Creating Cross-Curricular Lessons That Score Big:](#)

Although this Scholastic article was produced for the Super Bowl in 2012, the ideas can be easily updated. Here, author Addie Albano provides ideas for math, language arts, science, and geography lessons framed around the Super Bowl.

[Learning About Music With Touchdown Songs:](#) This lesson plan, featured on ARTSEdge from The Kennedy Center, provides a fun way to learn about music through the prism of football. The lesson is designed for students 12-18 years old and covers marching band fight songs, half-time sounds, and music from NFL Films.

[Learn About "the Best" Super Bowl Ad:](#) During the Super Bowl in 1984, Apple launched the Macintosh personal computer with its famous "1984" commercial. Using the ad as a starting point, this lesson from ReadWriteThink provides classroom activities, related resources, and other sources to start a larger discussion about advertising. Another football-related resource from ReadWriteThink to check out is "[Swish! Pow! Whack! Teaching Onomatopoeia Through Sports Poetry.](#)"

[The Best Sites Where ELLs Can Learn About the Super Bowl From Larry Ferlazzo:](#) Blogger and educator Larry Ferlazzo has been updating this list for the last few years, and there are plenty of valuable links throughout. Included in the list are links to podcasts, articles about Super Bowl history, and Super Bowl ads. There's something for every classroom.

[Top 12 Super Bowl Related Activities for the Classroom:](#) This TeachHUB resource from a few years back provides 12 great ideas for incorporating the Super Bowl into classroom lessons. There's a wide range of ideas, from nutrition lessons to commercial analysis and writing projects. Also, "[Super Bowl Blitz: Football-Related Activities](#)," from Education World, offers even more fun ideas to share with students.

Resources:

"7 Super Bowl Lesson Plans and Resources for the Classroom" by Matt Davis. [www.eduplans.com](http://www.eduplans.com), 2015.

[http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/28/teach-the-super-bowl-ideas-for-across-the-curriculum/?partner=rss&emc=rss&\\_r=0](http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/28/teach-the-super-bowl-ideas-for-across-the-curriculum/?partner=rss&emc=rss&_r=0)

[http://www.nsf.gov/news/special\\_reports/football/index.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/football/index.jsp)

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/classroom-solutions/2012/01/super-bowl-mania-creating-cross-curricular-lessons-score-big>

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/multimedia/series/AudioStories/touchdown-songs.aspx>

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/calendar-activities/1984-macintosh-commercial-aired-20711.html>

<http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/2009/01/29/the-best-sites-where-ells-can-learn-about-the-super-bowl/>

<http://www.teachhub.com/super-bowl-activities-classroom>

