



*“Educators should be champions of every student who enters the schoolhouse doors.” - Unknown*

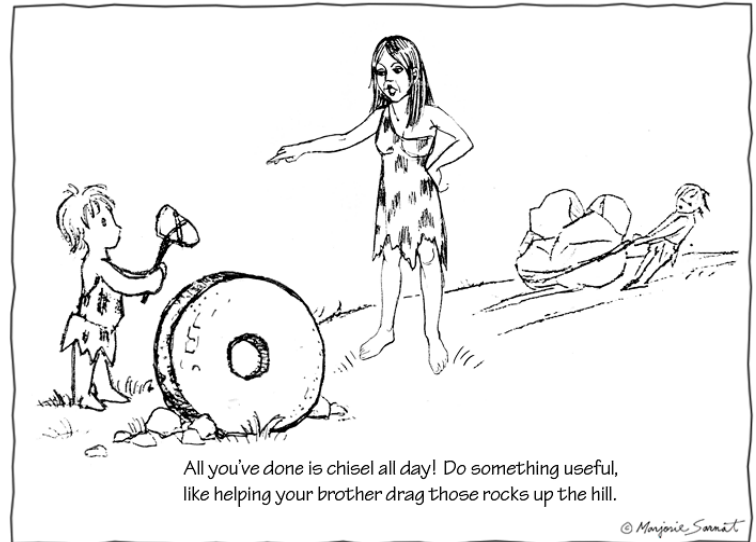
## BUILDING THE BACKBONE OF DI

So you get it. You know what to do and how to do it, right? You know that without it, your students cannot achieve to their potential. So what is holding you back? What continues to create obstacles (besides time) for you in the implementation of differentiated instruction in your classroom? It could be that you haven't built the backbone of the DI yet. *Classroom environment* is the most important element in setting up DI. It will make or break your success.

Proper set up of your environment includes both the physical set up of your classroom to the affective (emotional) elements that create the culture of your room. Without attention to this area, you will find consistent struggles and frustration when you attempt DI strategies. It takes very little prep to build a supportive environment, just a shift in mind set. Lets take a look at the mindsets necessary to make DI successful in your classroom.

Differentiation is built upon the foundation of *student readiness* (what they know), *learning styles* (how they prefer to learn), and *interests* (what they like to do). Every aspect of DI is built on the latter. *Environment* is one way to differentiate based on student needs. There are several considerations to building an effective learning community.

- **Everyone feels welcome and makes everyone else feel welcomed.**
  - The classroom should be a place where you *feel like you belong* with student work displayed, comfortable and flexible seating options, positive attention, and appreciated.
- **Promote the acceptance of differences.**
  - Recognize that everyone shares a need for some common feelings like acceptance, respect, security, etc.
  - *Everyone is appreciated* for who they are, what they know and what they can contribute without a feeling of being judged. ALL students have learning strengths.



- **There is a persistent expectation of growth.**
  - Acknowledge that students learn at different rates and in different ways. Students learn to self-assess. Their growth is not more or less valuable than another's.
- **The teacher teaches for success.**
  - It's the teacher's goal to find student readiness and provide learning experiences that will *push the learner*.
- **A new sort of fairness is evident.**
  - Fair should mean that each student gets what they need in order to grow and succeed, which may look very different for each student.
- **Teacher and students collaborate for mutual growth and success.**

(continued)

(continued)

- While the teacher may be the leader of the group, student will help to develop routines, make major contributions to solving problems, helping one another, keeping track of their work, etc.
- **Continually coach students to be contributing members of a group.**
  - Have clear and concise group goals and expectations
- **Plan with flexible grouping in mind.**
  - Groups can be planned by readiness, learning styles and/or interests as well as randomly.
  - Cooperative grouping principles should be enforced.

Teachers set the tone for the classroom environment. It is a wonderful opportunity to guide students learning. While we cannot always do everything in setting up a classroom environment, we can get better at “modeling what we want to students to learn-joy in work, pleasure in one another, patience, kindness, and a big heart”.

Resources:

[How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed Ability Classrooms](#) by Carol Ann Tomlinson, 2001.

ODE Javits Project: I-GET-GTEd Teacher Module

**“80% of differentiation is mindset; the rest is craft” – Rick Wormeli**



## COOPERATIVE GROUPS

Cooperative *groups* are a type of flexible grouping, which is a *DI strategy* that allows students to be a part of many different groups in a way that all individuals are accountable for understanding the material. This could include allowing a student to work alone. Students are grouped by readiness, interests or learning styles and can be grouped homogeneously or heterogeneously. Students can be purposely assigned to groups, student selected, or assigned randomly.

### **There are six Key Concepts for Effective Cooperative Learning:**

1. Teams - should have a strong, positive team identity, ideally consist of four members, and endure over time.
2. Cooperative Management - room arrangement should provide for equal and easy access to each teammate. Students should be able to easily and comfortably orient toward the teacher, and the noise level needs managed. Class rules need to be established and enforced.
3. Will to Cooperate- teambuilding and class-building tasks provide unique learning experiences along with cooperative task structures that no one individual complete learning task alone. Task and reward structures allow a teacher to design cooperative learning activities in which there is a high motivation to cooperate among all students.
4. Skill to Cooperate- students need to learn to: listen to each other, resolve conflicts, set and revise agendas, keep on task, and encourage each other

(continued)



## READY TO USE MATERIALS/RESOURCES

- Rationale and Guidelines for [Flexible Grouping](#)
- [“Five Steps to Implementing a Successful 1:1 Environment”](#) by Andrew Marcinek
- Another low prep strategy to differentiate in the 5-12 classroom is using *Anchor Activities*. Example activities and guidelines from core areas are included. Excerpt from [Strategies for Differentiating in the Content Areas](#) by Beverly & Troy Strayer
- Goal setting and responsibility are traits that successful people may exhibit. Try these K-5 activities from [Learning to be a Durable Person](#) by Mary Hennenfent.
  - [Activity 6 – Ready Set Goal](#)
  - [Activity 10 – Responsibility and Respect](#)
- [Six Key Concepts](#) poster by Spencer Kagan on Cooperative Learning Groups
- Do you have parents of gifted students needing help and support? Refer them to join the [SENG Model Parent Discussion Group](#)

(continued)

### 5. Basic Principles- 3 basic principles:

1. Simultaneous Interaction, which each person participates in turn, one after the other in sequence
2. Positive Interdependence, which occurs when gains of individuals or teams are positively correlated. The success of each member depends on the success of every member, and
3. Individual Accountability, which is making sure each member is accountable for his/her part, section, role, grade, etc.

6. Structures- a content-free way of organizing the interaction of individuals in a classroom- ex. pairs check, numbered heads together, and inside-outside circle

Resources:

[Cooperative Learning](#) by Spencer Kagan, Ph.D., 1992

## DI CONCEPT MAP

The DI Concept Map on the next page outlines the DI process completely. For me, I prefer to read it from the bottom up because it all starts by knowing your students and the rest falls into place from there.

It is broken up by the principles of DI, which need to be set into place before you can begin. From there you go into *WHAT* you can differentiate (content, process, product and environment). Next, you come to the *HOW* you differentiate. Finally you determine what strategy to use.

The HOWs of DI, which is student readiness, interests and learning profile, directly relate to the WHATs (content, process, product and environment). Both must be considered when planning. Click [here](#) for suggestions on differentiating by environment.

Resources:

[Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom](#) by Carol Ann Tomlinson, 2013

**Figure 2.1** Differentiation of Instruction

