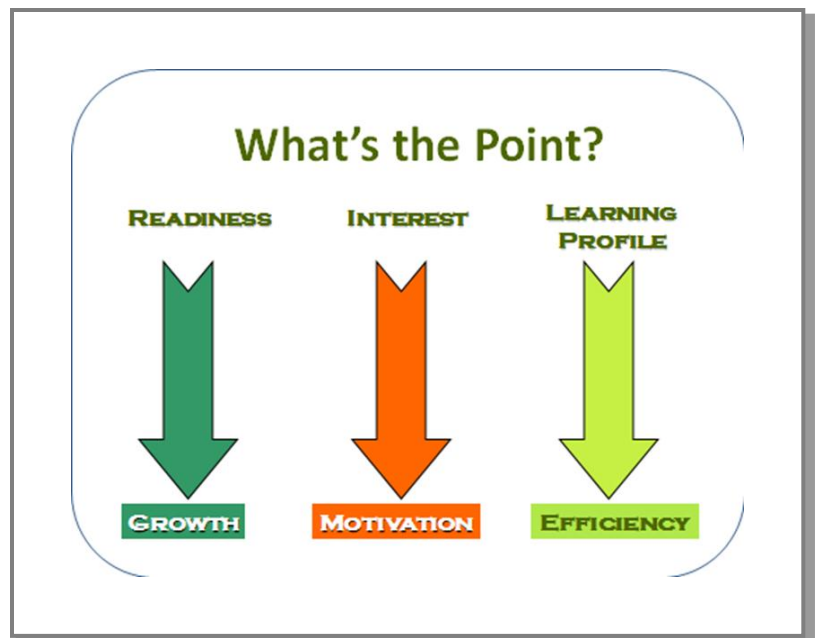


Interest-Based Differentiation

Why should teachers care what students are interested in? After all, it doesn't much matter whether students find designated standards interesting or not; they still have to meet them! In the differentiated classroom, teachers do not ignore the reality that standards form a good chunk of what we teach, and that not all students will be interested in all aspects of the curriculum, especially at first. Nevertheless, these teachers constantly look for ways in which they can connect the required material to student interests, perspectives, and experiences.

The reason for this is simple and powerful. Student who are interested in what they are learning are more motivated to learn.

Imagine you are outside the classroom of a colleague and you hear her giving instruction to the students. As you pass by, you realize that what she is saying is a good example of differentiation for interest. Study the following examples in column A, along with the explanations of how each statement is indicative of the teacher responding to student interest (column B). Column C illustrates a possible KUD for this lesson or activity.



A: What you hear the teacher say	B: What makes this an example of differentiation for interest	C: The KUD of this activity
<p>“Some of you raise horses, so I was thinking that you might be interested in learning how the life cycle of a horse compares to the life cycle of humans.</p> <p>Others of you might be more interested in comparing the life cycle of a different animal or a pet you have at home.</p> <p>Each table has information about a different animal. Pick the animal that interests you the most, and report to that table. Use the resource materials that are provided for you along with the graphic organizer to help you compare the animal’s life cycle to that of humans.”</p>	<p>This is an example of content differentiation for student interest.</p> <p>Rather than making everyone compare the life cycle of a horse (a known interest of many of these students) to the life cycle of the human, this teacher provides a choice of animals. Because students get to choose the animal that interests them the most, this is an example of differentiation for interest.</p>	<p>The teacher wants all students to</p> <p>Know the life cycle of a human.</p> <p>Understand that all living things have a predictable life cycle.</p> <p>Be able to compare and contrast the life cycle of a specific animal to a human life cycle.</p> <p>Note that no matter which animal students choose, the KUD remains the same for all students.</p>
<p>“Tomorrow, you will each pretend to be one of the authors that we have read so far this year. You will meet with other ‘authors’ for a group discussion on how your own life and experiences have influenced your writer’s voice.</p> <p>Before you leave today, please fill out an exit card listing the three authors you find most interesting.”</p>	<p>This is an example of content differentiation for student interest.</p> <p>In this example, students have a say in determining the role they will play during a class discussion. The teacher will attempt to give each student one of their three choices as she works to form groups that are made up of a variety of writers.</p>	<p>The KUD for this lesson, no matter which writer the student plays, is probably similar to the following:</p> <p>Know characteristics of writer’s voice.</p> <p>Understand that a voice is influenced by the writers’ own characteristics and experiences, their purpose for writing, and the audience they are addressing.</p> <p>Be able to identify ways in which authors’ life experience influence their voices.</p>

A: What you hear the teacher say	B: What makes this an example of differentiation for interest	C: The KUD of this activity
<p>"I want you to research the geography and leisure activities popular in a Spanish-speaking country that you have visited or would most like to visit someday.</p> <p>Later, we'll share what we learned in mixed-interest groups."</p>	<p>This is an example of content differentiation for student interest using the jigsaw strategy. (If the teacher provides multiple options for research, this might also be an example of differentiating the process, as well.) Each student becomes an expert in one aspect of a topic and then meets with students who have studied other aspects to share their learning. Again, because the student has a say in the country they study, this is an example of differentiation for interest.</p>	<p>For all students, the KUD will involve</p> <p>Knowing specific facts about the country they chose.</p> <p>Understanding that the geography of a region affects the activities of the people who live there.</p> <p>Being able to explain how geography influences culture.</p>
<p>"We've been working for several weeks on various ways to solve word problems in math. Please choose one of the following to show me what you have learned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation for a new math text • A written or recorded think-aloud of how to solve word problems • An annotated flow chart or another graphical representation that shows the steps • An original mnemonic that others could use to help them solve word problems. <p>If you have another idea, check with me before you begin."</p>	<p>This is an example of product differentiation for student interest.</p>	<p>All students must</p> <p>Know parts of a word problem and specific strategies for solving word problems.</p> <p>Understand that there are clues in a word problem that help the reader know what to do to solve it and that there is often more than one way to solve a problem.</p> <p>Be able to explain the process for solving word problems.</p>

A: What you hear the teacher say	B: What makes this an example of differentiation for interest	C: The KUD of this activity
<p>"What are some things <i>you</i> hope we do in this unit on careers in the arts?"</p>	<p>Teachers in a differentiated classroom seek out information about student interest in both formal and informal ways and then use the information collected to design activities that will be motivating to the students.</p> <p>This teacher will attempt to use student suggestions (within reason) to design classroom topics (content), classroom activities (process), and/or culminating assignments (product) that students will find interesting <i>and</i> that will meet KUD goals.</p> <p>For example, in an art class, students will likely be interested in a variety of career areas (content). Some students may want to learn about careers in art by researching online, others by reading books and print materials, others by interviewing or emailing local artists (process). Students might also show the results of their research through a variety of media (product).</p>	<p>How the students go about learning the information will vary, but they must all</p> <p>Know what careers exist in the arts.</p> <p>Understand that there are a variety of careers related to the arts.</p> <p>Be able to describe careers available in the arts.</p>

The term low-prep strategies does not refer to low in value but rather less in terms of the time and energy a teacher might need to create the learning experiences to meet different learner needs. Conversely, high-prep strategies are those that often require

more time to plan and generally involve more complex thought on the part of the teacher and student. A more involved strategy that responds not only to student interest, but also learning profile and readiness, is the RAFT strategy. You'll learn more about it in the video that follows this reading.

When Should I Differentiate for Student Interest?

Differentiate for interest when it makes sense to do so. Not all aspects of the curriculum are suited to differentiation for interest. However, the more a teacher knows about specific student interests, the better he or she can plan differentiation to capitalize on these interests.

To prepare for differentiation for student interest

- Collect formal or informal data about student interests, passions, hobbies, and activities.
- Use the data when designing differentiation options.
- Once you have designed the options, double-check that students reach the same KUDs no matter which task they choose or are assigned.

When differentiating for interest, teachers often vary one or more of the following:

- *Topics or aspects of topics related to unit content.*
- *Activities that students use to process or make sense of unit information.*
- *Products or the ways students show what they have learned in the unit.*