

# Checklist to “Look For” in Effective Classrooms

Differentiated instruction is a teaching philosophy based on the premise that teachers should adapt instruction to student differences and proactively plan a variety of ways to “get at” and express learning.

In classrooms that are designed following these principles you can easily observe many of the characteristics on these checklists which lead to opportunities for all students to be included in meaningful ways in the general education classroom.

These checklists are part of the training *Increasing Inclusive Opportunities for Students with Disabilities*.

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Additional training on this topic is also available through SPDG’s “On Demand” webinar series, *Increasing Access to Core Instruction and Inclusive Opportunities for Students with Disabilities*. This four-part webinar series is a great tool for parents and teachers. The free webinars can be viewed anytime on your computer, smartphone or tablet at this link <http://www.tnstep.org/news/#625>

- Increasing Access to Core Instruction: Continuum of Services and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
  - The Differentiated Classroom Increases Inclusive Opportunities
  - Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to Promote Inclusive Classrooms
  - Accommodations for Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners
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To request professional development or parent training related to increasing inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities contact:

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For more information please visit the SPDG website at <http://www.tnspdg.com/>

## Differentiated Environment

In a differentiated environment the teacher:

- ☐ communicates explicitly and implicitly to students that they are multi-faceted individuals whose needs, preferences, and strengths are dynamic
- ☐ communicates implicitly and explicitly to students that they and their contributions are valuable and necessary in order for the classroom to function well
- ☐ helps students get to know one another well
- ☐ encourages creativity of thought and expression
- ☐ structures activities so that students see one another in varied contexts and in varied roles
- ☐ assists students in setting their own personal and class goals for learning and behavior
- ☐ solicits student input in making decisions that will affect the whole class.
- ☐ frequently asks students for feedback on how the class is working for them, and for suggestions about how they and the teacher could work together toward improvement
- ☐ designs and assigns roles for students to assume in making the routines and systems flow smoothly

## Curriculum

In a differentiated environment the teacher:

- ☐ frames learning goals in terms of what students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the lesson/unit
- ☐ clearly communicates the learning goals to students
- ☐ connects the knowledge and skills students are learning to an essential question, big idea, important principle, and/or overarching concept
- ☐ connects the curriculum to students’ collective and individual experiences and interests
- ☐ engages students in activities that help them see how what they are learning is used in the real world (e.g. by real historians, scientists)

## Assessment

Related to assessment the teacher:

- ☐ employs a variety of formative assessment techniques that glean information most critical to making adjustments for student need
- ☐ pre-assesses students’ readiness, interest, and learning profile needs relative to the learning goals prior to a unit of study.
- ☐ uses ongoing assessment to gauge students’ progress during a unit.
- ☐ uses data gathered through informal or formal formative assessment to make decisions about how and when to use various instructional arrangements
- ☐ uses data gathered through informal or formal formative assessment to adjust content, processes, and products
- ☐ explicitly communicates the purpose of formative assessment to students

## **Classroom Leadership and Management**

The affective and physical attributes of the classroom environment inspire students to achieve their personal best and to take initiative in learning equip students to succeed in achieving the teacher’s high expectations.

In this area the teacher:

- ☐ empowers students to view their and each other’s differences as assets to the classroom community such that students view one another as equals
- ☐ ensures that the teacher and students are equal partners in sharing responsibility for the classroom
- ☐ honors student differences, nurtures student strengths and preferences, and provides opportunities for students to compensate for their weaknesses
- ☐ shares his/her roles and responsibilities with students, allowing them to control many aspects of classroom routines

## Instruction

In the area of instruction the teacher:

- ☐ employs many kinds of instructional arrangements (e.g., small groups, student-teacher conferences, partners, individual work, whole-class) to meet students’ needs
- ☐ structures grouping so they are aligned with curricular goal
- ☐ has group compositions that are intentional
- ☐ groups and re-groups students on the basis of the most recent information (e.g., assessment data) about the students’ readiness, interests, and/or learning profiles
- ☐ ensures that, over the course of a unit or semester, students experience varied roles and responsibilities within groups
- ☐ has established routines for how students should transition between different instructional arrangements
- ☐ plans for and clearly communicates what students should do when there is “down time” (e.g., when a group finishes a task early)
- ☐ provides multiple ways for individual students and groups of students to receive help during instructional segments