Fair Isn’t Always Equal
Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom
Teacher's Study Guide
Contents

Preface iii
Using the Study Guide iv
Writing a Personal Grading Philosophy Statement (GPS) iv
Prereading Suggestions v
Practice and Application Ideas to Further Understanding v

Chapter 1 The Differentiated Instruction Mind-set: Rationale and Definition 1
Chapter 2 Mastery 3
Chapter 3 Principles of Successful Assessment in the Differentiated Classroom 5
Chapter 4 Three Important Types of Assessment 6
Chapter 5 Tiering Assessments 7
Chapter 6 Creating Good Test Questions 8
Chapter 7 The Relative Nature of Grades and Their Definitions 9
Chapter 8 Why Do We Grade, and What About Effort, Attendance, and Behavior? 10
Chapter 9 Ten Approaches to Avoid When Differentiating Assessment and Grading 11
Chapter 10 Conditions for Redoing Work for Full Credit 12
Chapter 11 Six Burning Grading Issues 13
Chapter 12 Grading Scales 15
Chapter 13 Gradebook Formats for the Differentiated Classroom 16
Chapter 14 Responsive Report Card Formats 18
Chapter 15 Thirty-Six Tips to Support Colleagues as They Move Toward Successful Practices for Differentiated Classrooms 19
Chapter 16 Putting It All Together: How Do Differentiating Teachers Assess and Grade Differently? 20

Supplemental Resources 21
Preface

Through his book *Fair Isn’t Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom* and this study guide, Rick Wormeli shows you the guiding principles of successful assessment and grading in the differentiated classroom. He begins the journey with the end in mind, asking participants in this book study to create their own personal grading philosophy statements that reflect their growing perspectives on differentiated assessment and grading. He leads participants through a clear definition of differentiated instruction and then moves quickly into what constitutes mastery and sound assessment principles. He explains how successful grading rallies around teachers’ clear understanding of their subject content and what they will accept as evidence of subject mastery. This determination is best attained through frequent conversation with colleagues who teach the same subject.

Rick reminds educators of the appropriate and inappropriate purposes of grading, and he identifies common practices that actually reduce a grade’s accuracy and usefulness. He also includes chapters dedicated to tiering assessments, designing good tests, motivating colleagues to explore these concepts, and much more.

With a deeper understanding of the guiding principles of *Fair Isn’t Always Equal*, participants will be able to reexamine their current grading philosophy and practice and to make necessary changes that ensure a highly responsive and effective learning experience for diverse student populations.

—Eds.
Using the Study Guide

This study guide is intended for use in department or team meetings, book study groups, and workshops. You may choose to use the resource independently or with a group of colleagues. A separate study guide is available for facilitators and school leaders who may be guiding professional development for faculty or teaching university courses. Some of the suggested activities in the facilitator’s study guide might also appeal to teachers who are reading the book on their own, so you should consider downloading the facilitator’s guide as well.

Because professional development needs vary, the ideas in this study guide are meant to be flexible. However, the sequence of the study guide is important. For example, we really can’t assess students’ work unless we’ve already established what we’ll accept as evidence of learning, so the assessment section follows the material on determining standards and benchmarks (mastery). We can’t grade and report students’ progress without assessing their work properly, so grading comes after assessing. You may struggle with some of the book’s later principles if you don’t have the foundations from these earlier sections.

If you must adjust the sequence, please keep the larger goals in place. Create a clear picture of differentiated instruction, then define mastery, familiarize yourself with these nonnegotiable assessment principles, and finally, launch into the issues of grading when fair isn’t always equal. The journey will be smoother as a result.

I have included a range of guiding questions throughout. Some are designed to provide short answers; others will involve more thought, research, and time. You might choose the short-answer questions to initiate discussions with your colleagues and the more reflective questions to use as you develop a professional portfolio. Consider sharing your answers with colleagues through a blog, wiki, Ning, or other online format.

Writing a Personal Grading Philosophy Statement (GPS)

The ultimate goal of Fair Isn’t Always Equal and this book study is improving instruction to boost student learning. A critical first step is defining your professional beliefs and being willing to do the following:

- Analyze and clarify your thinking so others can understand your core values.
- Interact with colleagues, including receiving and giving constructive critique.
- Revise and solidify your thinking based on what analysis suggests.
- Reflect on your practice, a key attribute of highly accomplished teachers (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; www.nbpts.org).

One of the most transformative methods of reflecting on core values is creating a Grading Philosophy Statement (GPS). Just like the other GPS (Global Positioning System), this statement functions as a personal navigation device. Creating a GPS helps teachers explain what they do and why they do it.

A GPS has two parts. First, you should write your own statements privately, which consist of the following:
A clear, one-sentence declaration of each specific policy or belief about assessment (Example: Homework will count for 5 percent of a student’s grade in my class)

A short rationale for each core value

Second, share the GPS with others and ask for critique. Although the first step is helpful, defending your core values is where the most growth occurs.

In your statements, try to address common practices (grading scales, rubrics, group grades, and extra credit) as well as more theoretical issues (What is authentic assessment? Should students receive test questions before the actual exams?).

Prereading Suggestions

Most teachers don’t realize how their beliefs about assessment and grading affect every aspect of their instructional practice. To help you become more aware of your mind-set and how it might differ from your colleagues’ views, consider answering some of the questions in Figure 1.

Practice and Application Ideas to Further Understanding

To prepare for the group discussions related to Fair Isn’t Always Equal, choose one or more of the following activities to complete before your first meeting. Working with your study group members, you may decide to each choose different topics to cover more ground. Consider writing about your reflections and sharing through a collaborative journal or other networked platform.

Design a sample gradebook page or a sample report card that reflects differentiated instruction practices.

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**Figure 1. Checking Current Philosophy About Assessment and Grading**

1. What does it mean to differentiate instruction?
2. What concerns do you have about grading students in a differentiated class?
3. What does each mark or grade on your grading scale represent?
4. Does an A mean students have met or exceeded the standards or learner outcomes?
5. What is the role of assessment in the classroom? In grading?
6. How does your philosophy about differentiation and grading vary from that of your colleagues?
7. Would you be comfortable with your school administrators or a teaching colleague viewing your gradebook and critiquing your grading philosophy? Why or why not?
8. What’s the difference between formative and summative assessments, and what role does each play in the report card grade?
9. If two students complete different tasks as part of the same unit of study and both earn an A on the assessment, are the grades equivalent?
10. What do you hope to get out of your participation in this book study?
Choose one controversial aspect of grading and interview five colleagues about their beliefs and practices.

Identify one controversial aspect of grading and argue for both sides of the controversy, even if you do not agree with the position.

Read your school or district’s official grading policy and note differences between the stated policy and your (or your colleagues’) practices.

Obtain a copy of a report card used in a neighboring school or school district and compare it with your own.

Read a book or an article about assessment or grading by one of the following authors and share a summary of it with your study group: Tom Guskey, Ken O’Connor, Dylan Wiliam, Robert Marzano, Susan Brookhart, Anne Davies, Ruth Sutton, Rick Stiggins, Damien Cooper, Jay McTighe, Grant Wiggins, Doug Fisher, Nancy Frey, Doug Reeves.

Write a rationale for differentiated instruction.

Identify twenty specific strategies teachers can use to differentiate instruction for students.

Explain the difference between criterion-referenced and norm-referenced scores, including the pros and cons of each.
CHAPTER 1

The Differentiated Instruction Mind-set: Rationale and Definition

Overview

This chapter addresses many of the concerns educators have about differentiation, such as whether it makes learning too easy for students and properly prepares students for standardized testing situations or the world beyond school.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

(Note: For the purposes of space, we did not repeat questions mentioned in the prereading section. However, you may wish to include some of those questions with this chapter and subsequent ones. After reading the chapters, you may be open to revising your earlier thinking, an important aspect of professional development.)

Choose just a few of the questions from the list of suggestions so the process won’t seem overwhelming. In every case, however, be prepared to explain your rationale and defend your positions.

□ What can you point to in your class that demonstrates a differentiated approach?
□ What effect does differentiated instruction during K–12 learning have on our graduates when they are in college or working in the adult world?
□ What would need to change in your classroom or your building to implement differentiated instruction practices more effectively?
□ Is differentiated instruction a legitimate teaching method that positively impacts student achievement? Why do you believe as you do?

Practice and Application Ideas to Further Understanding

Complete one or more of the following activities. Mutual sharing, either in your book study meetings or in an online format, would be beneficial.
- Read a book about differentiated instruction. See the Supplemental Resources list included at the end of this study guide for suggestions. Choose any three main ideas from the selected book and implement them in your classroom. Report the results to at least one colleague. If something did not work well, explain how you could improve it. If something worked well, provide evidence of the impact.
- Identify three strategies teachers in your grade level could use to explain differentiated instruction to their students.
- Compose and share your definition of differentiated instruction with students, and then ask them to look for evidence of it in your classroom practice. Alternatively, write a letter to your students' parents explaining differentiated instruction, and invite them to look for evidence of it in their children's experiences in your classroom.
CHAPTER 2

Mastery

Overview

Before we can assess or grade students' work, we must understand the learning targets for ourselves. This involves more than just listing a standard or outcome at the top of our lesson plan. We must be able to clearly communicate those goals to colleagues, students, and parents; break down the larger goals and standards into cohesive instructional units; and defend our choices and practices with evidence. This chapter explains the complex process of defining mastery learning and helping students achieve it.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- Identify one standard, outcome, benchmark, or learning target that you will address during the year. Describe the work from students that you would accept as evidence that they have achieved the goal.
- For a specific learning target, describe what it would mean to exceed expectations.
- Is it necessary for teachers of the same subject to be consistent in their definitions of mastery? Why or why not?

Practice and Application Ideas to Further Understanding

- It's beneficial to discuss multiple examples of excellence from students, but we can't stop there. We develop a more accurate and useful understanding of acceptable evidence for mastery when we also draft an operative definition of mastery and share it with others. The composition and articulation of our definition of mastery, including its defense as warranted, is seriously powerful for participants. Some secondary English departments, for example, spend hours discussing anchor papers so they can agree on what they'll accept as qualifying for a 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, or 1.0 writing performance; yet, without first taking a step back and identifying what they are seeking and how it fits into their general definition of mastery, grading across the department will still be inconsistent at best—and, for many, final marks will not be accurate.
If we define mastery as something more than simple recall of facts or rote execution of tasks, we won’t settle for just these elements in the evaluative criteria for writing compare-and-contrast papers in our department. Instead, our definition of mastery includes the need to apply knowledge skillfully, demonstrating attention to more than one facet. We reflect on this larger point as we discuss specific rubrics. If we never fully captured our sense of mastery, we’d have no point of reference as we develop our evaluative criteria. Consequently, we tend to stray from what is accurate, consistent, and useful.

Review the definition of mastery at the bottom of page 12 in *Fair Isn’t Always Equal*. Does this definition work for you? If not, write your own definition of mastery. Compare your definition with those generated by colleagues from your department. How are they similar and how are they different? Revise your own definition based on insights gained from these interactions.

- Discuss with colleagues how best to resolve differences about what you will accept as evidence of mastery.
- With a colleague from your department, identify three standards, outcomes, benchmarks, or learning targets from your curriculum, and break them into their component skills and subsets of knowledge. Be very specific. For each skill, identify at least two ways students would be allowed to demonstrate mastery.
CHAPTER 3

Principles of Successful Assessment in the Differentiated Classroom

Overview
This chapter describes universally accepted assessment practices that need to be in place for learning to occur. The chapter includes a special emphasis on formative assessment and how to take action based on what it reveals about student learning. It also explores the importance of keeping assessments substantive, authentic, and varied over time.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter
- How do you determine what to assess?
- How many assessments in a grading period are sufficient to create an accurate report of a student’s proficiency?
- Should assessments be repeated over time?
- How should assessment guide instructional decisions?
- What’s the difference between formative and summative assessment? Which one has more impact on students’ learning? Which one is associated with percentages and letter grades, and why?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding
- Choose any two of your original classroom assessments. Analyze each one in light of the principles described in Chapter 3 and summarize your findings with a partner. Indicate whether you would change any aspect of the assessments the next time you teach the related unit of study.
- Identify several barriers to some of the suggestions made in Chapter 3. With a partner, brainstorm ways to remove those barriers so the assessment principle can work in your classrooms.
- Share several of Chapter 3’s assessment principles with your students, and ask them to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of each one for their own learning. Based on their insights, change one of your assessment practices and report the results to your book study group.
CHAPTER 4

Three Important Types of Assessment

Overview

Chapter 4 focuses on three types of assessment that research has shown to be effective: portfolios, rubrics, and student self-assessment.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- What makes a rubric effective?
- What problems do teachers and students have when using rubrics?
- Would portfolio assessment be helpful to your students and your teaching? Why or why not?
- What role does self-assessment play in students’ learning?
- What could you do to increase students’ self-assessment in your classroom?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- Ask your students to create the evaluative criteria for an upcoming project or assessment. As you guide them in this task, share at least three of the guiding principles for rubric design from this chapter. Afterward, reflect on the experience.
- Referring to a lesson you are preparing for next week, identify at least five different points where students will be directed to assess themselves against the lesson’s goals. If you do not find these moments, create them.
- Create a rubric for assessing a successful portfolio of work in your subject area. Ask a colleague to critique your portfolio rubric using the same standards you would use with your students’ portfolio rubric. If you already have a portfolio of your own professional work, critique it using the rubric you designed for student portfolios.
CHAPTER 5

Tiering Assessments

Overview

This chapter provides clear strategies for raising and lowering the complexity or challenge of assessments.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- What do we mean by tiering assessments?
- How do we know if we should tier an assessment for a student or group of students?
- Are we supposed to hold students accountable for every learning goal or only the important ones? How do we know which ones are important?
- How do we report student progress, such as maintaining gradebooks and preparing report cards, when we tier assessments?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- Select any assessment you will be using with students in the next week or so and tier it—one version more complex, one less complex—using some of the principles and techniques described in Chapter 5. Ask a colleague to critique the quality of both assessments in terms of how accurate and helpful the scores on each assessment will be for you and for students.
- Create a bulleted list of specific principles and cautions for tiering assessments based on your own experience and the insights from this chapter to keep handy in the back of your planner for reference.
- Identify one standard or learner outcome you have to teach. Then identify an introductory level of performance regarding the learning goal, followed by at least three more levels of sophisticated mastery, each one surpassing the one before it. In a follow-up discussion with a colleague from your department, determine which level would qualify for a 100, an A, or the top score on your scale. Explain your reasoning.
CHAPTER 6

Creating Good Test Questions

Overview

Some test questions are so confusing to students that they are unable to respond in a way that accurately renders what they know and can do. This chapter explains how to design test questions that are important enough to ask and clear enough to answer.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- Describe an ideal classroom quiz or test.
- How can you be sure that your tests assess what you need to know about student learning?
- What types of test questions were most comfortable for you as a student? Which ones created anxiety for you? How does acknowledging these personally help you design your tests and quizzes?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- Ask students to design their ideal test after you share many of the principles from Chapter 6. Note which types of questions they seem to prefer, and then decide whether to incorporate more of those types of questions in your next test. Several weeks later, ask students to evaluate the quality of your test questions in light of these principles.
- Critique other tests—yours or some offered by colleagues—in light of these principles. Suggest at least two ways to improve the tests to better serve their purpose.
CHAPTER 7

The Relative Nature of Grades and Their Definitions

Overview

Chapter 7 dives into the subjective, relative, and inferential natures of grading systems. It propels educators into discussions about how to define grades and asks teachers to ensure that grades are criterion-referenced.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- Whatever your marking/grading scale, take a moment and define each level clearly so that others will understand your policy.
- What should teachers who work together and teach the same subject do when they disagree on the definition of a grade or score?
- What does a mark of “Incomplete” teach students?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- With colleagues from your department, come to agreement about what each letter grade or symbol in your grading system means. Realize that this may take ten minutes or ten weeks.
- Identify at least three ways you will keep your grades from becoming overly subjective, relative, or inferential. Alternatively, identify what you can change in your classroom practice to ensure that grades more accurately reflect what students know and are able to do in response to the curricular goals.
- Gather colleagues from your department for a grade-calibrating experience. In other words, ask them to grade the same essay, lab, paragraph, student response, project, or performance using the same rubric. Complete at least three collective reviews. Then come together and compare the grades and comments. How did the responses align or diverge? What does this experience mean for the current assessment and grading systems?
- Once your group has come to agreement on the expectations for these particular assessments, assess and grade a fourth item collaboratively and see if your criteria are still appropriate and work for everyone.
CHAPTER 8

Why Do We Grade, and What About Effort, Attendance, and Behavior?

Overview

Chapter 8 focuses on the purposes of standards-based grading and the need to avoid factors that dilute grade accuracy.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- Should effort, participation, behavior, or attendance be included in the final report card grade of academic performance? Why or why not?
- Do high and low grades motivate students?
- Is it okay for a teacher to lower a student’s grade for skipping class or for being late to class repeatedly? Why or why not?
- If you had to choose only one, which is more important: the student learning the material or meeting a deadline? Why do you believe as you do?
- What is the greater gift to the student in the long run: recording an F on the report card for not demonstrating evidence of meeting the learning standard, or recording a C on the report card because even though the student didn’t learn, he or she followed the rules and worked earnestly throughout the unit of study?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- Revisit any of the prereading questions in your postreading discussion.
- How do we teach students self-discipline, a work ethic, and how to meet deadlines without using grades?
- Is it appropriate for grades to be used as the main determinant of student placement in different academic programs? Explain your reasoning.
CHAPTER 9

Ten Approaches to Avoid When Differentiating Assessment and Grading

Overview
Chapter 9 discusses many conventional grading practices that do not serve their intended purpose of revealing students’ progress toward subject mastery.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- Do you allow retakes or redo’s, and if so, do you offer full or partial credit?
- What percentage of your students would have to do poorly on a test to justify reteaching the lesson to the whole class? Why that percentage?
- What role do daily quizzes play in learning, and how do they influence the report card grade?
- Does alternative assessment make a grade more or less accurate?
- What’s your policy on extra credit?
- Are grades reported from group projects legitimate scores for individual students?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- Revisit any of the prereading questions and see if your response has changed as a result of reading the corresponding section in this chapter. If not, what new insights did you gain?
- Design a different model of schooling that would enable teachers to better meet the needs of diverse students.
- Describe a situation in which a teacher who thought he or she was testing content mastery instead measured the process or format of learning.
- Create a metaphor or analogy for criterion-based grading as opposed to norm-referenced grading.
CHAPTER 10

Conditions for Redoing Work for Full Credit

Overview

Chapter 10 probes the practice of letting students redo assignments and assessments, and it suggests strategies to ensure that students don’t abuse the policy.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- What’s your policy for redoing class work and homework? How, if at all, does your policy change for major grades such as scores earned on tests, projects, presentations, writings, and summative performances?
- Is there anything you would never let a student redo? Why or why not?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- Create a personal calendar of completion for a task, as described in this chapter. Then outline three activities or experiences you would need to provide students to teach them how to create similar calendars of completion successfully.
- Consider four test questions or tasks from a recent or future unit of study, and identify at least two other ways you could assess students’ mastery of the same standards if you had to retest on the same material.
- What do successful teachers do when a student gets a lower grade on subsequent attempts at tests and projects?
- Consider the idea of redoing tasks to achieve higher-quality performance in the working world, including the teaching profession. Would this ever be appropriate? If so, under what conditions? If not, why not? Share your thinking with a colleague and ask for feedback.
CHAPTER 11

Six Burning Grading Issues

Overview
Whenever school districts move from non-standards-based grading to standards-based grading, as we find happens in differentiated classes, conventional practices long considered appropriate are threatened. This is a good thing, but it can be difficult for some educators. Chapter 11 provides constructive responses to issues that arise.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

■ Is the 100-point scale a useful measure for reporting students’ academic progress?
■ To what degree should failure to meet a deadline on an individual assignment affect a student’s report card grade?
■ How do we grade students doing advanced work in a regular-level class? What should be recorded on the report card?
■ Is it appropriate to give more weight and, in most cases, raise a student’s GPA for more advanced coursework?
■ What’s the difference between automaticity and concept attainment? Should a grade be higher for one of these? Is one preferred over the other?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

■ Using the real percentages for several students from the current or previous marking period, convert any score (grade) less than a 50 to a 50 (or use 60 as your lower limit). This 50 (or 60) would still be an F, but it would be in the upper end of the failure range. Then respond to these questions:
  • How does the change affect students’ overall scores for the marking period? Are they more, or less, accurate indicators of the students’ knowledge?
  • How does averaging here distort the accuracy of the report?
  • Explain how such adjustments are necessary to support your educational philosophy, in particular your mind-set about differentiation and standards-based assessment and grading.
Consider the comments by Marsha Ratzel on page 144 (sidebar). What would need to change in your class and your school to remove the constant of time in your grading determinations as she suggests?

Make a thoughtful case for ending the practice of identifying a single class valedictorian. Present it to students, colleagues, and policy makers.

Explain how you can teach students to honor deadlines.

Examine your current policies about late work. Are they constructive, i.e., do they lead to more learning of the intended standard? Do they elevate or diminish the importance of the assignments in students’ minds? Do they create an accurate report of what students know and can do regarding the standards, or do they distort the accuracy of the report?

As appropriate, prepare a proposal for your faculty to change late-work policies to more accurately reflect the school’s mission and standards-based grading principles.

- Walk through the entire process outlined on pages 149–151 with a special education teacher if you’re a regular education teacher, and vice versa. Respect the expertise the other brings to the conversation. Once you’ve been through this process at least once, reflect on the experience: what worked well, and what would you change? Then create a bulleted list of advice for others going through the same conversations.
CHAPTER 12

Grading Scales

Overview
This chapter reveals the arbitrary and ineffective nature of many conventional grading scales, and it provides practical tips for resolving these issues.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

■ Is it important to be able to discern high and low versions of grades, such as the difference in the B grade range between an 82 percent and an 88 percent? Why or why not?
■ How would you respond to this parent or news reporter’s question: “The child earned an A in your class but failed the state [or provincial] exam. How do you explain this?” Or: “The child failed your class but scored very high on the state [or provincial] exam. How do you explain this?”
■ What are the limitations of your current grading scale? What are the positives?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

■ What are the advantages and disadvantages of larger (100.0) and smaller (4.0) scales?
■ Can we determine levels of mastery with great precision? Explain.
■ Make a case to remove minus grades from the school grading scale.
■ Similar to the example on pages 156–157, identify something you normally grade using a percentage or point system. Now create a rubric for that same concept using a 5.0 grading scale, complete with a thoughtful descriptor for the standard of excellence. Ask someone in the book study group to critique it.
■ Is it inappropriate to hold students’ earlier digressions against them in the final grade? Explain your thinking.
CHAPTER 13

Gradebook Formats for the Differentiated Classroom

Overview

Many conventional gradebooks that teachers create for themselves do not reflect responsive teaching or standards-based grading. This chapter provides examples of gradebook formats that support differentiated instruction.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- Does your current gradebook provide an accurate report of what students know and are able to do in relation to your subject standards? If so, explain how. If not, what would need to be modified?
- Does your current gradebook support your teaching philosophy? Explain.
- If a student demonstrates mastery of a concept, does the medium used to represent that mastery matter?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- Modify what you consider the most useful gradebook for you and your discipline using any of the insights gained from this chapter, and then present the revised version to your book study group for critique.
- Explain how your gradebook is responsive to differentiated practices.
- Research “electronic gradebook” on the Internet. Visit at least three sites and identify three or more differences. Then, either with these three choices or moving back to the main search list, find an electronic gradebook that most closely reflects sound differentiated instruction and standards-based grading practices. Be very specific in what you identify as supportive of these two approaches. Present your findings to your study group. This presentation is key: articulating your defense of concepts increases the likelihood of regular reference to them in your daily thinking. A format I’ve used in the past is based on the ideas of Robert Marzano and others:
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<th>Dimension/Topic B</th>
<th>Dimension/Topic C</th>
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<td>6</td>
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### Summative Assessments

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<th>EFG Observ.</th>
<th>XYZ Test, part 2</th>
<th>GHI Perf. Task</th>
<th>Most Consistent Level</th>
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CHAPTER 14

Responsive Report Card Formats

Overview

Chapter 14 begins with a call to make report cards responsive to all stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, and the community) but recognizes that not all formats will succeed. The chapter suggests some alternatives and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- Design the ideal report card. What are the features that make it so valuable?
- What is the educational role of report cards, progress reports, and interim reports?
- What would you change about your current report card to make it more effective and clear to everyone who sees it?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- Choose one or more of the formats presented and insert data from your students this year. Consider whether these reports of students’ performances would be helpful. If not, what would you adjust?
- Argue for one of these formats over the others as the most appropriate format to use for a differentiated classroom. Alternatively, design a new format that more appropriately responds to a differentiated classroom approach and argue for its use.
- As mentioned in the previous chapter, not all standards are of equal importance. Explain how we can account for those variances on our report cards.
- Volunteer to be on the committee to revise your school or district report card.
CHAPTER 15

Thirty-Six Tips to Support Colleagues as They Move Toward Successful Practices for Differentiated Classrooms

Overview

Many of the ideas in *Fair Isn’t Always Equal* ask teachers and administrators to change their philosophy and behavior regarding instruction, assessment, and grading. This chapter offers strategies to guide the process.

Questions to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- Describe a time when you changed your thinking about an educational philosophy or practice.
- How can colleagues challenge and help each other grow without alienating each other?
- Identify two or three ideas from other chapters that would create controversy if enacted school-wide. What would make the transition to these ideas smoother for everyone involved?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- Identify five of the most urgent questions or ideas from the list on page 183 (or create a list of your own) and discuss your responses with the book study group. What did it take to discuss the topic constructively, and what did it feel like?
- What keeps teachers from fully embracing new ideas, and what can we do, specifically, to remove these roadblocks?
- What skills do teachers need in order to discuss controversial topics with each other? If teachers don’t have those skills, what can be done to make sure they get them?
CHAPTER 16

Putting It All Together: How Do Differentiating Teachers Assess and Grade Differently?

Overview

How does an educator pull together all the perspectives and strategies presented in Fair Isn’t Always Equal and use them daily in the classroom? Chapter 16 suggests how this can be accomplished.

Question to Consider Before and After Reading the Chapter

- How do teachers assess and grade appropriately in a differentiated classroom?

Practice and Application to Further Understanding

- Write your own version of this chapter. Based on the insights gained from reading the book and sharing ideas with your study group, answer the question clearly: how do teachers assess and grade appropriately in a differentiated classroom? Compare your response with the responses from other members of your group. Remember, it’s the discussion that most affects our thinking, not the genesis of the product.
Supplemental Resources

For further reading in differentiated instruction, the following resources are highly recommended:


For professional development in differentiated instruction, the two best companies with terrific trainers are Staff Development for Educators (www.sde.com) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (www.ascd.org). For more information on leading the professional development for differentiated instruction, the following books are highly recommended:


Muhammad, Anthony. 2009. *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.


For further reading in assessment and grading, particularly when focusing on standards-based grading and differentiation, the following resources are highly recommended:


For good videos (or at least great launching points for finding good videos) on assessment, the following resources are recommended: the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (www.ascd.org), Dylan Wiliam’s Web site (www.dylanwiliam.net), Grant Wiggins’s Web sites (www.grantwiggins.org and www.authenticeducation.org), Jay McTighe’s Web site (www.jaymctighe.com), Rick Stiggins’s Assessment Training Institute (www.assessmentinst.com), and the Educational Testing Service (www.ets.org).