Inclusive practice through practical differentiation strategies

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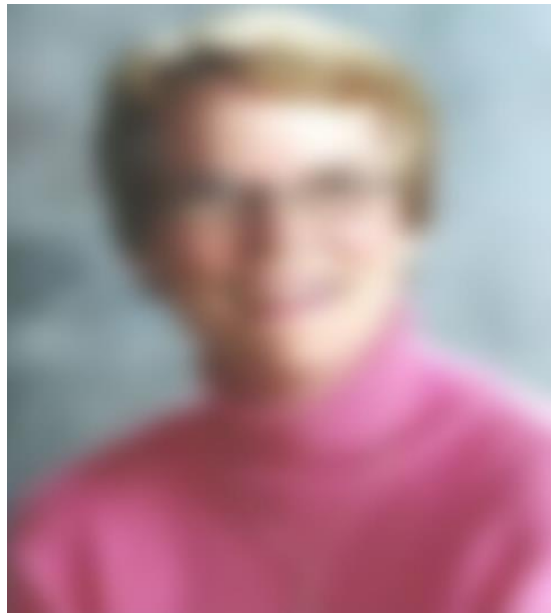
In our workshop today:

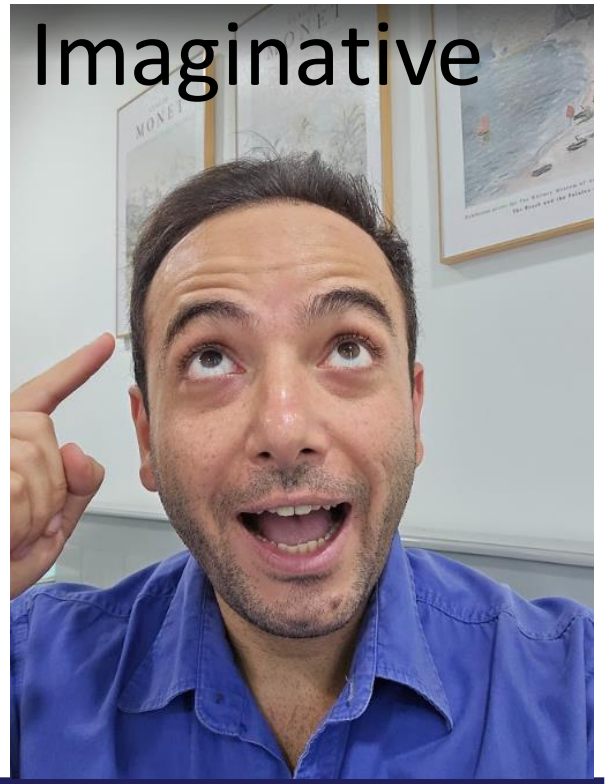
- Four pillars of differentiation and their definitions
- A few examples of differentiation techniques
- Examination of three classroom scenarios
- Drawing an analogy between differentiation and UDL
- List of some practical classroom activities
- Reflection
- Q&A



But first!

- Take out your phones.
- Take a selfie that represents one of your personality traits.
- Show your pictures to a few colleagues.
- See if you can guess each other's characteristics based on the pictures.

Can you guess mine?







BECAUSE EVERYONE MATTERS.

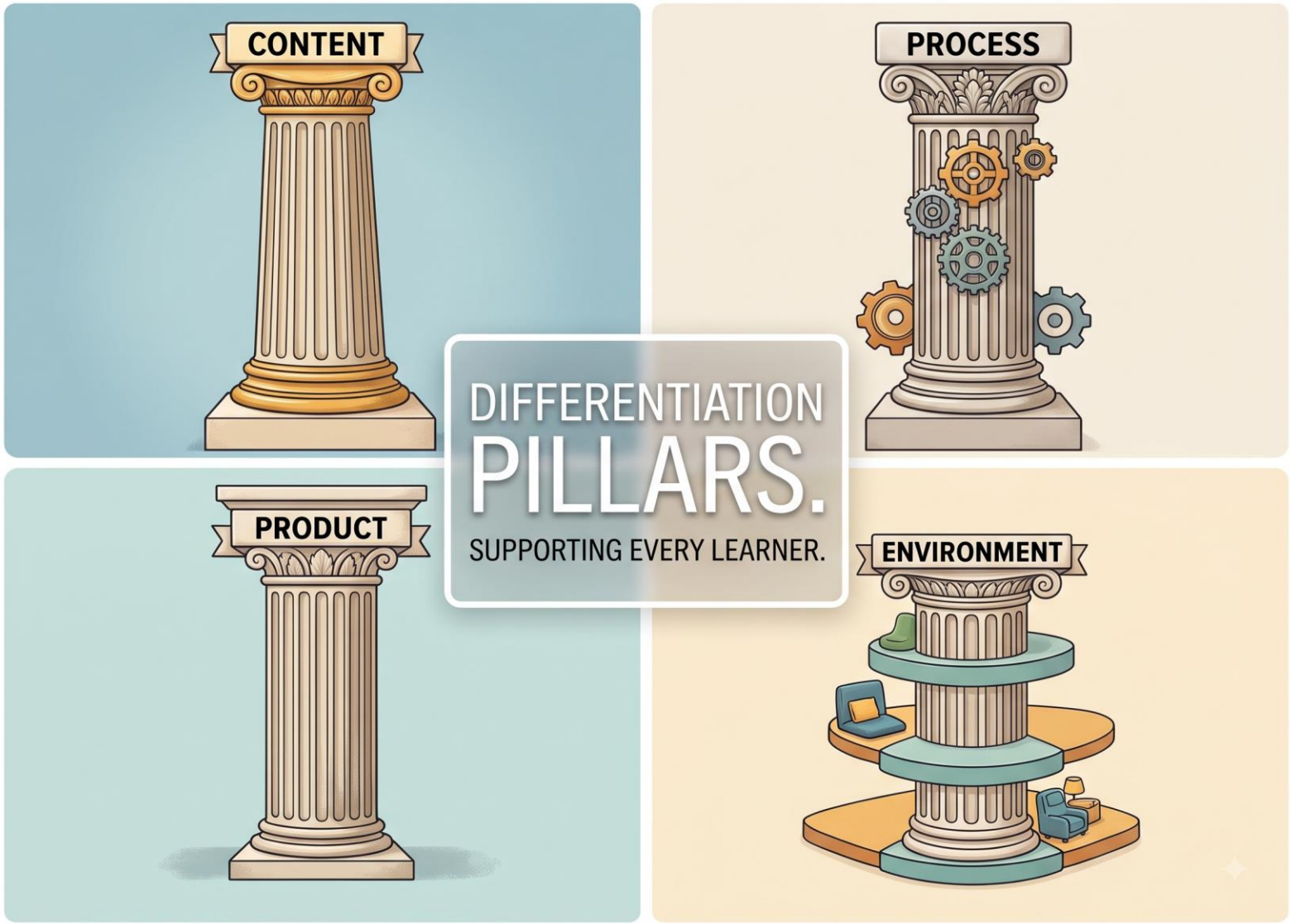




?

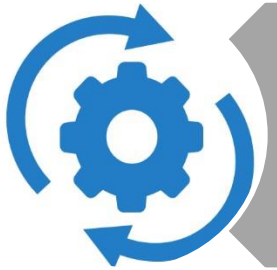
Say ‘Hi’ to your neighbors.

Discuss what each pillar of differentiation means.





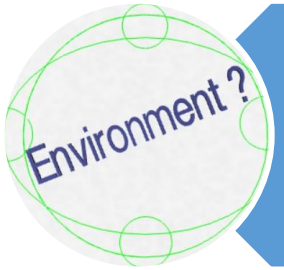
What students learn/access



How students engage with the learning



How students demonstrate what they have learned



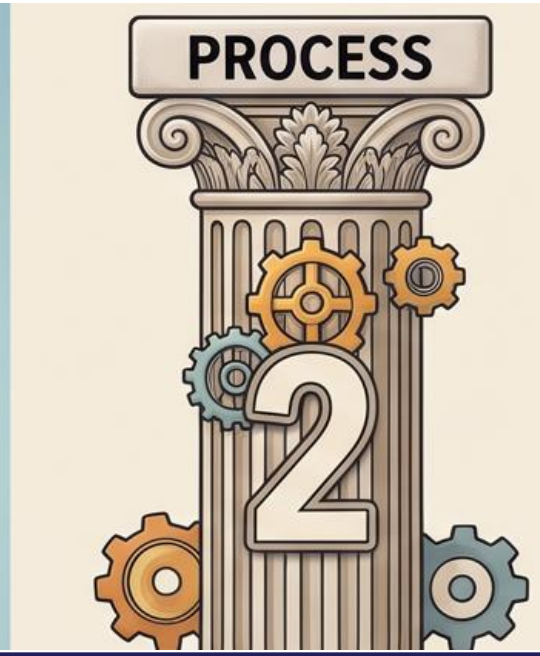
The physical and affective condition where learning happens

Read the classroom practice and show which pillar it represents.

Students work individually, in pairs or in small groups depending on the task and their learning needs.

Students write a paragraph, or a short opinion piece.



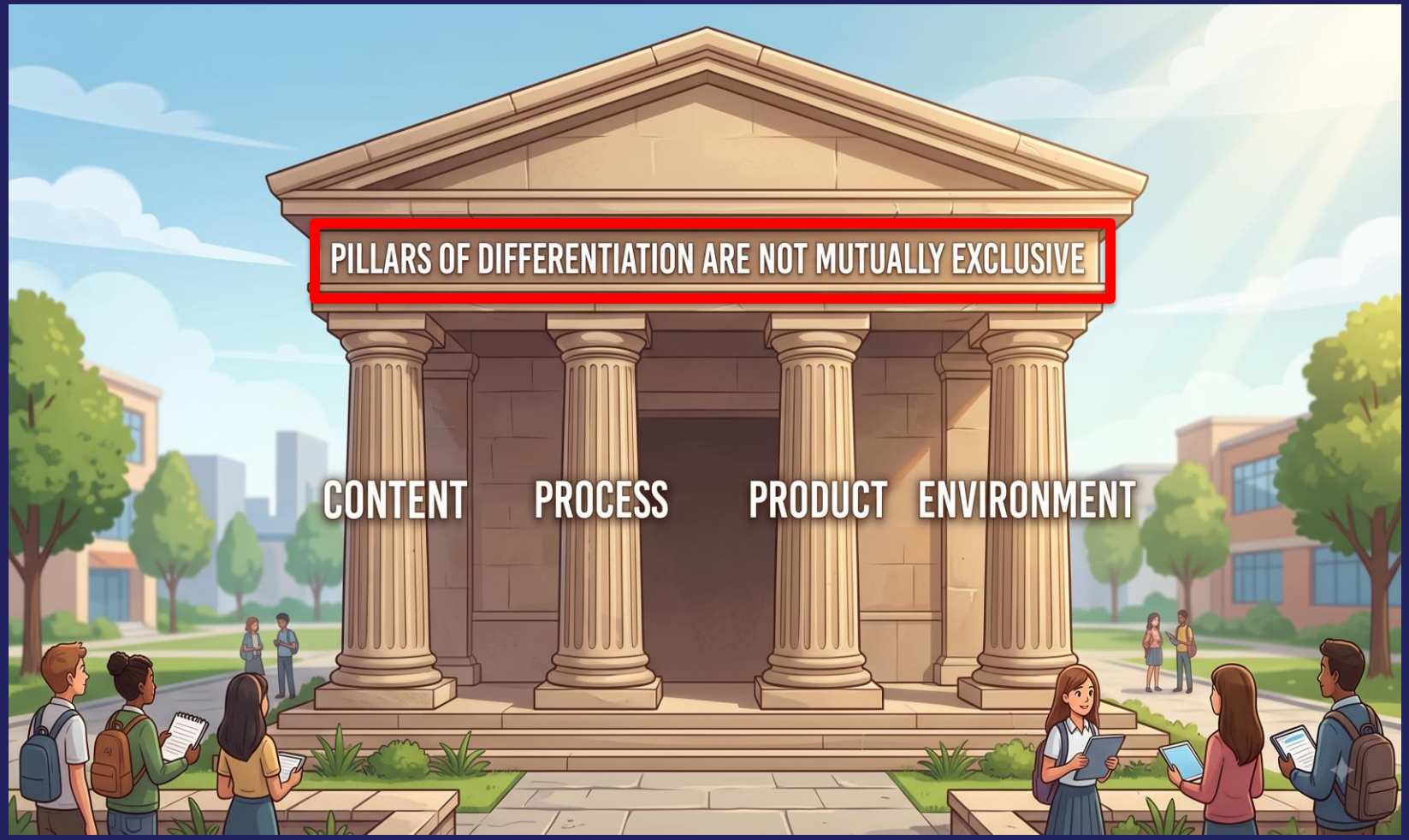






Differentiation pillar	Classroom practice 1	Classroom practice 2
Content	**Tiered texts:** Give different groups texts on the same topic but at different levels of linguistic complexity.	**Choice of input:** Let students choose between a short video, an infographic, or a written text to learn about the same topic.
Process	**Scaffolding:** Provide different levels of support, such as sentence starters, word banks, worked examples, guiding questions, or partially completed tasks, depending on students' needs.	**Flexible grouping:** Students work individually, in pairs, or in small groups depending on the task and their learning needs.
Product	**Output choice:** Students demonstrate their understanding by creating a poster, giving a short presentation, or recording a voice message.	**Tiered output:** Students work toward the same learning objective but produce different levels of output—for example, writing 5 sentences, a paragraph, or a short opinion piece.
Environment	**Flexible seating:** Students choose to work at desks, on the floor, standing, or in a quieter corner when appropriate.	**Learning zones:** Set up different areas of the classroom—for example, a quiet individual-work area, a collaboration area, and a teacher-support area.

Let’s examine a few classroom situations and see how differentiation would come into play in each scenario.



What is the learning objective (LO)?

Which pillar of differentiation could be most helpful?

Discuss: How? Why that pillar?

Situation:

5-year-old kids are learning fruit words. Some have already learned apple, orange, and banana, while others are still learning.

LO: Vocabulary

Differentiation: Content

How:

- Keep practicing the same target vocabulary with weaker students
- Add relevant words to the lexical set for stronger students

Why content: The teacher is changing **what language students work with** according to their current level.















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Situation:

College students have studied how to give and support an opinion. For their final task, they must demonstrate that they can present a clear argument about whether university education should be free. Some students are confident speakers, while others communicate their ideas much better in writing.

LO:

Differentiation:

How:

Why that pillar:

Situation:

College students have studied how to give and support an opinion. For their final task, they must demonstrate that they can present a clear argument about whether university education should be free. Some students are confident speakers, while others communicate their ideas much better in writing.

LO: Speaking/Writing, expressing and supporting an opinion clearly.

Differentiation: Product

How:

- Give a short presentation;
- Record a 3-minute video;
- Submit a written argument.

Why product: Students have **different ways of showing what they have learned,** and the teacher assesses the **same core criteria** regardless of the format.

Teaching English to younger learners is more difficult than teaching older students.

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adu ng
lea lts
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What is the learning objective (LO)?

Which pillar of differentiation could be most helpful?

Discuss: How? Why that pillar?

Situation:

A class of 9-year-olds is learning to describe people. Some students can produce sentences easily, while others struggle to organize their ideas. The teacher wants everyone to describe a person using at least three sentences.

LO:

Differentiation:

How:

Why that pillar:

Situation:

A class of 9-year-olds is learning to describe people. Some students can produce sentences easily, while others struggle to organize their ideas. The teacher wants everyone to describe a person using at least three sentences.

LO: Speaking, describing people

Differentiation: Process

How:

- Students who need help: structural help, word banks
- Stronger students: more descriptive language and sentences

Why process: Everyone is working toward the **same goal** (describing people), but **some students** receive **more support** during the learning process.

Use *to be* when Talking about:

- height
- body
- age

- She's very tall.
- He's slim.
- She's young.

Use *have/has* when talking about:

- face
- hair

- She has small, black eyes.
- He has long, dark hair.



Height	tall, short, average-height
Body	fat, slim, strong, weak, overweight
Age	old, young, teenager, child, middle-aged
Face	small/big eyes, ears, etc.– round – handsome, beautiful
Hair	long, short, black, grey, blond(e), wavy, curly, straight

What is the learning objective (LO)?

Which pillar of differentiation could be most helpful?

Discuss: How? Why that pillar?

Situation:

Secondary students are focusing on word stress in academic vocabulary. Some students are confident practicing individually and in front of others, while others feel self-conscious about making pronunciation mistakes. A few also find it difficult to concentrate when the whole class is practicing together.

LO:

Differentiation:

How:

Why that pillar:

Situation:

Secondary students are focusing on word stress in academic vocabulary. Some students are confident practicing individually and in front of others, while others feel self-conscious about making pronunciation mistakes. A few also find it difficult to concentrate when the whole class is practicing together.

LO: Pronunciation (word stress)

Differentiation: Environment/Process

How: Allow students to practice in different learning conditions:

- Individually and quietly after an audio model (teacher/recording)
- With a partner or in small groups
- In a corner of their choice

Why environment/process: The **teacher is changing the conditions in which students are practicing** or **how they engage with the content**, not the pronunciation content itself.


THAILAND
SINGAPORE
PHILIPPINES


But first!

The UDL Guidelines

The CAST UDL Guidelines™ are a tool that can be applied in any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners are able to access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities. The Guidelines are a set of concrete suggestions rooted in the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), an educational framework developed by CAST.

The CAST UDL Guidelines help educators address the diversity in learning in three main categories:

- **Engagement** (the why of learning): recruiting interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and self-regulation.
- **Representation** (the what of learning): perception, language and symbols, and comprehension.
- **Action & Expression** (the how of learning): physical action, expression and communication, and executive function.

Extracted from: https://www.cast.org/what-we-do/universal-design-for-learning/

- **Engagement:** the why of learning
- **Representation**: the what of learning
- **Action & Expression**: the how of learning



What students learn/access



How students engage with the learning



How students demonstrate what they have learned



The physical and affective condition where learning happens

	Design Multiple Means of Engagement 	Design Multiple Means of Representation 	Design Multiple Means of Action & Expression 
Access	Design Options for **Welcoming Interests & Identities** • Optimize choice and autonomy • Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity • Nurture joy and play • Address biases, threats, and distractions	Design Options for **Perception** • Support opportunities to customize the display of information • Support multiple ways to perceive information • Represent a diversity of perspectives and identities in authentic ways	Design Options for **Interaction** • Vary and honor the methods for response, navigation, and movement • Optimize access to accessible materials and assistive and accessible technologies and tools
Support	Design Options for **Sustaining Effort & Persistence** • Clarify the meaning and purpose of goals • Optimize challenge and support • Foster collaboration, interdependence, and collective learning • Foster belonging and community • Offer action-oriented feedback	Design Options for **Language & Symbols** • Clarify vocabulary, symbols, and language structures • Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols • Cultivate understanding and respect across languages and dialects • Address biases in the use of language and symbols • Illustrate through multiple media	Design Options for **Expression & Communication** • Use multiple media for communication • Use multiple tools for construction, composition, and creativity • Build fluencies with graduated support for practice and performance • Address biases related to modes of expression and communication
Executive Function	Design Options for **Emotional Capacity** • Recognize expectations, beliefs, and motivations • Develop awareness of self and others • Promote individual and collective reflection • Cultivate empathy and restorative practices	Design Options for **Building Knowledge** • Connect prior knowledge to new learning • Highlight and explore patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships • Cultivate multiple ways of knowing and making meaning • Maximize transfer and generalization	Design Options for **Strategy Development** • Set meaningful goals • Anticipate and plan for challenges • Organize information and resources • Enhance capacity for monitoring progress • Challenge exclusionary practices

Design Options for

Welcoming Interests & Identities

- Optimize choice and autonomy
- Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity
- Nurture joy and play
- Address biases, threats, and distractions

Design Options for **Interaction**

- Vary and honor the methods for response, navigation, and movement
- Optimize access to accessible materials and assistive and accessible technologies and tools

Design Options for **Perception**

- Support opportunities to customize the display of information
- Support multiple ways to perceive information
- Represent a diversity of perspectives and identities in authentic ways

A few classroom activities!

Jigsaw reading/ listening

Co-creating dialogs

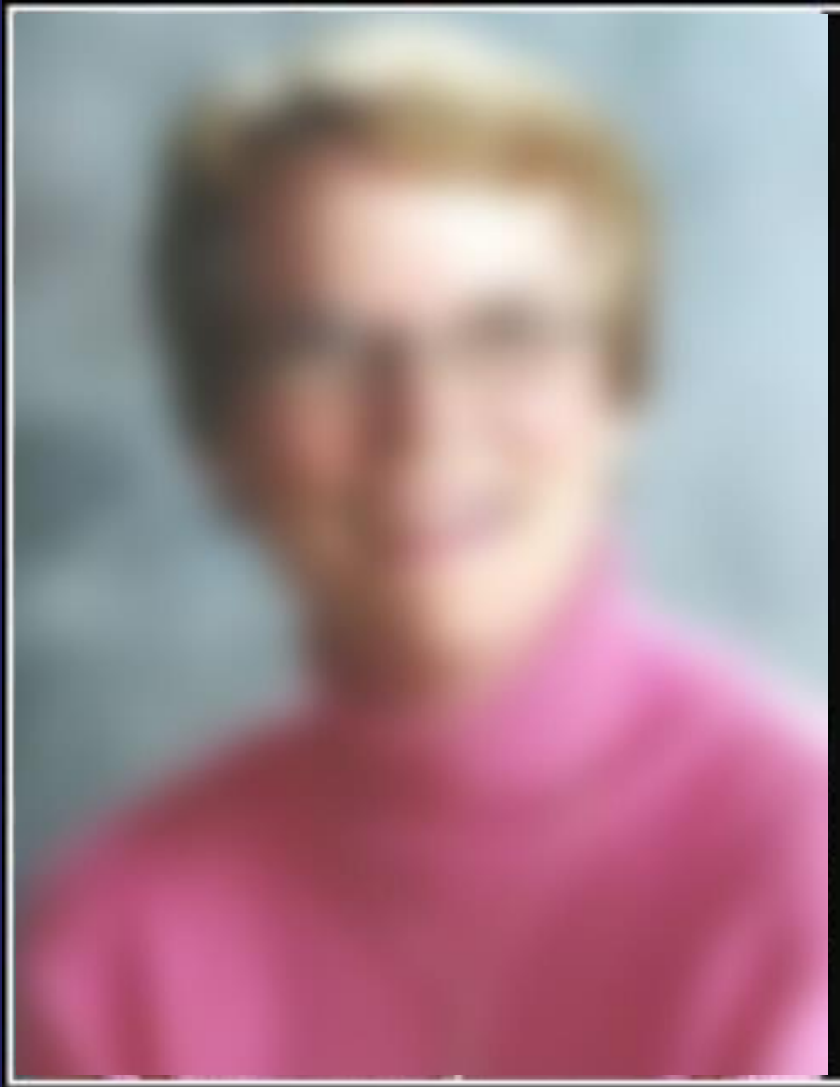
Dynamic groups

Choice boards

Dictogloss

Graded questions

Learner-modified role-plays



We aren't quite sure what we're trying to differentiate, and therefore can't quite see how to do it other than giving some students more to cover and some less. That rarely works.

[redacted]

AZ QUOTES

Picture from: https://www.azquotes.com/

To me …

Differentiation is similar to R[redacted] T[redacted]

In a 

Differentiation techniques underpin inclusive practice. A fair awareness of each can help us bring about:

- psychological safety
- sense of belonging
- sense of achievement



Reflection!

Turn to a partner and:

- Name 4 pillars of differentiation and define each briefly.
- Say which differentiation technique you use most.
- See if you remember the three main categories for UDL.



Picture extracted from Unsplash

Resources

- Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners (2nd ed.). ASCD.
- https://www.cast.org/what-we-do/universal-design-for-learning/
- Unquoted Images generated by AI, Gemini

Download our session's materials here

Q&A

Thank you



Picture extracted from: https://applikeedu.com/rmit-vietnam/

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