

# Best Practices Bulletin

## Differentiated Instruction: Secondary

Northern  
Virginia  
Partnership

An Adventure of the American Mind

Joining Educators and Students with Library of Congress Resources



*This bulletin explores differentiated instruction to address varying student academic levels through tiered assignments using Library of Congress primary sources as learning tools.*

In these assignments, all students are expected to develop unit understanding goals, knowledge-based facts, and study skills. To ensure that the curriculum is neither too easy nor too difficult, the content, learning process, or assignment products have been differentiated to engage and challenge learners with a variety of interests and strengths.

**“Even though students may learn in many ways, the essential skills and content they learn can remain steady. That is, students can take different roads to the same destination.”**

Tomlinson, C. (September, 1999). Mapping A Route Toward Differentiated Instruction, *Educational Leadership*, v. 57, 1.



**Differentiated Instruction is like environmentally sensitive land development.**

The development begins with an assessment of the current landscape. The underlying bedrock differs from place to place like students' academic levels. There are existing structures or roads (students' prior knowledge), different soil types (cultural origins), and several elevations and drainage patterns (preferred pathways of absorbing and using knowledge). A timeline (the school year) and resource restrictions (curriculum and testing) must be balanced. A successful development uses the assets from the current landscape as the basis for new construction.



**Flexible grouping has its roots in the American one-room school house.**

In one-room school houses, students participated in several different instructional groups. The groupings changed during the day based on student needs with regard to what was being taught.

Likewise, to use tiered assignments, teachers flexibly group students, meaning students would not always be in the same tier. Students would participate in different assignments based on their instructional needs, strengths, and interests.

## Primary Sources and Differentiated Instruction

Primary sources are particularly helpful to educators when differentiating instruction.

For example, primary sources:

- are fragments of history that challenge students to create meaning by interpreting clues.
- come in a variety of formats including pictures, letters, diaries, maps, artifacts, motion pictures, sound recordings, architecture designs, and sheet music.
- vary in complexity with curricular subjects.

The Library of Congress has more than 10 million digital primary sources at <http://loc.gov> waiting for curious students.

Photos:

*School children conducting simple experiments, Washington, D.C. 1899 Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs*

*Overlook Development, 1915 Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs*

## Same task, 3 different sources of **CONTENT** information

Tiered assignments based on academic level are designed to meet students where they are in terms of readiness and then to extend their learning. All students travel through a learning process:

Tier 1 - Grow: building a foundation and growing understanding

Tier 2 - Extend: connecting knowledge to extend understanding

Tier 3 - Flexible Use: using resources flexibly to create new understanding

*Directions: Choose one of the primary sources below. Examine both the bibliographic record and the item carefully. Take notes of important details that will help you answer the question below.*

**What were some of the economic, social, and political effects of the Great Depression on people?**

### **Tier 1:**

Dorothea Lange Photograph of ["The Migrant Mother", 1936](#)

*Migrant agricultural worker's family*  
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division



### **Tier 2:**

Mrs. Mary Sullivan – August, 1940 –  
Migrant Experience Folksong

*A Traveler's Line*  
Library of Congress, Folk Life Center

NINA BOONE

They live right on the rim of Happy  
small three-room house looks out over a s  
in which are located all hogpens belongin  
of Happy Hollow. Happy Hollow is that pa  
Spencer Mill Village which rambles gradua  
streets, down into a valley-space covered  
shade-giving trees. The day in late Sept  
went to see Nina Boone, I went past the l  
followed the up-grade, dusty road around  
stopped in front of Nina's house.

### **Tier 3:**

American Life Histories, Manuscript  
from the Federal Writer's Project,  
North Carolina, 1938

*Nina Boone*, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division,  
WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection

SOL US.11.5d The student will demonstrate knowledge of the social, economic, and technological changes of the early twentieth century by identifying the causes of the Great Depression, its impact on Americans, and the major features of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

## Same content information, different learning **PROCESS**



Marcus Miller and family, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

All students will answer these questions.

### **Knowledge:**

Describe what you see in the photograph. Include as much detail as possible.

**Comprehension:** Compare and contrast your home to the home you see in the photograph. What is similar and what is different?

In addition to the first two questions, student pairs will each receive one of the following questions based on academic readiness level.

### **Tier 1:**

**Analysis:** This photograph was taken during the Great Depression, if we could hear the people talking about their life, what would they be saying?

### **Tier 2:**

**Analysis:** This photograph was taken during the Great Depression. From what you see in the photograph, explain how you think this room might be used by the family and why.

### **Tier 3:**

**Evaluation:** Assess the Great Depression's social and economic impact on this family from the evidence in the photograph.

SOL US.11.5d The student will demonstrate knowledge of the social, economic, and technological changes of the early twentieth century by identifying the causes of the Great Depression, its impact on Americans, and the major features of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

Varying the learning **PROCESS** students complete.

## Same content information, same analysis process, different **PRODUCTS**



*Dust Storm, Kansas*  
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

**Directions: The teacher assigns or students choose different products to complete.**

### **Tier 1:**

Create a timeline of the Dust Bowl and Great Depression era. Include the following 10 events with accompanying visuals and written description.

Events: Stock Market Crash, Bank Rush, First Inauguration of FDR, First 100 Days Legislation, Dust Bowl, Migrant Workers Exodus to California, Wizard of Oz Release, FDR Supreme Court Packing, Third Inauguration of FDR, America's Entry into WW II

### **Tier 2:**

Create a scrapbook depicting the life of a child affected by the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. Include information about where the child lives, his/her family's economic and social situation, recreation, education, and prospects for the future.

### **Tier 3:**

In the role of a political candidate, create a persuasive speech proposing actions to address the concerns of Dust Bowl farmers during the Great Depression. Incorporate information about the farmers' economic, social, and political problems, and propose how the government can and cannot assist them. Support your plan with evidence from both primary and secondary sources.

SOL US.11.5d The student will demonstrate knowledge of the social, economic, and technological changes of the early twentieth century by identifying the causes of the Great Depression, its impact on Americans, and the major features of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

When students examine primary sources, they are working like real historians or scientists. Through observation and analysis, students discover clues and change their thinking to integrate the new information into their knowledge base. This process is part of rigorous learning experiences for all ages.

**Successful teaching requires two elements: student understanding and student engagement. In other words, students must really understand, or make sense of, what they have studied. They should also feel engaged in or "hooked by" the ways that they have learned.**

Tomlinson, C. (September, 1999). Mapping A Route Toward Differentiated Instruction, Educational Leadership, v. 57, 1.

For more information about professional development using LOC primary sources contact:  
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Tiered lesson examples were created by: Patricia Carlson, Arlington Public Schools

Varying the **PRODUCTS** students create to demonstrate their understanding of the curriculum.