

List 1.2. One-Size-Fits-All Teaching Versus Differentiated Teaching

Differentiated instruction (DI) offers students a more responsive and personalized learning experience, and can be an alternative to the frustration and failure many students experience when learning is presented and assessed in the same way for each student. This list compares DI with the one-size-fits-all approach to teaching by providing examples so teachers can begin to see some key differences.

One-Size-Fits-All Teaching	Differentiated Instruction
Teachers answer all the questions.	Teachers redirect questions to students.
Every student writes on the same topic.	Students choose from a variety of topics.
Tests are all multiple-choice questions.	Tests have different sections that offer multiple ways to demonstrate learning.
Everyone reads the same book.	Students choose books according to their interests and reading levels.
For most class time, teachers are at the front of the room directly teaching all students the same materials.	Teachers guide students through activities rather than spend most of the time delivering content.
Teachers give only verbal directions.	Teachers give both oral and written directions; teachers may provide a sample of a project so students can see an expected outcome.
Class time is spent doing one kind of activity the entire time.	Class is broken down into seven- to ten-minute chunks with new activities for each chunk.
Teachers are viewed as the authority on all knowledge.	Teachers ask for student input on lessons, topics, and projects.
Students read in class and work on projects outside of class.	Students work with others in class and do things they can do on their own when they are not in class.
Students have one opportunity to perform, usually in the form of some kind of cumulative test at the end of a unit.	Students are provided examples of what quality work looks like, and their work is checked along the way with many opportunities for revision.