

## First, what is differentiation?

Differentiation is adjusting the content, process, product, and environment to meet the specific educational needs of each student. The environment includes the child's social and emotional needs.

## What They'd Like Parents to Know about Differentiation

- Differentiation occurs for social and emotional needs, as well as academics. This means that we are committed to developing the whole child. A student may be ready academically, but not emotionally, for a task or opportunity.
- We'll draw on your student's strengths in a way that honors those strengths, and we're trying to make that strength a growth tool. The purpose of differentiation is growth, not to create busy work.
- It changes with content, so your child may be in one group for one activity or unit, and in a different group with different content. It's based on the content being covered, so prior skills and understanding play a big role.
- It's okay for students in the same class, even if it's the gifted class, to be doing different things. Gifted classrooms still need differentiation.
- The goal is not to have them just know information, but to be able to use and apply information. Because of this, even a voracious reader or stellar mathematician may not be in the group that aligns with the parents' perception.
- Because your child needs to be challenged to show growth, he/she may struggle. This is desirable, and shows that growth is occurring. It's similar to the way muscles are sore when they are growing. This is an opportunity for you to help support your child in struggle. They need this opportunity to struggle and be supported in that struggle.
- We're creating safe space for students to thrive in, and your support is crucial. Remember that your child doesn't always have to be in the highest group. That's okay. Please support your child in understanding this.
- We offer varied learning activities based on your child's strengths and needs, so if your child tells you that he/she is doing something different from others, that's probably true, and it's purposeful.

- Please encourage your child to participate actively in differentiated experiences in school. This will make it more likely for them to be offered other opportunities in the future.
- We use depth, complexity, thinking skills, and other pedagogical tools to differentiate. It's not more work for highly able students and less work for students who need support.
- Please advocate for your child. We love that. Advocacy is most effective when it is forthright and gentle.
- Trust us.

Created by staff at Hulstrom K-8