

# Differentiation is Necessary for All Students . . .

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- Serious problems have been encountered as school districts strive to meet federal mandates regarding IDEA, while assuring a quality education for all students (and, at the same time, dealing with continually decreasing revenues).
- On the one hand, access to special education must be assured for all children with disabilities identified under state and federal regulation who need and can benefit from it.

- Conversely, some children who may not be truly disabled are labeled and placed in special education inappropriately.
- It is not a benign action to label children as "having a disability" if they do not, in fact, have a disability, even when this is done in order to provide them with services unavailable in general education.

- Our task is to improve outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities, and increase opportunities within the total school system, without taking away the protections offered by IDEA.
- This requires the development of increased support systems and ongoing training of all school personnel to enable them to work effectively with a broad range of children within the general education system.  
(NASP 2002)

# ... in East Grand Rapids

- The use of Differentiation in teaching and learning will benefit all of our learners, including students with special needs, whether labeled “special education”, “talented and gifted” or not.

# But wait - isn't it all genetics?

Meta-analysis of twin studies indicates that genes contribute roughly 50% to human behavioral variance. That leaves 50% under control of environmental influences.

The neural pathways with their cell assemblies and electrochemical synaptic connections are to a fair extent modifiable via environmental interventions such as good parenting, **GOOD TEACHING**, and behavior modification.  
(Treacy, 2003)

# So, that leads us into differentiation... (a.k.a. good teaching)

- Differentiated instruction is student centered.
- Differentiated instruction provides multiple approaches to content, process, and product.
- Differentiated instruction is a blend of whole-class, group, and individual instruction.

- In a differentiated classroom, the teacher proactively plans and carries out varied approaches to content, process, and product in anticipation of and response to student differences in readiness, interest, and learning needs. (Tomlinson 2001)
- Teacher instructional strategies – in particular, classroom management – have nearly as much effect as student aptitude on learning. (Wang, Jaertel, and Walberg (1997))

- In order to be a successful teacher for students who are struggling to learn, you need to understand that these kids are not necessarily less intelligent or less capable than the successful students.
- Many are simply less fortunate because successful students have enjoyed a match between the way their brain processes information and the skills that are needed to master typical school tasks. By and large, unsuccessful students have not.

- Although many of these kids have been labeled “...disabled,” a more accurate description is that they are “learning strategy disabled.”
- Many simply have never been taught strategies that are compatible with the way they think and learn.
- We must work to make matches happen between the content to be learned and the learning styles of our students.  
(Winebrenner 1996)