

## **9 Strategies for Differentiated Classrooms\***

1. Compacting
2. Independent Projects
3. Interest Groups or Interest Centers
- 4. Tiered Assignments**
- 5. Flexible Grouping**
6. Learning Centers
- 7. Varying Questions**
8. Mentorships/Apprenticeships
9. Contracts

### **Guidelines for using Tiered Assignments:**

- ✓ Be sure the task is focused on a key concept or generalization essential to the study
- ✓ Use a variety of resource materials at differing levels of complexity and associated with different learning modes
- ✓ Adjust the task by complexity, abstractness, number of steps, concreteness, and independence to ensure appropriate challenge
- ✓ Be certain there are clear criteria for quality and success

### **Guidelines for Flexible Grouping:**

- ✓ Ensure that all students have opportunities to work both with students most like themselves and with students dissimilar from themselves in readiness and interest
- ✓ Teacher assigns work groups when task is designed to match individual readiness/interest based on pre-assessment or teacher knowledge
- ✓ Teacher assigns work groups when desirable to ensure that student work with a variety of classmates
- ✓ Students select groups when task is well-suited for peer selection
- ✓ Alternate purposeful assignment to groups with teacher/selection
- ✓ Ensure that all students learn to work cooperatively, collaboratively, and independently
- ✓ Be sure there are clear guidelines for group functioning that are taught in advance of group work and consistently reinforced.

### **Guidelines for Varying Questions:**

- ✓ Target some questions to particular students and “open the floor” to others
- ✓ Use open-ended questions where possible
- ✓ Use wait time before taking answers
- ✓ When appropriate, give students a chance to talk with thinking partners before giving answers
- ✓ Encourage students to build on one another’s answers
- ✓ Require students to explain and defend their answers
- ✓ Adjust the complexity, abstractness, degree of mental leap required, time constraints, connections required between topics, and so forth, based on the learning profile of the student being asked a question

\*Adapted from Carol Ann Tomlinson’s *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed Ability Classrooms*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition pgs. Appendix A