Chapter 1: Introduction

Bird's-Eye

Transcript:

This is a module on differentiating instruction through performance tasks. This module is part of a series dedicated to the topic of differentiation.

If you are new to this topic, access the “Basics of Differentiation,” an introductory express module that explores foundational mindsets, beliefs, and terms.

Modules in the “Preparing to Differentiate” group will teach you how to gather pertinent information about your students before implementing a strategy.

Modules in the “strategy” group will teach you how to differentiate instruction based on information you gather from the “Preparing to Differentiate” modules.

Click on each module icon for a description. Click “Proceed” when you are ready to continue.
**Purpose**

**Performance Tasks:**
- What they are
- Why use them
- How to differentiate with them

**Transcript:**

In this module, we'll explore how performance tasks can be used as differentiated assessments for your students. However, we will not be providing explicit steps on how to create one from scratch. Our focus will be on the process of differentiating a performance task according to one or more of the five elements that we will explore.

**Definition**

**Performance Task:**
Open-ended problem or situation

*Nilko & Brookhart, 2004; Pasham, 2011; Puckett, 2013*

**Transcript:**

A performance task is an open-ended problem or situation that a student or group of students must resolve by doing some form of demonstration. Students can demonstrate mastery through live performance, a process, the creation of a product, or a mix of all three. Performance tasks are often used as a means of assessing student knowledge. Therefore, this category ranges from very simple tasks to much more elaborate performances and products.
Components

Performance Tasks

Transcript:

Performance tasks, by their very nature, are often open-ended. This means they may have several “entry points” to perform the task, different ways or processes through which students can complete the task, and even several right answers. Performance tasks can be formal live performances like a debate or presentation, informal processes like collaborating with peers or editing a paper, or products like policy briefs or the construction of a simple machine. A performance task could also be a combination of all three of these types.

Performance tasks consist of three basic elements: the description of the task, the actual student performance of the task, and the scoring of the performance, which is often done using a rubric.

Examples

Social Studies
Students will be researching the Vietnam War and creating a museum display that embodies important economic, political, domestic, and international elements of the conflict. Accompanying the display will be a report that describes the confluence of events and circumstances that led to the start and end of the conflict. To assist students in their research, the teacher will provide historical texts at a range of reading levels and a mix of primary or secondary sources in a variety of media formats.
English Language Arts
Present kindergarten students with a mix of upper case and lower case letters and have students point out five upper case letters and five lower case letters.

Science
Students are given an unknown substance and must perform a battery of tests and experiments to successfully identify it.

Math
Students select an appropriate measuring tool and measure the length of a given object.
Transcript:

Let’s start by exploring some examples of performance tasks. Click on each icon to read an example.

Standards

Transcript:

Performance tasks are generally more complex to create, administer, and evaluate than a simple multiple choice style of assessment. This begs the question: If they are more complex, why would a teacher use one in his/her classroom? Performance tasks lend themselves to skill-based or application-rich standards that are much more difficult to measure in a multiple choice assessment. A teacher could have created a multiple choice assessment for any of the previously mentioned tasks.

But as you can see with this math standard and its aligned performance task that was shown earlier, some form of demonstration was embedded into the standard itself.
### Check for Understanding

Check the objectives that are well-suited for a performance task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Well-suited</th>
<th>Learning Objective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give a speech that clearly presents an argument and sufficient supporting reasons.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Demonstrate proper weight lifting technique as a spotter and lifter.</td>
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<td>Calculate the force of an object when given the appropriate variables.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Identify three causes of World War I.</td>
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### Transcript:

Let’s pause for a moment and catch our breath! We’ve covered some important concepts, so let’s do a quick activity to solidify some of this learning. Here are four different learning objectives. Based on the description of each objective, decide whether it is well-suited for a performance task. When you are finished, click the submit button.

### Feedback

Check the objectives that are well-suited for a performance task.

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Now that we’ve covered some of the basics about performance tasks, let’s get into why and how teachers can use them to better differentiate for their students.

The inherent flexibility of performance tasks enables a teacher to differentiate time, support, and resources. You should consider using performance tasks as a differentiated assessment if: there is a large range of student ability in your classroom, and you want to increase student engagement.

In a differentiated classroom, both students and teachers understand that equity does not necessarily mean equality. Not all students need an equal amount of time, support, or resources in order to learn certain material. What would be fair is to provide students the amount of time, support, and resources that they require in order to learn the material.

As mentioned earlier, the open-ended nature of performance tasks provides various points of flexibility where
adjustments can be made to meet the diverse needs of your students.
For example, the learning objective that was described earlier (Demonstrate proper weight lifting technique as a spotter and lifter) naturally lends itself to differentiation. This task can be differentiated based on student readiness. Students could be offered a choice of different lifts, like dead lift versus bench press, with which to demonstrate their competency. They could also be offered a different amount of weight on the lift, and even a different amount of time to complete the lift.

Chapter 2: Five Elements

Introduction

Transcript:
We will now explore five different elements through which a performance task can be differentiated. Many of these elements exist on a continuum where supports and resources can be dialed up or dialed down depending on your students.
As you click on each one, you will see a simple definition, an example, and an explanation. Please take a few minutes to explore these elements at your leisure. When you are ready to move on to the rest of the module, click the “Proceed” button.
**Student Choice**

Click on each element for details. Click “Proceed” when ready to move on.

**Student Choice**
Freedom of choice within a larger task can increase levels of student interest.

Example:
Writing activity:
• Offer students choice in any or all four writing areas - Role, Audience, Format and/or Topic.

Note:
Ensure that students have been taught or know a process for making informed choices.

**Personal Relevance**

Click on each element for details. Click “Proceed” when ready to move on.

**Personal Relevance**
Students express and share their own personal experiences or relevance to a topic.

Example:
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech:
• Students read and discuss speech.
• Students write about how “the dream” has and hasn’t been fulfilled, citing evidence from media sources and personal experiences.

**Small & Great Leaps**

Click on each element for details. Click “Proceed” when ready to move on.

**Small & Great Leaps**
Small leaps require a relatively simple transference of knowledge and skill. Greater leaps require greater insight and transference of knowledge and skill from one context to another.

Example:
Physics small leap:
• Students complete a word problem where all variables needed to calculate force are known.

Physics great leap:
• Students describe how the Department of Transportation might use the concept of force to create speed limits and safety zones.
Pace and Structure

Click on each element for details. Click "Proceed" when ready to move on.

Pace and Structure
Pace refers to the amount of time a student needs to complete a task. Structure refers to the explicit support needed for a task. This may vary with each student.

Example:
Science experiment:
- Some students may need days to organize an experiment, and others may only need a few hours.
- Students that are more dependent may need planning tools, checklists, teacher check-ins or collaboration with peers.

Note: Research has shown that greater levels of structure and independence are helpful for some students and can be a hindrance for others (Lodewyk & Winne, 2005).

Simple to Complex Resources

Click on each element for details. Click "Proceed" when ready to move on.

Simple to Complex Resources
Some resources can be changed to increase the overall complexity of a task, such as texts at different reading levels, different types of numbers, or even the inclusion of more primary sources.

Example:
Researching the Vietnam War:
- Teacher provides historical texts at a range of reading levels and a mix of primary or secondary sources in a variety of media formats.

Note:
When selecting resources, be sure to comply with state standards that indicate required levels of complexity.

Keep in mind

Keep in mind:
- Performance tasks should not be differentiated by all five elements at once.
- Differentiate based on student needs.
- Pay attention to the natural flexibility of the performance task.
Transcript:

At this point you might be wondering, should performance tasks be differentiated according to all five elements at once? The answer is no, not necessarily. Most likely, a performance task shouldn't and/or couldn't be differentiated according to all five elements. First, you should differentiate performance tasks based on the needs of your students. Second, you should pay attention to what flexibility your performance task naturally offers.

Check for Understanding 1

Click on the element through which this performance task was differentiated.

Foreign Language
Students participate in a classroom debate around a contentious topic from a country where the language is spoken. Prior to the debate, students read texts in the foreign language as preparation. The texts they are given range from newspaper and magazine articles to research articles or other academic literature published online.

Student Choice  Simple to Complex Resources  Small & Great Leaps

Transcript:

Before we close out this section of the module, let's take a moment and check your understanding of some of the elements. Each of the following performance tasks have been differentiated according to one of the five elements we just discussed. After reading each performance task, click on the corresponding element through which it was differentiated.

(Correct Answer: Simple to Complex Resources)
Check for Understanding 2

Kindergarten Math
Students are presented with a small pile of coins, crayons, and colored buttons. All students must sort the objects into pre-identified categories, count how many objects are in each category, and then answer a series of questions about which category has the highest or lowest number of objects. Some students may be asked to think about how store owners use this same skill of sorting and counting in their stores and why they would do that.

Small & Great Leaps  Pace & Structure  Student Choice

(Correct Answer: Small & Great Leaps)

Check for Understanding 2

Health and Fitness Class
Students must conduct mini surveys and collect data on nutrition and exercise habits of 30 individuals. This information then must be summarized in a short paper with graphs and personal reflections. Some students have been provided with examples, guiding questions, and a graphic organizer to help in writing the report and organizing their ideas.

Personal Relevance  Simple to Complex Resources  Pace & Structure

(Correct Answer: Pace & Structure)
Conclusion

Transcript:

Meeting the needs of all students can sometimes feel overwhelming. Performance tasks provide the opportunity for you to differentiate for your students' diverse abilities, interests, and learning preferences. Performance tasks can help you foster an engaging, relevant, and supportive learning environment, which all of our students deserve.