



Information Sheet: Example activities that demonstrate differentiation strategies

You can use differentiation across all of the curriculum areas, and we have provided examples of activities for each curriculum area. Each of the example activities below relates to a learning statement from a different curriculum area and demonstrates differentiation strategies which are then summarised at the end of the activity. The activities include indoor and outdoor contexts to exemplify differentiation in different areas of the learning environment.

Curriculum area	Creative Expression
Specific area of learning	Experiencing
Age group	EY1 (ages 3–4)
Learning statement	1CEa.04 Play with different art and design tools and materials, for example, use sticks and other implements to change the surface of a flat piece of clay.
Context	Indoors: creative table
Description of activity	<p>Four children are at the creative table: Child A, Child B, Child C and Child D. There are large balls of soft dough on the table. The teacher asks the children to sing the rhyme ‘Pat a cake, pat a cake!’ that they have been learning. As they sing, the children are encouraged to ‘pat’ (press down) the dough with their hands in time to the beat of the rhyme. The teacher models the ‘patting’ movements on their dough for Child B and Child D who are struggling to coordinate themselves.</p> <p>The teacher then puts a basket of wooden utensils on the table and invites the children to use these to decorate their ‘flat cake’. Child A and Child C each take a pair of wooden scissors and cut the edges of their cakes with little snips. Child B is unsure of what to do, so the teacher takes a wooden fork and models using it to make marks along the middle of their ‘cake’. Child B watches this and then copies the teacher on their own ‘cake’. Child D, who has also watched the teacher’s actions, takes a wooden spoon and randomly presses the handle into their cake several times.</p>
Summary of the differentiation strategies used	<p>The children are all engaged in the same activity, but the teacher differentiates using:</p> <p>Modelling</p> <p>The teacher models the patting of the cake for those children who need support with their coordination (Child B and Child D). Modelling is also used to help Child B begin to decorate their cake, but the teacher is careful to decorate <i>their</i> own cake, <i>not</i> Child B’s.</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>A variety of wooden utensils are made available for the children to choose from, including those that require more dexterity (scissors used by Child A and Child C) and those that are easier to manipulate (forks and spoons used by Child B and Child D).</p>

Curriculum area	Mathematics
Specific area of learning	Counting
Age group	EY2 (ages 4–5)
Learning statement	2Mn.04 Use ordinal numbers from 1st to 10th in practical contexts, for example, to talk about a sequence of events or activities.
Context	Outdoors: play area
Description of activity	<p>A couple of children chalk a simple running track on the ground. Teacher 1 selects about eight children at a time to stand in the 'start square'. The group is based on prior mathematical understanding. Teacher 1 shouts: 'Ready... Steady... GO!' and the children all run to the finish line as fast as they can, following the chalked lines. Teacher 2 is at the end of the running track and records each race on a tablet computer, focusing on the children as they cross the finish line.</p> <p>After their race, each group of children is invited to come together to watch their race. Together they identify who comes in certain places in the race, as specified by Teacher 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racing group 1 identify who comes 4th, 5th and 6th. • Racing group 2 identify who comes 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th. • Racing group 3 identify who comes 4th, 6th and 8th. <p>Teacher 2 then asks the group to watch again and identify the places of two specified children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racing group 1 are given the names of the children who came 6th and 7th. • Racing group 2 are given the names of the children who came 3rd and 4th. • Racing group 3 are given the names of the children who came 5th and 7th.
Summary of the differentiation strategies used	<p>The children are all engaged in the same activity but Teachers 1 and 2 differentiate as follows:</p> <p>Grouping</p> <p>Teacher 1 selects the children for each race depending on their mathematical understanding, using previous assessments of understanding of ordinal numbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racing group 2: children who are still struggling with ordinal numbers beyond 3rd. • Racing group 1: children who need practice in identifying larger ordinal numbers (4th onwards) but would benefit from some support. • Racing group 3: children who are more secure in identifying larger ordinal numbers (4th onwards). <p>Task</p> <p>Teacher 2 sets tasks that match the prior understanding of each grouping above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racing group 2's tasks consolidate and develop EY1 learning on 1st, 2nd and 3rd. • Racing group 1's tasks support children's understanding of larger ordinal numbers by focusing on consecutive ordinal numbers. • Racing group 3's tasks cover a wider range of ordinal numbers and non-consecutive ordinal numbers.

Curriculum area	Communication, Language and Literacy
Specific area of learning	Making sense of text
Age group	EY3 (ages 5–6)
Learning statement	3CLr.05 Recognise or blend to identify the sounds represented by combinations of letters including common word beginnings and endings (e.g. <i>th-</i> , <i>sh-</i> , <i>ch-</i> , <i>ai</i> , <i>ee</i> , <i>igh</i> , <i>br-</i> , <i>bl-</i> , <i>-nd</i> , <i>-s</i> , <i>-ed</i> , <i>-ing</i>).
Context	Indoors: literacy table
Description of activity	<p>Three children are encouraged to join the teacher at the literacy table: Child A, Child B and Child C. There are playing cards, placed face down, and dice on the table. There is a different word beginning on the hidden side of each card. The teacher demonstrates a game by picking up a card. ‘st’ is written on the card. The teacher sounds out each letter individually and then blends them:</p> <p>Teacher: “‘s’ ... ‘t’ ... ‘st-’ Clap your hands if I got that right!” All of the children clap their hands.</p> <p>Teacher: “OK, now I need to roll my die. The number tells me how many words to say beginning with my blended sound ‘st-’.” The teacher rolls a 3.</p> <p>Teacher: “Three. Can you help me to say three words that begin with ‘st-’?”</p> <p>Child C: “Statue!”</p> <p>Child B points to a sticker on their jumper.</p> <p>Child B: “Look!” After a short pause.</p> <p>Child A: “Star!”</p> <p>Teacher: “Well done! Those are three good words [counting on fingers as they say the words] <i>statue</i>, <i>sticker</i>, <i>star</i>! Are you ready to play the game now?”</p> <p>The children take it in turns to play the game.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher encourages Child A to ‘take their time’ when identifying their two words starting with ‘tr-’. • The teacher challenges Child C to say their six words beginning with ‘fl-’ as quickly as they can. • The teacher invites Child B to point to or say objects in the setting that begin with ‘br-’.
Summary of the differentiation strategies used	<p>The children are all engaged in the same activity, but the teacher differentiates as follows:</p> <p>Pace</p> <p>The teacher encourages Child A and Child C to identify their words at different paces, based on their responses to the earlier ‘st-’ activity. This gives Child A more time to think and gives Child C the challenge of thinking of their words quickly (at a faster pace).</p> <p>Response</p> <p>As Child B pointed to an object beginning with ‘st-’ rather than verbalising their word, the teacher gives Child B the option to point to relevant objects in the setting that start with ‘br-’, whilst still encouraging them to say the words as another option.</p>

Curriculum area	Physical Development
Specific area of learning	Moving well
Age group	EY1 (ages 3–4)
Learning statement	1PD.07 Show some control when handling small objects and construction toys, for example, stacking a number of building blocks.
Context	Indoors: construction play area
Description of activity	<p>Three children are sitting on the carpet with the teacher: Child A, Child B and Child C. In front of them is a bag of different-sized building blocks. The teacher invites each child to use five blocks to build a tower for an imaginary dragon to sit on. The children count out the blocks they want from the bag and begin to build their individual towers.</p> <p>The teacher observes Child A building a sturdy five-block tower, moving and placing the blocks with ease using their right hand. As Child B and Child C continue to work on their towers, the teacher challenges Child A to build two more towers, but encourages him to use their left hand sometimes to move and place a block.</p> <p>Child B completes their tower and leans back from it just as Child C's uneven, incomplete tower falls down, knocking down Child B's tower too. The teacher comforts Child B, who is upset, and suggests that Child C and Child B work together to build a five-block tower by the time Child A finishes building the last of their three towers. Child C builds the lower part of the tower with three blocks and Child B finishes it off.</p> <p>The children are then prompted to dance around the towers flapping their dragon wings (arms) and making fire breathing sounds with their mouths – "RARRRRRR!"</p>
Summary of the differentiation strategies used	<p>All of the children start by doing the same activity, but the teacher differentiates as follows:</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>When Child A easily completes the activity, the teacher challenges him to repeat the task using their less dominant hand as well as their dominant hand.</p> <p>Peer support</p> <p>When Child C finds the activity challenging, the teacher asks Child B and Child C to work together. In this way, Child C achieves the learning statement to some degree and also completes the task with Child B's support with the more challenging aspects.</p>

Curriculum area	Understanding the World
Specific area of learning	Plants and animals
Age group	EY2 (ages 4–5)
Learning statement	2UWs.02 Grow and care for different plants, knowing that they need light and water to survive.
Context	Outdoors: garden

Description of activity	<p>Child A and Child B are sitting together reading <i>Jasper's Beanstalk</i> by Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen. They go to the teacher and ask if they can water the plants in the garden like Jasper the cat does.</p> <p>Teacher: "Why do you want to give the plants water?"</p> <p>Child A: "Because [pause] it helps them to grow! Look!" Child A points at a picture of Jasper with a watering can in the book.</p> <p>Teacher: "Oh, I see! Okay, but how much water will you give to each plant?"</p> <p>Teacher looks at Child B. Child B pauses for a moment, unsure of how to answer. Child B looks down at the ground.</p> <p>Child B: "Don't know."</p> <p>Teacher: "Are you going to give the plants <i>a lot</i> of water or <i>just a little</i> water?"</p> <p>After a short pause.</p> <p>Child B: "Just a little."</p> <p>Teacher: "That's good. [smiling] We don't want to give them too much water, do we?"</p> <p>Child A: "No, anyway, our watering can doesn't hold much water!" The teacher laughs and monitors the two children as they independently go and water each of the plants in the garden, taking it in turns to be Jasper the cat with the watering can.</p>
Summary of the differentiation strategies used	<p>The two children are both present during the short exchange with the teacher, but the teacher differentiates as follows:</p> <p>Questioning</p> <p>The teacher asks each child different questions, ensuring that neither child dominates and using different question stems to yield different responses from each child (<i>Why...?</i> and <i>How much ...?</i>).</p> <p>Prompting</p> <p>When Child B is unsure of how to answer, the teacher offers two prompts to choose from (<i>a lot</i> or <i>just a little</i> water), giving the child the chance to answer correctly by guiding their thinking.</p>

Curriculum area	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Specific area of learning	Developing self-confidence
Age group	EY3 (ages 5–6)
Learning statement	3PS.16 Talk confidently to unfamiliar people in familiar social settings, including visitors to school.
Context	Outdoors: play area

Description of activity	<p>The teachers have invited parents and carers of children in the class to spend time working with the class in the outdoor play area. The aim is to encourage children to talk confidently to parents and carers of other children. The teachers have set up lots of cooperative activities, for example playing football, painting pictures and building a den.</p> <p>Child A confidently approaches one of the parents and asks if they can help them to paint a picture of a car. Child B and Child C are shy, so Teacher 1 suggests that they start kicking a ball between them and one of the parents. Teacher 1 also encourages the two children to ask the parent questions they had prepared beforehand, e.g. 'Do you like playing football?', 'How can I kick the ball in a straight line?'</p> <p>Teacher 2 observes Child D and Child E working intensely with one of the parents on building a den. Teacher 2 suggests that the children give instructions to the parent on how to make part of the den, rather than the parent telling the children how to build all of it.</p>
Summary of the differentiation strategies used	<p>The children are all engaged in cooperative activities, but the teachers differentiate as follows:</p> <p>Interaction</p> <p>Teacher 1 prompts physical interaction between the shy children and the parent by encouraging the passing of the ball between the three of them. They also prompt the children to interact verbally with the parent by suggesting they ask questions that they are already comfortable with.</p> <p>Level</p> <p>Teacher 2 challenges Child D and Child E to work at the task of building the den at two different levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listening to and acting on the parent's instructions • giving instructions themselves, which also gives them the opportunity to observe parent to see if they carry out the instructions as they expected.



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