

Taming the Fluff: Making Differentiation Substantive

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- Visit <http://spark.uconn.edu/sparkpres>

Differentiation – Buzzword or Solid Practice?

- Goals of differentiation
 - Respond to the varied needs of learners
 - Increase access to learning, motivation for learning, and effectiveness of learning (Tomlinson, 1999; 2001)
 - Provide opportunities for exceptional learners to have their needs addressed outside of a resource setting (as well as *in* a resource setting)
- Challenges of differentiation
 - Defining the concept
 - Managing the practice
 - Communicating regular-classroom differentiation as “necessary but not sufficient” (Hertberg-Davis, 2012)

Differentiation Practices and Perceptions – A Cautionary Tale

- Promoting interest and engagement
- Prioritizing choices
- Emphasis on format
- Allocation of time, energy, and resources

Our focus today...

Tasks designed to promote *choice and/or engagement* within a context of differentiation

Balance of *substance* with the question of choice and engagement

Fluff versus Substance

- Perspectives on fluff:
 - Removing the core substance of a task or making it less rigorous to increase access for struggling learners
 - Developing tasks that have “face” appeal but limited substance in an effort to ensure a variety of choices for learners

A Differentiation Problem Only?

- Dangers presented by trying to build too many choices
- Importance of ensuring connections of high-quality content and meaningful objectives
- Importance of starting from worthwhile, substantive tasks – differentiation of weak curriculum/instructional experiences will not make those experiences better

RAFT ACTIVITY ON FRACTIONS

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Fraction	Whole Number	Petitions	To be considered Part of the Family
Improper Fraction	Mixed Numbers	Reconciliation Letter	Were More Alike than Different
A Simplified Fraction	A Non-Simplified Fraction	Public Service Announcement	A Case for Simplicity
Greatest Common Factor	Common Factor	Nursery Rhyme	I'm the Greatest!
Equivalent Fractions	Non Equivalent	Personal Ad	How to Find Your Soul Mate
Least Common Factor	Multiple Sets of Numbers	Recipe	The Smaller the Better
Like Denominators in an Additional Problem	Unlike Denominators in an Addition Problem	Application form	To Become A Like Denominator
A Mixed Number that Needs to be Renamed to Subtract	5 th Grade Math Students	Riddle	What's My New Name
Like Denominators in a Subtraction Problem	Unlike Denominators in a Subtraction Problem	Story Board	How to Become a Like Denominator
Fraction	Baker	Directions	To Double the Recipe
Estimated Sum	Fractions/Mixed Numbers	Advice Column	To Become Well Rounded



RAFT Planning Sheet

Know
Understand
Do

How to Differentiate:

- Tiered? (See Equalizer)
- Profile? (Differentiate Format)
- Interest? (Keep options equivalent in learning)
- Other?



Role	Audience	Format	Topic

Feudal Pyramid RAFT

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
King	The Subjects	Proclamation	Read My Lips, New Taxes
Knight	Squire	Job Description	Chivalry, Is it for you?
Lord	King	Contract	Let's Make a Deal
Serf	Animals	Lament Poem	My So Called Life
Monk	Masses	Illuminated Manuscript	Do As I Say, Not as I Do
Lady	Pages	Song	ABC, 123

Following the RAFT activity, students will share their research and perspectives in mixed role groups of approximately five. Groups will have a "discussion agenda" to guide their conversation.

Kathryn Scaman

Defining Fluff versus Substance

- Option 1: Start by listing characteristics that might make a task “fluffy.” Then list characteristics that might represent substance. Use those to develop 3-4 key criteria that could be used in evaluating tasks for fluff versus substance.
- Option 2: Draft a continuum of characteristics that might be illustrations of varying degrees of fluff versus substance.
- Option 3: Describe several sample tasks you have seen used in classrooms that you would consider “fluffy” and several that you would consider substantive. Choose 1-2 tasks in each group that you would consider to be clear, illustrative examples.

A Few Key Points...

- Clear linkages to intended, worthwhile learning outcomes
- Relevance of the experience to the disciplines under study
- Defensible allocation of time and resources
- Opportunities for growth
- Manageable and defensible assessment
- Avoidance of differentiation by volume

Pond Animals:

You must pick at least three different activities. The activities have to be in a tic tac toe pattern. Color in the box of each activity that you pick to complete.

Write a poem about a pond animal of your choice.

Draw a picture of your favorite pond animal. Write a description of what the pond animal looks like.

Create a graph using different pond animals.

Pretend to be different pond animals. Move and sound like the animal and have someone guess the animal.

Write a story about your favorite pond animal.

Create your own pond animal. If you could make any pond animal what would it be. Draw a picture of the animal and tell why you picked it.

Pick two pond animals. Create a venn diagram about the animals.

Write and describe what you think it would be like to be a pond animal and what it would like to live in a pond.

Pick your favorite pond animal and create a dance moving how the animal moves.

Macbeth Tic-Tac-Toe Project

Choose 3 cells in a row- horizontally, vertically or diagonally
You may choose any 3 as long as you can connect them all with a straight line!
Complete all 3 activities to complete your final project for our Macbeth unit.



1. Create a character web or concept map using an online tool such as Mindjet or Bubbl.us- Be sure to include pictures and descriptions for each character. Choose your favorite Hollywood actors to create the cast.	2. Create a historical timeline of the real, Scottish events surrounding <i>Macbeth</i> . Please include important dates, political figures and do not forget to make it colorful! You can do this on a poster board. Please cite any outside information.	3. Create an advertisement for a theatre production of <i>Macbeth</i> . Why should people come and see this production? Make me want to come see this fabulous production! Who is the star of the show, where is it being held?
4. Rewrite the ending of <i>Macbeth</i> . Turn in a 500 word play-by-play of how your rendition goes down.	5. FREE CHOICE- have an idea of your own? Come talk to me and let me know what you have in mind! Get creative with this one!	6. Memorize and perform a soliloquy of your choice. It can be from any character who has an aside or a longer soliloquy. Why not try the famous "tomorrow, tomorrow and tomorrow" speech made by Macbeth? You can film yourself or perform for the class!
7. Create a soundtrack for <i>Macbeth</i> . Include at least 10 songs. Please put your music on a CD with a cover designed by you! Inside the cover, include a description for why you chose each song. Be specific and list any evidence from the text.	8. Create a word search or crossword puzzle. Choose from key terms and search inside the play for important characters, themes etc. Must choose a minimum of 40 words for your puzzles.	9. Write 3 journal entries from the perspective of one character. These should be "dear diary" esque. Make sure their deepest, darkest feelings come out and follow them on their journey throughout their role in <i>Macbeth</i> .

Applying the Criteria

- Review 2-3 of the sample tasks within your group.
- Evaluate the tasks for fluff versus substance.
- Discuss whether you might implement each task as is, modify or improve it somehow, or eliminate it from consideration for instructional time.



A fool thinks himself to be wise,
but a wise man knows himself to be a fool.

(Touchstone, *As You Like It*, Act V, Scene 1)

Shakespeare can be fluffy, and potentially fluffy topics can develop into meaningful learning experiences....

A Few Key Points...

- Clear linkages to intended, worthwhile learning outcomes **that are relevant for all learners in the group**
- Relevance of the experience to the disciplines under study **and opportunities to engage authentically in practices of the disciplines**
- Defensible allocation of time and resources **that prioritizes pace and depth in response to learner needs**
- Opportunities for growth **for all learners**
- Manageable and defensible assessment **linked clearly to learning outcomes over “window dressing”**
- Avoidance of differentiation by volume – **more complex, more abstract, etc. – not just MORE**

Areas of Emphasis for Differentiation for the Gifted

- Acceleration
 - Complexity
 - Depth
 - Challenge
 - Creativity
 - Abstractness
- (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006)



Advance our standards, set upon our foes
But screw your courage to the sticking place...

(Lady Macbeth, *Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 7)

Thank you!