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Message from OASCD **Board of Directors**

Oregon's educational future is a bright one. We have outstanding educators working on their own professional development resulting in improved content as well as process skills. Policy makers are struggling with every possible issue from pre-school to higher education as well as core requirements to alternative schools structures. The Board of Directors continues to bring professional development and services to Oregon educators to help them in their pursuit of excellence. We would like to thank member for their participation in OASCD and ask for continued involvement in the organization and its activities.

Here are some of our accomplishments so far this year:

October

Differentiated Learning Conference
Carol Ann Tomlinson

Over 550 participants
From 65 different districts

November

Released influence document
Ideal Assessment System
A Guide to Understanding

Distributed over 1000 copies

February

Pre-Service Teacher Conference

192 pre-service teachers from
14 Colleges across Oregon

May 4-6

Spring Research Institute
Inn of 7th Mountain, Bend

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The Outlook Newsletter provides our members with a resource on current topics. This months newsletter is made up of topic identified by our membership and examines Differentiated Instruction, Student Lead Conferences, Multi Cultural Classroom, High Schools. The full downloadable copies with citations are available on our website at www.oregon.ascd.org. If you would like to suggest a topic or submit an article for publication or for posting on our website, please do so by contacting Colin Cameron or Mark Girod via email from our website.

The Art of Differentiation

Moving from Theory to Practice

by John Franklin

Dana Flowers had a problem. As a 3rd grade teacher struggling to “leave no child behind,” she found that George* was proving to be a formidable challenge. “He never volunteered for anything,” she says. “His handwriting was awful, he had a crummy attitude, and he never showed any signs of wanting to participate. I was really worried about him.”

Those behaviors changed when, after one particular unit, Flowers offered her students a choice. Instead of simply taking a test, the students could choose different ways of showing what they knew. To her surprise, George chose to do a musical routine. “Here he had hardly spoken a single word all year, and now he wanted to get up in front of the entire class and sing a song,” she recalls. “But he did it. He sang an entire song about water, once for us and *again* for the music teacher. He covered every concept that we were looking for—evaporation, condensation, you name it—and just sang

his little heart out. He really was ‘Joe Cool!’” Since then, Flowers says, George’s hand is regularly in the air, and he has continued to blossom, sharing what he learns through further songs.

“Differentiated instruction really made a difference for George,” Flowers adds. “I’ve found that if kids can show what they’ve learned in their own way and can express it in their own fashion, they can



show what they know in a much deeper manner than if they simply take a pencil-and-paper test.”

Flowers’s experience with differentiation—teaching students based on their individual abilities and through various methods designed to fit their particular learning skills rather than through a one-size-fits-all model—demonstrates what many teachers have been successfully doing for some time now: applying the theory of differentiated instruction through strategies and practices that help students blossom.

Preassess for Success

Just as any traveler needs a map before starting on a journey, so teachers need to plan the process of differentiation carefully, according to experts.

“We go with Susan Winebrenner’s ‘Most Difficult First’ strategy,” says Kim Pettig, an instructional coordinator with the Allen Creek School in Pittsford, N.Y. “This is where we determine if students can demonstrate understanding or skills at the outset of a lesson. If so, then we try to challenge them with things that they *don’t* already know. You then use that knowledge to guide your instruction.” Pre-assessment, she says, can be done with paper and pencil for math and science, but it can be applied to subjects such as social studies as well. “When we did a unit on the westward movement of the 19th century, we asked the children to write letters as if they were moving to another part of the country,” Pettig says. “If Mom and Dad were changing jobs, that meant changes in economic development were underway, and if more jobs were available elsewhere, what did that mean? That was the concept we wanted the kids to understand, and by using the children’s letters, we were

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Where Students Lead, Achievement Follows

Opal Dawson

Opal Dawson grew up on the rough streets of Chicago's South Side. The daughter of a single mother and sister to five siblings, she learned at an early age the value of clearing her mind of the word "can't." A crucial component to overcoming the odds was finding support and learning to build on it. Now, as the principal of an urban Montessori school where 67 percent of the students also come from single parent households, she looks for any chance to share this philosophy. Through practice, she's found that student-led parent-teacher conferences are a way to create positive alliances between home and school and empower students to take ownership of their own success.

Students in the Middle

These student-led conferences support accountability, Dawson said. They put students in the middle of learning goals and teacher expectations. With the teacher as the facilitator, students review and reflect upon their work with their family and teacher. Students are no longer passive recipients of grades, and parents no longer feel in the dark about the work leading up to a culminating grade. Along with their parents, students explicitly analyze how their work stacks up to the criteria the teacher uses to judge the assignments.

As students review their educational progress through the conference, they are the primary agents for setting their own goals, Dawson noted. "The open communication style of a student-led conference means that parents are going to interact a lot more and get a lot more information about their child's learning and skills," she added. This is key to securing parent support of the goals set by the student and teacher. Also, students can help bridge language barriers between teachers and parents, making conferences less intimidating to non-English-speaking parents.

Dos and Don'ts

Dawson offered a few guidelines for getting started using student-led parent-teacher conferences:

- **Do** role-play conferencing with teacher peers or the student beforehand.
- **Don't** let the conference be the first time you meet parents. Call or e-mail parents during the first weeks of school. Try to arrange an informal meeting at the first school event.



- **Do** let data guide you. Save work samples and review them objectively.
- **Don't** be afraid to ask parents for help. Ask them, "What works at home?"
- **Do** set an agenda before the conference—it can be tight or loose based on your rapport with the parents.

Student-led conferences get students, parents, and teachers all working toward the same goal, Dawson noted. These conferences help school communities tap their inherent power by sharing expectations, goals, and a firm belief in "can."





Managing the Multicultural Classroom

Effective Learning Communities Are Built on Understanding

by John Franklin

Skillful teachers know that they regularly compete with various outside influences in their students' lives—such as television, Web sites, and video games—and are prepared to deal with them. Occasionally, however, even the most experienced teacher can find herself up against an influence she knows she can't compete with.

Take God, for instance.

"One of my [master's degree] student teachers told me that [an elementary school] pupil tried to share information with another student because at church he had been told that God would be angry with people who didn't share!" says Alison Shook, an assistant professor of education at Albright College in Albright, Pa. "Many minority communities don't focus on individual achievement," she adds. "They focus on collaboration instead."

Cultural differences such as the one Shook describes are an influence teachers must learn to manage

in order to promote effective learning environments in their classrooms. For instance, disciplining a student for a perceived infraction can create a cultural rift between the teacher and student if the student feels the teacher does not understand or respect the intention behind the action. If not closed quickly, such a rift can lead to greater misunderstandings that have the potential to poison the teacher's relationship with the student. In extreme cases, such differences can irreparably damage a student's openness to learning.

"Conflicts can arise when 90 percent of teachers are white and a majority of the students are nonwhite," Shook adds. "There are disconnects or misunderstandings between

approaches and activity levels that can come up, [so] the best strategy you can employ is simply to prevent problems before they start."

Cultural Sensitivity vs. Individual Identity

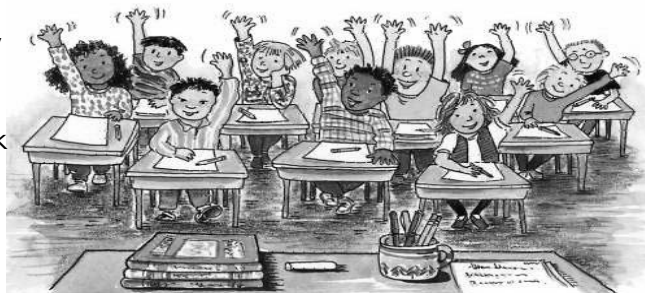
Ironically, one of the biggest mistakes new teachers often make stems from their good faith efforts to treat all students equally. "It's a mistake to treat everyone the same," says Richard L. Curwin, coauthor of the ASCD book *Discipline with Dignity*.

Rewarding Relationships

Allen Mendler, author of the book *Just in Time: Powerful Strategies to Promote Positive Behavior*, says "You have classrooms full of different students, both culturally and in terms of learning styles, so how do you reach out to all of them? How do you achieve those high standards in a differentiated classroom while addressing multiple intelligences in an inclusive environment? You do it by building a community."

Read More

About community building, the importance of differences, and racism in the complete article on our website <http://oregon.ascd.org>



Spring Research Institute

May 4-6, 2006

The Inn of the Seventh Mountain, Bend, Oregon

Sponsored by: Oregon ASCD

Make It Happen In Your School!

Come join us in beautiful Central Oregon for this year's Spring Research Institute. Don't miss this opportunity for **quality team collaboration**. This is a chance for Title I school wide planning teams, site councils, and program development teams to **review and update action plans for school improvement**. The Institute offers a variety of consultants to offer support in key areas, problem solving and planning. The only one of its kind, the OASCD Spring Research Institute will provide teams with the focus and time to work together that it takes to help your school become all that it can be!

Thursday, May 4

9:30-10:00 AM Registration

10:00-12:30 PM Concurrent Sessions

➤ **'School Wide Planning and How to Evaluate Your School Improvement Activities'**

Mike Loretz: Director of School Improvement/McMinnville School District

Chris Rhines: School Improvement Consultant/Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement in Washington, D.C.

➤ **'Effective Implementation of SIOP'**

Frank Hernandez: Northwest Regional Education Lab

12:30-1:30 PM Lunch

1:30-4:00PM Concurrent Sessions

➤ **'Standards Based ELL Instruction'**

Frank Hernandez: Northwest Regional Education Lab

➤ **'Baby Step- Getting Started With Differentiated Instruction'**

Cate Hill, et al: Classroom Teacher and Program Developer for Bend/LaPine School District

➤ **'Small Learning Communities'**

Vicki Van Buren: Director of HS Programs/Bend/LaPine School District

Mark Neffendorf: Principal/Bend High School

Chris Reese: Vice Principal/Bend High School

Al Hulbert: Teacher Leader/Bend High School

6:00-8:30 PM – Happy Hour (no host bar) Banquet Dinner and OASCD General Meeting

Friday, May 6th

7:30-8:30 AM Breakfast Buffet

8:30-12:30 PM Team Work Time with Consultants (sign-up required)

12:30-1:30 PM Lunch

1:30-4:30 PM Team Work Time with Consultants (sign-up required)

Dinner on your own (have fun in Bend with your Team)

Saturday, May 7th

Breakfast On Your Own

8:00-11:00 AM Team Work Time

12:00 PM Hotel Check-Out

Conference limited to 100 participants, Register by April 7, 2006

Thursday Sessions only 9:30-4:00 PM

\$99.00

OASCD Member \$69

Full Conference, Thursday-Saturday

\$330

OASCD Member \$300

(includes; the above plus, lodging and meals as indicated in schedule)

Visit the OASCD Website for further contact information and registration form: <http://oregon.ascd.org>

What Our High School Students Need

By Gene R. Carter,
Executive
Director, ASCD



A great deal of attention has been focused recently on the demand to improve high schools, including President Bush's call to expand NCLB-mandated testing in high schools. Although the President's attention is rightly focused, high-stakes testing is insufficient to solve the problems high schools face, including high dropout rates, low student engagement, and poor college and work preparation.

In Texas, where high-stakes testing has been the norm for more than a decade, increased testing has done little to stem the tide of dropouts. In the last several years, Texas schools have come under sharp criticism for falsifying dropout data to hide the true number of dropouts and, more recently, for rampant cheating on state tests.

The relevancy of state assessments has also been questioned. As Stanford Professor Michael Kirst writes in the November 2004 issue of *Educational Leadership*, "State high school assessments stress knowledge and skills that differ from college entrance and placement exams." These "disconnected education systems are undermining students' college aspirations" and contributing to the failure of many students to graduate from college.

Education reform that brings more of the same to our high schools will not suffice. As Virginia Governor Mark Warner wrote in *Education Week*, "a revolutionary approach to high school is needed—one that challenges and engages students in meaningful, lifelong learning and provides a nurturing support system at all levels."

Rather than focus solely on high-stakes tests at the expense of educating the whole child, we must ensure our students are civically engaged; motivated; and emotionally, physically, and socially healthy. Each of these aspects of a student's learning and development is crucial to preparing students for their future success as employees, college students, citizens, and healthy, productive adults.

A story my colleague told me about her son is an example of the importance of engaging students through relevant, challenging high school experiences. As a sophomore in high school, her son was an uninspired student whose journalism teacher had to chase him down on the football field to remind him that his newspaper story was overdue. Just two years later, as a senior, this student was not only the editor of the school newspaper but also won scholarships as the Virginia high school journalist of the year and as a runner-up for the national award.

More important than achieving success on a high-stakes test, he found his passion. As he grew connected to his journalism teacher, he also became more engaged in his

school and community. When a police officer erased digital pictures my colleague's son had taken of his fellow students being questioned by the police, this young man defended his first amendment right of freedom of the press. He relied on his journalism teacher and his school for support and, ultimately, made a difference in his community and at the police department, where they decided to use his story as a training tool. Currently, he is a successful college freshman planning to major in journalism.

Many innovative schools are working toward this goal by connecting students with internships, college coursework, and service learning in their communities. At the Met School in Rhode Island, for example, Dennis Littky has created a school that gives students individualized, real-world experience through internships and personalized learning. The result is that 100 percent of the school's seniors are accepted to college each year, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Said one 8th grader, quoted in Littky's book, "I am more interested in school because school is more interested in me."

Students like this 8th grader and my colleague's son—who are challenged to learn more about the things they are passionate about—are students who are more likely to be engaged and successful not only in high school, but also long after graduation day.



Continued from Page 2

able to gauge our instruction based on how each child responded."

"Doing Differentiation"

Despite the widespread interest in differentiated instruction, the approach has not been without its detractors and challenges, according to educators.

"Differentiated instruction definitely requires more time and planning," says John Artis, assistant superintendent for Upper Arlington Schools in Upper Arlington, Ohio. "But time is not the biggest challenge or obstacle. In our experience, the biggest challenge is overcoming the assumption by many teachers that they're already doing differentiated instruction."

Artis's view is echoed by teachers as well. "There is a tendency by some teachers who have been teaching a certain way for years to think, 'We're already doing differentiation,' but that's not always the case," says Flowers. Veteran teachers, she says, may be doing guided readings in their classrooms, but they may not be giving students the opportunity to show what they know through different projects or allowing them to study what interests them. That kind of variety, she and

others contend, can make for a much more enriching curriculum if it is incorporated properly.

Uneven = Fair

Being able to incorporate differentiated instruction properly, however, requires teachers to communicate clearly with their students—and the students' parents—that students will be required to work at different times on different projects in order to fully develop as learners.

"I tell my students and their parents in the fall that my job is to take every student and stretch him or her to that next level," says Judy Miller, a 5th grade teacher at Windermere Elementary School in Upper Arlington, Ohio. "That means that there will be times when one student is reading two books and times when another has to read one book. Those two books might be easier for one while that one book is very

challenging for another particular student—it's not about what's even, it's about being fair in order for everyone to excel." In Miller's own class, students sometimes read up to 22 different books at any given time, but each assignment is still designed to get that individual student to learn and improve to the best of her particular abilities and skills. "It takes a lot of effort," says Miller, "But when you can celebrate what you're doing, that makes a big difference."

Flowers shares Miller's enthusiasm. "The hardest thing for me is not overdoing my differentiated instruction," she says. "It takes a lot of time and planning, and it's hard not to want to do it in every aspect of your teaching, but when you're able to do it—and when you can see it working for a student—it's really amazing."

OUTLOOK is issued semi annually during the school year by the Oregon Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Direct questions and articles to the editor at 503.472.1243 or colinc@onlinemac.org

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CALL TO AUTHORS!

Oregon ASCD is inviting Oregon educators to share their thoughts in future Oregon ASCD Newsletters. Outlook articles should be 300-500 words and submitted via email to Colin Cameron colinc@onlinemac.org Please include professional biographic information of author, digital photos or graphics are welcome.

Possible topics:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Good ideas or best practices from your school | | |
| NCLB | Content Specific | State Assessment Policy |
| Curriculum | Mentoring Programs | Parent Involvement |
| Assessment | CIM/CAM | Business Partnerships |
| Instruction | Reading First | Pre-school Education |
| State Standards | Accountability | Extra Curricular Activities |

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