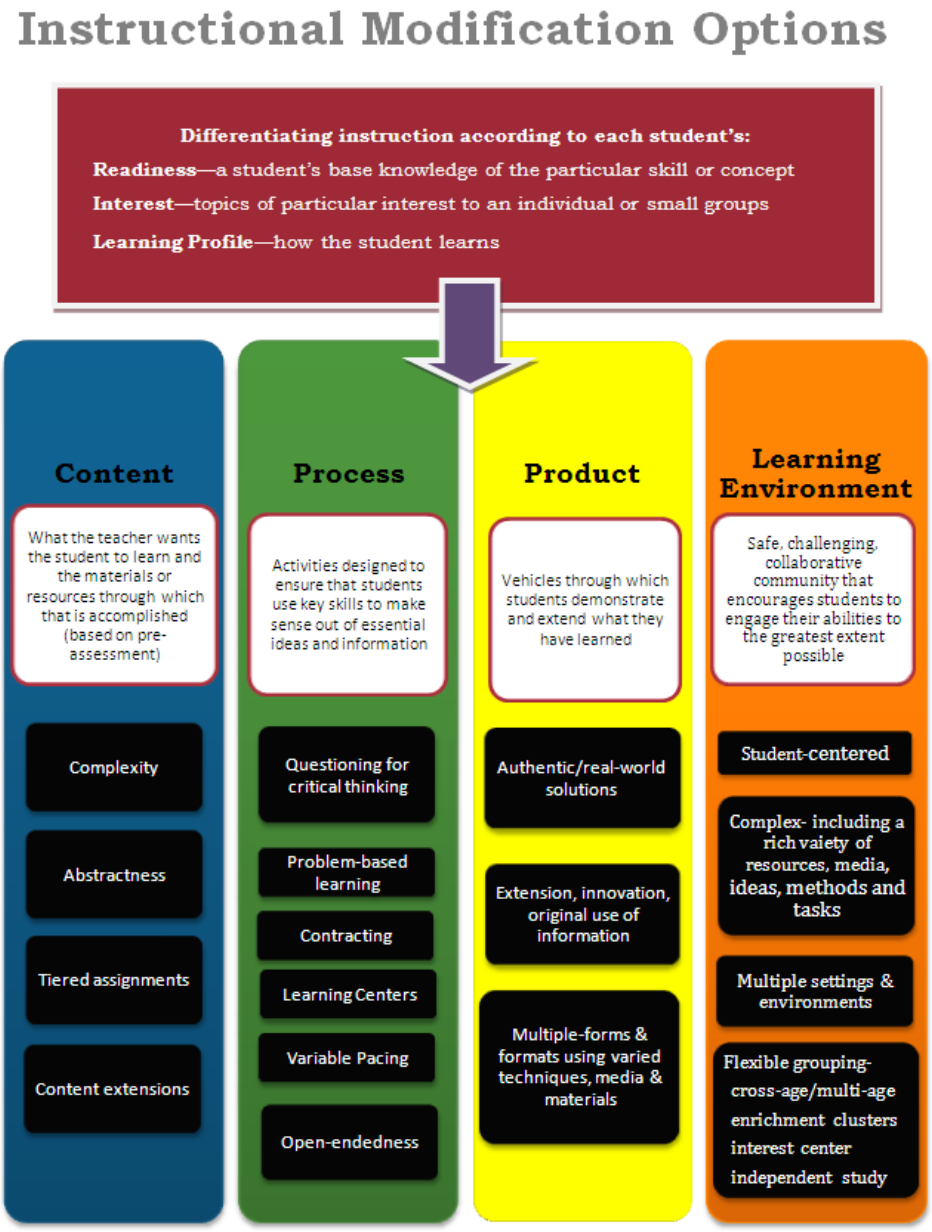
Differentiation
Definition and Graphic Organizer

Differentiating instruction is an approach to respond to a learner's needs through modification of content, process, product, as well as learning environment.



Content, process, and product are addressed by adjusting depth, complexity and novelty of materials and tasks to promote continual growth and appropriate challenge.

- **Depth** encourages students to venture further, deeper, with greater elaboration into an area of study (going deeper, uncovering information, learning from: concrete to abstract, familiar to unfamiliar, known to unknown, literal to synthesized).

- **Complexity** helps students make connections and identify relationships and associations between, within, and across subjects and disciplines (focus on: relationships within, between, and among a topic or discipline, content to study issues, problems, and themes, varying perspectives).

- **Novelty** encourages students to create a personal understanding or connection to the subject area, making content more memorable (provide personalized approaches to inquiry and exploration, use nontraditional study methods, synthesize information using irony, paradox, and metaphors, interpret meaning and give personal insights).

The learning environment addresses both the operation (rules, procedures, guidelines) and the tone (respect, celebrations, responsibility) of the classroom. The student's readiness, interests, and learning level need to be considered when determining instructional decisions.

According to Carol Ann Tomlinson, Professor of Educational Leadership, Foundations, and Policy at the University of Virginia, "…learners should work consistently with concept-focused curriculum, tasks that call for high level thought, and products that ask students to extend and use what they have learned in meaningful ways. As a student becomes more advanced, task 'demand' will need to escalate to ensure ongoing challenge for that learner and to ensure continual progress toward expertise. This concept is called ascending intellectual demand." (Tomlinson, et.al. *The Parallel Curriculum*. Corwin Press, 2002.)