Dubai Modern Education School

Differentiation

Policy

School Vision

Empower learners to contribute to the global community through innovation, exploration, and citizenship.

School Mission

DMES cultivates reflective scholars, bold innovators and passionate leaders equipped with the content knowledge, skillset, and ethics to make a positive contribution to society. The learning environment prepares students for lives of meaning and purpose emphasizing academic excellence, high expectations, and enthusiasm for life. Our school emphasizes the development of a character loyal to GOD and country identified by integrity through self-discipline and tolerance.

Through our authentic programs, conducive learning environment, and strong partnerships with families and the wider community, our learners experience rich language acquisition, appreciation for diversity, and become lifelong learners.

Core Values

- Citizenship
- Respect
- Leadership
- Responsibility
- Tolerance
- Commitment
- Excellence
- High Expectation

Differentiation Policy

1.0 Primary Value

The primary value in this policy is catering for the needs of each individual student to raise the levels of academic and personal achievement through the effective implementation of differentiation.

2.0 Rationale

DMES takes pride in providing quality education to our culturally and academically diverse student population. The school responds to the evolving demands of serving our learners – including students of determination, English language learners, and gifted and talented students by promoting inclusivity and equity in our educational provision. To provide for this entitlement, DMES advocates for differentiation as an integral component of our educational programs and practices.

3.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote differentiation through the provision of equitable learning experiences and opportunities that are purposeful, enjoyable and challenging for all students. The policy outlines the philosophy, principles, and practices of differentiation as well as strategies of DTI for diverse learners.

4.0 Aims

DMES strives to provide all students equity of access to quality education through our differentiation provision which aims to:

- Recognize the rights of all students to be socially included in school and the community through inclusive practices.
- Maximize student potential and promote student success by upholding the highest possible standards of quality in curriculum, learning environment, assessment, instruction, and support.
- Develop flexible, challenging and engaging learning opportunities for all students to help them meet the curriculum standards and benchmarks.

- Respond to individual differences among students in prior knowledge, readiness, needs, interests, and learning styles through rigorous, relevant, and varied learning experiences.

- Increase overall student achievement and performance by communicating higher expectations for all students and employing learner-centered approaches to instruction.

5.0 Definitions

5.1 **Differentiate**[1]: To plan, teach, and assess, taking account of differences amongst students, e.g. cognitive, linguistic, cultural, learning styles.

5.2 **English Language Learner (ELL)** [2]: A child who does not speak English or whose native language is not English and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English.

5.3 **Gifted and Talented Student**[3]: A student who is in possession of untrained and spontaneously-expressed exceptional natural ability in one or more domains of human ability (gifted); a student who has been able to transform their 'giftedness' into exceptional performance (talented).

5.4 **Student of Determination**[4]: A student with a long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment, which, in interaction with various barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in education on an equal basis with other peers of the same age.

6.0 Philosophy, Principles, and Practices of Differentiation

The differentiation provision in teaching and learning at DMES draws on the guidance from Tomlinson's three pillars of effective differentiation[5].

The *Philosophy* of differentiation is based on the following essential tenets:

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[1] UAE Inspection Framework 2015-2016, p. 23

[2] ELA/ ELD Framework for California Public Schools 2015, page 1065

[3] UAE Inspection Framework 2015-2016, p. 119

[4] Implementing Inclusive Education: A Guide for Schools 2019, page 9

[5] Tomlinson, C.A. The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners 2014, pp. 25

- **Diversity is normal and valuable** – The school recognizes the unique traits and the individuality of each student, fostering a culture of respect and tolerance. We strive to create learning communities that celebrate student differences and are enriched by the students' diverse experiences and perspectives.

- **Every learner has a hidden and extensive the capacity to learn** – We seek to unleash and uncover the strengths and potential of all students through our learner-centered approach in teaching.

  We establish high expectations for all students, regardless of their background and abilities, and provide them with adequate support and challenge to optimize their achievement.

- **Teachers taking responsibility to guide and structure student success** – We recognize the primary role of teachers in instilling the values of proactivity, persistence, and resilience in our students as they work towards achieving and exceeding their learning goals. We believe that teachers also contribute to the strong home-school partnership that further uplifts the achievement and success of all students.

- **Championing every student entering the learning environment and assuring equity of access** – We advocate for the rights and entitlement of each student entrusted to us and ensure that all students receive holistic support throughout their educational journey. We promote inclusive practice within the school to remove the barriers that deny students equal access to the curriculum and to academic excellence.

The underlying *Principles* of differentiation include:

- **Creating environments that are conducive to learning** – We promote positive learning environments to ensure that students feel safe, supported and valued as individuals. We cultivate the importance of developing a growth mindset, self-discipline, and learner independence as students work towards their learning goals.

- **Building on a foundation of a quality curriculum** – We guide students throughout the learning process by establishing clear learning objectives and providing learning experiences and assessment tasks that allow them to meet the expected learning standards. All students develop key knowledge and skills through different levels of structure and support appropriate to their diverse needs.

- **Tailoring instruction to assessment-indicated student needs** – We use formative and summative assessments to determine the needs and strengths of students, monitor their progress, and inform adjustments to planning and instruction. Assessment information guides teachers in the ongoing process of decision making based on curriculum requirements and how students learn the academic content.

- **Leading and managing a flexible classroom** – We ensure that all students are given ample opportunities to work with different peers for different purposes, depending on the learning objectives of the lesson or task. The flexible classroom allows students of determination and underachievers to work on differentiated tasks and succeed alongside their peers.

The instructional *Practices* that contribute to the success of differentiation include:

- **Proactive planning to address readiness, interest, and learning profile** – Teachers proactively plan lessons and modify instruction according to the proficiency of student experiences and skills for the task at a given period; learning pursuits and topics that interest and intrigue them; and the learning styles, intelligence profiles, talents and abilities of students.

- **Modifying instructional approaches based on student needs and the nature of content** – Teachers incorporate a variety of instructional approaches based on what students learn (content), how students make sense of learning (process), and how students demonstrate what they have learned (product).

- **Teaching up** – Teachers set up high expectations for all students and provide stimulating tasks and activities that offer stretch and challenge, which allow students to push them to the limits of their knowledge and comfort levels.

- **Assigning respectful tasks that match students' needs** – Teachers are responsible for designing tasks that are equally interesting, engaging, and focused on essential knowledge and skills that promote challenge and success for students with various learning needs.
- **Using flexible grouping strategies** – Flexible grouping helps students to gain access to a wide range of learning opportunities, working arrangements, and resources that cater to their learning needs and draw on the strengths of individual group members, including underperforming students.

7.0 Differentiating for Diverse Learners

Differentiation provision at DMES recognizes, respects and responds to the needs of the wide range of diverse students in the school community. We ensure that all students gain equal access and opportunities to optimize their potentials towards personal and academic achievement.

Teachers shall utilize differentiated strategies and techniques[6] to support our diverse groups of learners and minimize instructional barriers to learning:

7.1 Students Below Grade Level

- Using direct instruction for vocabulary instruction with visual and concrete representations.
- Modeling problem-solving sets with drawings and graphic organizers, giving many examples and visual displays.
- Guiding students as they select and practice using their own graphic organizers and models.
- Using explicit directions with steps and procedures enumerated and guiding students through initial practice promoting gradual independence.
- Using alternative methods of delivery of instruction such as recordings and videos that can be accessed independently or repeated if necessary.

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[6]K-12 Blueprint. Common Core Standards and Differentiated Instruction 2014, pp.2-6

- Scaffolding complex concepts and providing leveled tasks for multiple entry points.

- Guiding students in using manipulatives or real objects for them to make transfer from concrete to pictorial to abstract.

- Asking students to restate their learning for the day using a different representation in the restatement.

- Encouraging students to explain their thinking and strategies.

- Cultivating peer-assisted learning interventions for instruction and practice.

- Practicing routines to ensure smooth transitions.

- Setting goals with the students regarding the next steps and what to focus on next.

7.2 Students Above Grade Level

- Teaching students how to ask questions to extend "think-pair-share" conversations and modeling conversation "starters."

- Incorporating written reflection, evaluation, and synthesis and allowing creativity in expression and modeling solutions.

- Encouraging students to explain their reasoning both orally and in writing.

- Extending exploration of topics by means of challenging games, puzzles, and brain teasers.

- Offering choices of independent or group assignments for early finishers.

- Encouraging students to notice and explore patterns and to identify rules and relationships and having them share their observations in discussion and writing.

- Fostering student curiosity by facilitating research and exploration through discussion, experiments, Internet searches, trips, etc.

7.3 Students of Determination

- Providing a variety of ways to respond: oral; choral; student boards; concrete models; pictorial models; pair share; and small group share.

- Varying choral response with written response on student boards to ease linguistic barriers and supporting oral or written response with sentence frames.

- Adjusting oral fluency games by using student and teacher boards or hand signals and using visual signals or vibrations to elicit responses.

- Give students a chance to practice the next day's sprint beforehand.

- Giving students a few extra minutes to process the information before giving the signal to respond.

- Assessing by multiple means, including "show and tell" rather than written.

- Having students check off or highlight each step as they work.

- Teaching students to use self-questioning techniques.

- Making eye-to-eye contact and keeping teacher-talk clear and concise.

- Checking frequently for understanding.

- Assigning a buddy or a group to clarify directions or process.

- Using songs, rhymes, or rhythms to help students remember key concepts.

- Pointing to visuals and captions while speaking, using hands to clearly indicate the image that corresponds to spoken words.

7.4 Gifted and Talented Students

- Engaging students in progressively more complex learning.

- Using flexible grouping

- Providing enrichment activities that involve real-life problem solving

- Letting students choose their mode of response: written, oral, concrete, pictorial, or abstract.

- Letting students write word problems to show mastery and/or extension of the content.

- Maximizing the use of student choices in determining what, when, where, and how they will learn

- Organizing self-directed learning that incorporates pursuit of interests

- Involving students in making decisions about appropriate learning alternatives

- Using tiered assignments according to student readiness

- Pushing student comprehension into higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

- Accepting and eliciting student ideas and suggestions for ways to extend games.

- Providing assignments geared to development in areas of affect, creativity, cognition, and research skills.

7.5 English Language Learners

- Providing multiple means of action, expression, and engagement.

- Knowing, using, and making the most of student cultural and home experiences.

- Building on the student's background knowledge.

- Checking for understanding frequently to benefit those who may shy away from asking questions.

- Providing sufficient wait time to allow the student to process the meanings in different languages.

- Keeping teacher-talk clear and concise.

- Getting students up and moving, coupling language with motion.

- Providing a variety of ways to respond: oral, student boards, concrete models, pictorial models, pair share, small group share, etc.

- Treating first-language and experiences as resources, not as obstacles.

- Providing oral options for assessment rather than multiple-choice.

- Supporting oral or written response with sentence frames.

- Asking questions to probe what students mean as they attempt expression in a second language.

- Scaffolding questioning to guide connections, analysis, and mastery.

8.0 Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 Students

Students are expected to:

- Be taught about respect and empathy towards their peers.

- Develop awareness of and appreciation for their commonalities and differences.

- Become confident, reflective and responsible learners working for their personal best.

- Work independently and collaboratively to complete assigned tasks and gain insights about their individual strengths and overcome challenges in learning.

8.2 Parents

Parents are expected to:

- Provide the school with information about the students' experiences, interests, personality, and attitudes.

- Be informed of the learning plans for their children and have a positive understanding of differentiation.

- Ensure that their children come to school prepared to learn and succeed.

- Encourage their children to participate actively in differentiated experiences in school.

- Provide various avenues of exploration and learning outside the classroom.

9.0 Related Policies

The Differentiation Policy is linked to the following school policies:

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Feedback Policy