

Differentiated Instruction at Chesapeake

An Instructional philosophy that helps our teachers nurture and develop confident, competent, and engaged learners.

- **WHAT IS D.I.?** Differentiated Instruction (DI) is an educational philosophy that guides our teachers to design instruction to meet the needs of each student's varying readiness levels, learning preferences, and interests. By implementing DI strategies, our teachers create a classroom learning environment that builds upon each student's **STRENGTHS**.

- **HOW DOES DI INCREASE LEARNING?** Teachers focus on concepts and student's understanding of essential ideas. DI emphasizes high level thinking and communication skills as students apply their knowledge to real world problems. DI tasks cultivate an inquisitive mindset so students seek patterns, connections, and more complex relationships among ideas. Students are able to take facts and go way beyond them: they analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information to gain a deeper understanding of questions, themes, and concepts.

- **WHAT ARE DI STRATEGIES?** Based on student readiness, interest, and learning profiles, teachers can differentiate within a lesson or unit by:

Content: what essential concepts the student analyzes. Students working on different sets of information within a unit can become experts for the group as a whole. Peer teaching and collaborative work ensure that all students end the unit connecting with the "big ideas" and supporting information.

Process: how students work with essential concepts. Students can approach information in different ways, making choices based on their learning preferences or interests.

Product: how students demonstrate their understanding of essential concepts. Students can show mastery of material in a variety of ways, including projects, presentations, technology, and other assessments.



"The key to successful DI is knowing how each of our students learn best and using this knowledge to build upon a welcoming classroom community. It's something that's always been a strength at Chesapeake."

- Julie Keesee, Academic Dean

- **WHAT DOES DI LOOK LIKE IN ACTION?** When Middle School science teacher Linda "Doc" Hunter teaches a lesson on cells, she wants students to develop an understanding that a cell is a system with interrelated parts. Following a whole class study of cells, Doc differentiates by **PRODUCT**. To do so, she offers her students a **CHOICE** of the following activities:

1. Make a cause/effect chain to show how parts of a cell affect the whole. Explain it to a classmate who is uncertain about how cells work.
2. Look for systems that could serve as analogies for the workings of a cell and devise a way to make that analogy clear to an audience of peers;
3. Tell a story that helps us understand a cell as a system with interdependent actors or characters, including plot, setting and character conflict.

All three tasks achieve the desired result- students can demonstrate their complex understanding of the cell system in a way that requires them to use a variety of skills.