

Putting It All Together: Upper Elementary Examples[4th Grade \(Math and Science\)](#)[4th Grade](#)[4th Grade Reading](#)

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4th Grade Math and Science

Please describe the range of ability levels in your classroom. How did you determine that range existed?

I grouped my students into three general categories:

- **Group 1** (highs: students who generally came to me on grade 3 ability level and could be pushed toward the appropriate grade level and higher)
- **Group 2** (mediums: students who generally came to me on grade 2 ability level but with extra support and practice could conceptualize basic concepts of 4th grade level)
- **Group 3** (lows: students who generally came to me on grade 1 ability level. Need great support and individual attention, could be pushed to a grade 2 or level with in-school support)

I figured out these levels by giving, during the very first week of school, a diagnostic test that covered questions based on first through fourth grade level skills. Based on the number of multiple choice questions answered correctly and ability to tackle open-ended questions, students were grouped in the appropriate level.

Given the wide range of ability, interests, and learning modalities that exist in your classroom, what specific strategies do you use to meet the needs of all your students?

First of all, **everyone is given an agenda by month and week**. This lets students know on a general basis what to expect day to day. It also shows them that we have a long-term goal in mind and it takes little steps to get us there. In addition, it also shows them that each topic builds on the previous. Nothing is isolated or to be forgotten.

Second, **each lesson is purposely planned**. I first introduce a new topic in a teacher centered manner. From there, I introduce overheads with words to clarify what I have said. Then, the students are shown pictures that demonstrate the same mathematical steps. Finally, students work independently and in teams with manipulatives to answer designated questions. This is done because there are different learning modalities in any given classroom (tactile, auditory, visual, etc.)

Third, **each person is assigned a group number** regardless of what class they are in. When I give homework, I tailor the homework based on each group's needs. For example, I can have several levels of students in one class, but they know that within the class they

P-4: Differentiate your plans to fit your students

have different groups. So when it's homework time, they look for their group name and copy down the homework associated with that title. This way no one feels left out and the students know that the problems cover the same topic but don't really realize that they're assigned based on levels of difficulty.

What systems do you have in place to provide support for students who learn more slowly, but still challenge those who grasp concepts quickly?

My class is set up in a collaborative structure. There are 4 teams and 4 students per team. Each team is given a table number, so I have tables 1-4. Within each team, each person is assigned a letter based on where they sit in each group, so I have letters A-D within each group. I strategically place students based on skills. My A/C's are my Group 2 ability level students. My B is my Group 3 ability level student. My D is my Group 1 ability level student.

Within each lesson, the students work together to explore new topics. For instance, when I introduced equivalent fractions, they had a group project where they had to figure out their equivalencies using manipulatives. Each group was given an envelope with 4 problems. Each problem was color-coded. So each lettered person was told to take a color. The students obviously didn't know why they were assigned a certain color but I had purposely coded green as a lower order equivalency problem (i.e. $2/4 = 1/2$). Two shades of blue as a medium order problem and red as a challenging problem. Students worked on their problem and then shared their strategy with their partners (i.e. $15/20 = 3/4$).

[Back to Top](#)

P-4: Differentiate your plans to fit your students

Differentiation Example: 4th Grade

Ms. Manahan had always been an advanced student, and remembered how frustrated and bored she had always felt in school. She started her first year of teaching 4th grade by making a point to provide challenging, creative work. While her accelerated students thrived, her lower performing students became frustrated, and eventually lost interest and motivation. To counter this, she spent the second half of the year focusing on her struggling students, and found that the accelerated kids became bored and disruptive. Like many other teachers, she finished the year by teaching to the middle, but felt that none of her students' needs were really being met.

She did some research on differentiated instruction over the summer, and began her second year of teaching determined to incorporate the approach into her classroom. She started the year by diagnosing exactly where her students currently performed, particularly in reading and writing. She developed an academic profile for each student, and used the profile to gauge progress throughout the year. This was a good start, but she knew she needed to change her daily approach as well.

After observing a colleague teaching summer school, Ms. Manahan had noticed that this teacher's students worked at centers for part of the class period, while he worked with small groups of other students. The major difference between her approach and his was that each of his students did not go to every center. Rather, he had designed the centers so that students worked on the same academic learning standard, at specified centers, and in ways that matched their individual learning profiles.

Following his lead, she designed centers to meet students' needs based on their readiness levels, as determined by reading and writing diagnostics. At each center, students could choose to work individually or in pairs to achieve the goals.

While she knew that her centers were only a partial solution, she found that the majority of her students actively and effectively engaged the reading and writing activities she designed, so she knew she had made a good start towards differentiation.

[Back to Top](#)