



Planning a Tiered Activity

Rationale and Purpose

This tool provides teachers with a format for planning tiered activities, which are designed to help students at different levels of readiness meet common KUD goals.

Directions

- Review the definition and purposes of tiered activities.
- Distribute a copy of the tool to each teacher. Tell them they will use the tool to help them design an activity that is differentiated for student readiness.
- Tell teachers they may skip Step 2 if they wish.
- Point out that Step 3 of the planner asks teachers to begin by designing an activity that would challenge their most advanced students. This may differ from how they usually plan, but encourage them to try it. When teachers plan this way, they often find that they have raised the challenge level for all students while providing appropriate scaffolding.
- Remind teachers that they are not limited to three tiers. For a particular set of objectives or a particular set of students, two or four tiers may be more appropriate.
- Ask teachers to share their work with another teacher or group of teachers to give and receive feedback on their work.

Tips and Differentiation Options

- Some teachers will work better on their own; others will prefer to work with colleagues who teach the same or a similar curriculum. Allow them to choose.
- If teachers prefer to use a different format for their planning, let them. The format doesn't matter as much as ensuring that they begin with identifying their objectives and that these objectives include Understand goals or the equivalent.
- Novice differentiators will probably find it easier to differentiate an activity in a familiar area of the curriculum that they particularly enjoy teaching, especially if the activity has been successful in the past.
- Suggest that teachers who have experience with differentiation try to plan a differentiated activity in a subject or topic area that is less familiar to them.
- Step 2 is optional. This step is a helpful start for some teachers, but it may lock others into a preconceived way of designing the activity. Watch for this, and make appropriate changes to the planner.
- If possible, collect the work to analyze it and give feedback.

What to Look For

- Check that teachers have identified an appropriate KUD plan and that any understandings truly represent “big ideas.”
- Make sure that each version of the activity leads students to increased competency with activity goals.
- Make sure that each version of the activity will feel respectful to students.

Planning a Tiered Activity

Activity

Step 1: Devise KUD goals (what you want students to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the lesson or activity).

KNOW (facts, dates, definitions, rules, people, places)	UNDERSTAND (big ideas, principles, generalizations, rules, the “point” of the discipline or topic within the discipline) <i>I want students to understand that . . .</i>	BE ABLE TO DO (skills of literacy, numeracy, communication, thinking, planning, production, etc.; start with a verb such as: describe, explain, show, compare, synthesize, analyze, apply, construct, or solve)

Step 2: Determine your usual starting point (optional).

Jot down what you would typically do in this lesson if you were **not** going to differentiate. (Sketch out the steps you would follow or the assignment you would give.)

Planning a Tiered Activity

Activity (Cont.)

Step 3: Write differentiated plans.

Think about the most advanced student you have ever had. Design an activity (clearly related to your KUD goals) that would stretch this student.	Figure out ways to scaffold the task so that students at or near grade level can be successful with the task. Make sure this version still matches your KUD goals.	Figure out ways to further scaffold the task so that students who may struggle with the task can be successful. Double-check that you have not watered down the task to the point that students miss out on the KUD goals.

Step 4: Check your KUD goals.

- Double-check that every version of the activity leads students to increased competency with activity goals. If not, adjust as needed.
- Double-check that every version of the activity will feel respectful to the student for whom it is designed. If not, adjust as needed.

Planning a Tiered Activity

Activity (Cont.)

Step 5: Assess your plans.

- Where might you run into trouble in carrying out the differentiation in this lesson?
- How will you give directions for each version of the task? Will you color-code task cards or assignment sheets? Audio-record directions?
- Will you tell students the lesson is differentiated? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What will you do if some students or groups finish early?
- If necessary, how will you get students into groups efficiently? How will you get them back to a whole-class configuration?