

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE...

Dear Parents,

Back in the days of the one-room schoolhouse, teachers faced the challenge of having to divide their time and energy between teaching young children who were just learning how to hold a book and teach older, more advanced learners who were reading and writing. Today, teachers still have a challenge similar to the days of the one-room schoolhouse, which is, how to effectively reach ALL learners. Although students are now grouped according to grade levels and age, a grade level class still has a diverse population of learners. Today, we know more about how children learn. We know that children learn in different ways and at different rates. Today, educators are charged with teaching more than reading, writing and arithmetic. Given this knowledge, a teacher is faced with the awesome challenge of what is the most effective way to divide time, resources, present curriculum and provide individualize attention so as to maximize learning for ALL students.

There is no single formula for creating a differentiated classroom. Differentiation is about high-quality performance for all individuals and giving students the opportunity to develop particular strengths. Differentiated instruction enhances learning for all students by engaging them in activities that better respond to their particular learning needs, strengths, and preferences. In Differentiated Classrooms the Goals are as Follows:

- ❑ To study student differences as a basis for planning appropriate instruction.
- ❑ To use ongoing and diagnostic assessment to understand how to make instruction more responsive to the learner.
- ❑ To develop challenging and engaging tasks.
- ❑ To develop instructional activities based upon essential topics and concepts, significant processes and skills and multiple ways to display learning.
- ❑ To provide flexible approaches to content, instruction and products.
- ❑ To respond to students' readiness, interests, and learning preferences.
- ❑ To provide opportunities for students to work in varied instructional formats.
- ❑ To meet curriculum standards and requirements for each learner.
- ❑ To establish learner-responsive, teacher-facilitated classrooms.

At Ladera Elementary School, we are committed to meeting the individual needs of all students. As our vision statement says, we will provide an individualized educational learning environment that meets the needs of the whole child at all ability levels... Having made this commitment, many of the teachers have attended GATE workshops designed to prepare them to differentiate instruction to respond to the gifted and talented child. To share what is happening in the regular classroom to meet the needs of the GATE student, we are implementing a "Differentiated Learning Plan". The idea behind developing this plan is that it creates an opportunity for teacher, student and parents to come together and share ideas on how together we can be responsive to the needs of the GATE learner. The "Differentiated Learning Plan" puts on paper some of the activities, strategies and techniques to be used/ being used in the classroom to provide the GATE student with the challenge needed to reach a higher level. The "Differentiated Learning Plan" makes everyone accountable and provides a form for feedback/evaluation.

This year, as we implement the " Differentiated Learning Plans" with our GATE students, we will continue to share and collaborate with grade level teachers and cross grade level teachers so that we can all learn how to meet today's challenge of responding to the needs of ALL learners within the diverse regular classroom. Through ongoing sharing of ideas and materials, the staff at Ladera Elementary School has found that a differentiated learning environment is good not only for the GATE student but for ALL children. Knowing this, we will continue our education and search for differentiated instructional strategies and techniques that can be used in the regular classroom to meet the individual needs of all children.

Sincerely,

Dr. Pam Chasse