

Introduction by the Author

I have had the good fortune of holding a variety of positions in the field of education. I once worked for a mid-sized school district in Texas a differentiated instruction district lead. In my time in that role, I learned a few valuable lessons about supporting teachers and districts in differentiation:

1. Teachers need to see examples of differentiated lessons in addition to learning the research behind the philosophy.
2. Administrators need the same level of support, both in viewing examples and in how they understand the signs of differentiation as a regular occurrence in a classroom or on a campus.
3. There is a huge range of materials available (if you know what to look for) related to content differentiation and to product differentiation. But, as we know from Carol Tomlinson, “Teachers can differentiate content, process, or product...” for their students.

In my time in the classroom and in the role of supporting differentiation, I found insufficient support for process differentiation. I could use RAFTS for content differentiation, or offer more challenging texts to elevated students. I could utilize learning contracts and choice boards for product differentiation and so on. But, I struggled to find anything related specifically to the differentiation of process for learners.

Consequently, when I was training our teachers on differentiation, as my district set out on this journey to implement district wide on a three year plan, I

developed CAP Activities. The work of Sternberg leads us to three types of thinkers: Creative, Analytical and Practical. I can't thank him enough for giving us thinker types that work as an acronym! 😊

Using CAP Activities for process differentiation is one way of achieving process differentiation, as these activities/tasks will require students to manipulate new content in ways that are most appropriate to their preferred learning modes. Their modes may (and will) change on a daily basis, but at the end of a CAP activity, and according to Sternberg, students should see improved retention and recall of information learned through these thinker types. Thus, teachers can be more effective in their use of instructional time and students can be more successful when asked to recall and use the information they have learned.

My purpose in this text is simply to show you how I landed on CAP Activities and offer you some guidance in implementing them, should you see fit. I link CAP to Kaplan's icons for depth and complexity and provide a variety of examples across grade levels and content areas. CAP Activities are beneficial to all learners, but will absolutely lend themselves toward elevating rigor in assignments through this connection to Kaplan in the planning template.

I hope this book is valuable to you and you can take these activities to the classroom with confidence and purpose as you design differentiation for your students.

