



# Differentiated Learning

## Fun Fact

American educator Elizabeth Peabody opened the first English-language kindergarten in the United States. She promoted the idea that play has intrinsic developmental and educational value long before most educators in the country. In what year did she do this?

a) 1810 b) 1860 c) 1910

See answer on pg. 3

## Notable Quote

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

—Dr. Seuss

## Tips for Parents

When you are reading with your child, you can choose to focus on letter names, letter sounds, sight words, sounding out words, or vocabulary.

When your child is learning something new, provide opportunities to practice in many different ways. This will allow him or her to build confidence before moving on.

## Interview with Dr. DeAnna Owens, Assistant Professor of Elementary Education at the University of Memphis and scorer for the Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), a student-centered multiple-measure teaching assessment:

Dr. Owens is an Assistant Professor of Elementary Education and has previously taught science and mathematics in the public school system as well as elementary math and science methods at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Dr. Owens was one of the lead writers on a team that designed a transitional math course for the state of Tennessee and has also served on the Benchmark and Consensus Scoring Committee for the Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) in Secondary Mathematics, Middle-Childhood Math, and Middle-Childhood Science. Her passions are differentiated instruction and integrating technology into the STEM classroom, both of which have inspired her to seek out opportunities to provide professional development to K-12 teachers.

## DeAnna Owens was recently interviewed about differentiated learning.

### What is a differentiated curriculum?

**DeAnna Owens:** Differentiation is an educational approach in which teachers provide each student with the kinds of learning experiences that are most effective for that child. The basic idea is that, in education, one size does not fit all. Every child has different strengths, needs, interests, and learning preferences. Giving children learning experiences that match their interests is an important aspect of differentiation. When they are interested in a topic or activity, children learn faster and more effectively.

A fully differentiated curriculum also allows a child to learn at his or her own pace. This allows the child to build a solid foundation and then continue to learn in a step-by-step manner that enables him or her to be successful with each new concept or skill being learned.



Dr. DeAnna Owens, Assistant Professor of Elementary Education

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### How is differentiation accomplished?

**DeAnna Owens:** In a fully differentiated classroom, each child would have a personal educational plan. In creating that plan, the teacher would identify learning objectives, methods of learning, and methods of assessment that are based on the needs and interests of each individual.

In order to provide children with different learning experiences that are based on their needs, teachers often create learning groups in which the children in each group have similar needs. In a reading class, for example, children in one learning group might focus on learning the sounds of letters, and children in another group might focus on sight words.

Teachers can also use different methods of assessing how well children are learning. For example, if a teacher wants to know how well a child understands a story, the child could be given the choice of either explaining the story in his or her own words or drawing a picture that shows what the story is about.

“If your child is coming home excited about what he or she is learning at school and feeling successful, it is likely that his or her needs and interests are being met.”



ABCMouse.com Puzzle:  
Counting 1-5

ABCMouse.com Song:  
Five Little Monkeys

### How do parents know if their child's needs and interests are being addressed?

**DeAnna Owens:** If your child is coming home excited about what he or she is learning at school and feeling successful, it is likely that his or her needs and interests are being met. In addition to observing your child, it's also always a good idea to look at the work that your child brings home and to ask your child's teacher any questions you have about that.

### How can parents work with their child's teacher and school to support a differentiated approach to their child's education?

**DeAnna Owens:** The first rule is to communicate with your child's teacher or teachers. Be sure they know what your child's needs are, what you are doing at home to help your child, and what he or she seems most interested in. If you know of a particular way that your child likes to learn, let the teacher know.



ABCMouse.com Puzzle:  
Let's Play Together

If your child seems to be struggling with anything particular at school, have a conversation about what he or she most enjoys doing at school, and what seems to be most difficult. Then be sure to share these interests and needs with your child's teacher.

When you meet with your child's teacher, ask about how students are learning in the classroom. What types of activities do they get to do? What does a regular school day look like? How does the teacher know what students' interests are? Find out what types of assessments the teacher has done to determine your child's needs and strengths. Ask for the teacher's observations of your child, and find out how you can support his or her learning at home.

### What resources are there to help parents provide learning opportunities that take into account their child's needs and interests?

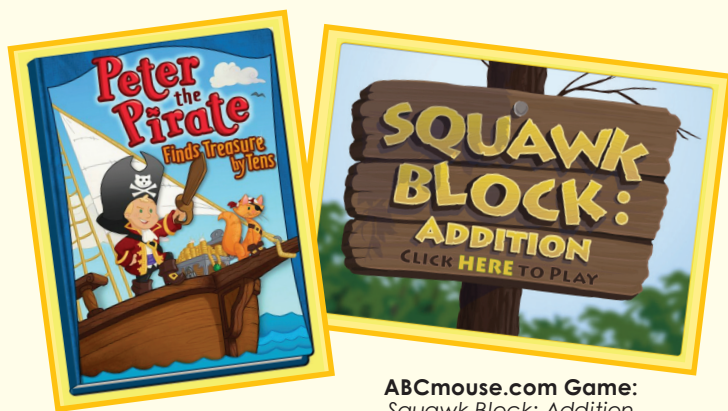
**DeAnna Owens:** One great resource is your local library or bookstore. Visit it with your child, and help him or her choose books that are interesting and seem to have the right level of language for your child. It's a good idea to get some books that are meant to be

“The first rule is to communicate with your child’s teacher or teachers. ...Ask for the teacher’s observations of your child, and find out how you can support his or her learning at home.”

read to your child, as well as other books that are intended for the child to read (if your child has begun to read).

Another good resource is your community calendar. If you keep an eye on it, you may come across events or exhibits that you know your child will enjoy.

There are also a lot of apps and websites that offer a wide range of learning experiences for children—so many, in fact, that it can be difficult to find those that are a good match. That’s why I always recommend ABCmouse.com to parents and teachers of young children—there are many, many different kinds of learning activities, but it’s still easy to find things that meet a particular child’s strengths, needs, and interests.



ABCMouse.com Book:  
*Peter the Pirate  
Finds Treasure by Tens*

ABCMouse.com Game:  
*Squawk Block: Addition*

For comments, feedback, or suggestions, please email us at [newsletter@ABCMouse](mailto:newsletter@ABCMouse).

**Fun Fact Answer:** In 1860, Elizabeth Peabody opened the first English-language kindergarten in the United States.

## Early Learning Research

Terri Purcell, Ph.D. and a professor in Literacy Education in the Department of Education at Cleveland State University, recognizes differentiated instruction as a way to respond to student differences and accommodate each learner’s unique needs and interests.

An excerpt:

“Preschool children enter school with a wide range of literacy skills. By embracing differentiated instruction, you can build on their knowledge and create an instructional program that meets children where they are. Teaching emergent literacy in this manner supports developmentally appropriate practices because each child is encouraged to work at his or her level of comfort and pacing.”

Article:

### **Differentiating Instruction in the Preschool Classroom: Bridging Emergent Literacy Instruction and Developmentally Appropriate Practice**

<http://www.stcloudstate.edu/tpi/teachersupport/documents/DifferentiatingInstruction-EarlyChildhood.pdf>

An article from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development discusses how differences among learners are being met through differentiated instruction.

An excerpt:

“Differentiated instruction can enable students with a wide range of abilities—from gifted students to those with mild or even severe disabilities—to receive an appropriate education in inclusive classrooms.”

Article:

### **What Research Says about Differentiated Instruction**

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb10/vol67/num05/Differentiated-Learning.aspx>



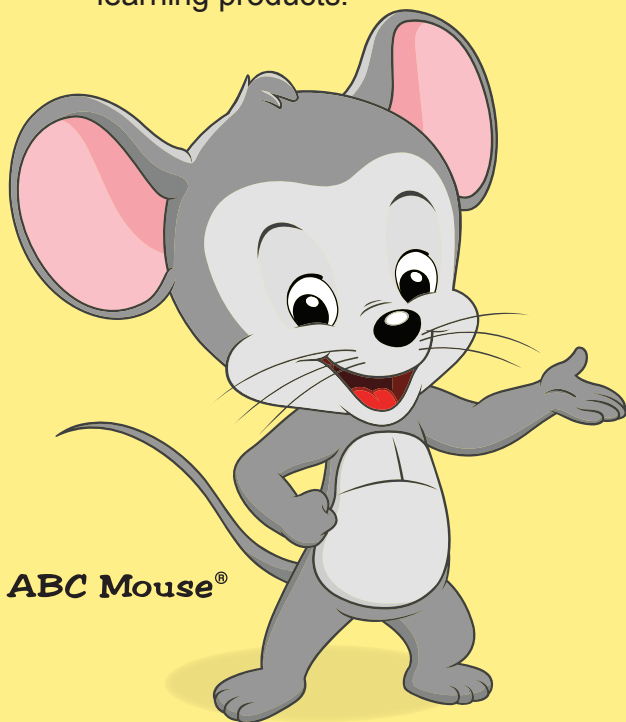
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## Classroom Resources Offer More Ways to Put Big Ideas into Little Hands

### Teachers trust us, children love us.

The award-winning ABCmouse.com *Early Learning Academy* website is used in more than 30,000 classrooms nationwide, with rave reviews from educators.

We're now offering teachers an easy way to extend these benefits throughout their classrooms—with ABCmouse.com classroom resources available through Kaplan, a trusted source for early learning products.



- ✓ **Books** Our hardcover books feature easy-to-read fonts, striking full-color illustrations, and rich language with child-friendly glossaries to develop phonemic awareness and expand vocabulary. Choose full sets or order books individually.
- ✓ **Puzzles** These colorful 4-piece sets teach early learners about animals, letters and numbers, and historic U.S. landmarks while supporting development of motor skills and problem-solving abilities.
- ✓ **CD & DVD** Children can listen to songs or watch animated music videos that help them learn the names and sounds of the letters of the alphabet, develop their vocabulary, and familiarize them with a variety of music genres.

For more information and additional products, visit:

[www.Kaplanco.com/ABCMouse](http://www.Kaplanco.com/ABCMouse)



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