

Florence City Schools

Hibbett Middle School & Florence Middle School

How are we preparing students for tomorrow by what we do today?

Instructional Rounds: Problem of Practice

This past year within Florence City Schools, we have been working diligently with AdvancED to gain accreditation and evaluate classroom practices. All teachers at HMS and FMS have been able to participate in the walkthroughs using the AdvancED Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot) to gain a greater understanding of classroom best practices in order to personally reflect and improve learning within individual classrooms. We are continuing to use this walkthrough data, focusing on learner behaviors, to target and improve our classroom instruction. The collective data gained from this experience is allowing school administration to drive our professional development and empower teachers by meeting their needs in order to positively impact student achievement.

We are now narrowing our focus and addressing areas of opportunity that have been highlighted using the eleot. One such area of opportunity is the topic of differentiation. The specific focus identified by this tool is how to best differentiate to meet the specific needs of our students. We are seeking to gain baseline data through these instructional rounds that can be used to hone and craft future professional learning for our teachers, ultimately impacting student achievement as measured by Scantron Performance Series testing.

As Rick Wormeli writes in the book *Fair Isn't Always Equal*,

"Differentiated instruction is doing what's fair for students. It's a collection of best practices strategically employed to maximize students' learning at every turn, including giving them the tools to handle anything that is undifferentiated. It requires us to do different things for different students some, or a lot, of the time in order for them to learn when the general classroom approach does not meet students' needs. It is not individualized instruction, though that may happen from time to time as warranted. It's whatever works to advance the students. It's highly effective teaching" (page 3).

When you are in classrooms today, we would like for you to consider the following as we look for how our teachers are strategically maximizing student learning at every turn.

- In what ways can students tell you they are learning and why it is important?
- What is the teacher doing to support the individual and group learning needs of her/his students?
- What evidence can you gather that shows different instructional strategies and tasks in place to meet the specific needs of students? (such as evidence of different learning tasks in the room; teacher providing individual or small group instruction while other students are learning in small groups or individually, or evidence of classroom structures or supports that allow students to engage with the content in different ways)