Profiling Play: Differentiating Learning for Little Ones

Materials Needed

- Index Cards (3 colors recommended) or paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Construction paper
- Small objects or manipulatives (e.g., blocks, pom-poms, small toys)
- Large sheet of paper or whiteboard for mapping
- "4-Year-Old Profile Template" (simple sheet divided into three sections: I Can Do, I'm Trying To Do, Likes/Dislikes)

Learning Objectives (Tell them what you'll teach)

By the end of this lesson, the learner will be able to:

1. Define and give an example of Content, Process, and Product differentiation.
2. Analyze a 4-year-old's learning profile based on "I Can Do," "I'm Trying To Do," and "Likes/Dislikes."
3. Design three distinct differentiated activities (C, P, & P) for a specific learning goal based on the profile data.

Introduction: The Tailored Toy Box

Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: Imagine you have two 4-year-old friends, Alex and Ben. You want to buy them blocks. Alex loves building tall towers and knows all his colors. Ben prefers sorting small objects and gets frustrated if his tower falls. Would you buy them the exact same set of blocks, or adjust your choice? Why?

(Learner response should highlight the need to match the toy/activity to the child's skills and interests.)

Educator Connection: Choosing the right blocks is exactly what differentiation is! It means adjusting the learning experience to fit the specific needs, skills, and interests of the learner. Today, we will learn how to formally use a 4-year-old's profile to create three types of tailored learning experiences.

Success Criteria

You will know you are successful when you have created a profile for a pretend 4-year-old and developed a specific content, process, and product activity that clearly addresses that child's strengths and interests.

Body: Building the Differentiated Plan (Teach It)

Phase 1: I Do – Modeling the Core Concepts (15 minutes)

A. Defining the Differentiation Triad

Content: *(What)* This is what the child needs to learn or master (e.g., identifying the letter 'B'). We adjust the complexity or method of instruction.

Process: *(How)* This is the method or activity the child uses to learn the content (e.g., learning about 'B' by tracing sand letters vs. building 'B' with Duplo blocks). We adjust how they practice.

Product: *(Show)* This is how the child demonstrates mastery of the content (e.g., drawing a picture of something that starts with 'B' vs. verbally telling a story about the letter 'B'). We adjust how they prove what they learned.

B. Modeling Profile Analysis

Educator Action: Create a sample profile on the large sheet of paper for a fictional student named "Leo."

- **I Can Do:** Identifies shapes (circle, square, triangle). Knows 1-5 counting.
- **I'm Trying To Do:** Holds scissors correctly. Recalls the names of 3 letters (A, M, T).
- **Likes/Dislikes:** Loves animals and sensory play (playdough/sand). Dislikes sitting still for long book readings.

Modeling Application (Content Goal: Learning the letter 'R'):

- **Using 'I Can Do':** Since Leo knows shapes, we can connect 'R' to shapes (e.g., "The letter R has a straight line like the side of a square and a round part like a circle.").
- **Using 'Trying To Do':** Since he is trying to master scissors, we can incorporate a simple cut/paste activity related to 'R'.
- **Using 'Likes':** The content focus should be on animal words that start with R (e.g., Rabbit, Rhino).

Formative Assessment: What part of Leo's profile helped us decide *what* words to focus on?

Phase 2: We Do – Designing the Activity (20 minutes)

Goal: Building Fine Motor Skills (specifically, grasping and manipulating small objects).

Activity: The Great Manipulative Match

Educator and Learner collaborate on a new profile for "Mia."

- **I Can Do:** Sorts by color. Uses a paintbrush well.
- **I'm Trying To Do:** Stringing beads onto yarn. Using a tripod grasp on pencils.
- **Likes/Dislikes:** Loves cars and trucks. Dislikes messy glue projects.

Collaborative Differentiation Design: Use three different colored index cards (one for C, one for P, one for P).

1. **Differentiated Content (What):** *(Based on "Likes/Dislikes")* Mia will manipulate objects related to her interest. Instead of abstract buttons, she will be given small toy cars and pom-poms representing fuel/cargo.
2. **Differentiated Process (How):** *(Based on "I'm Trying To Do" & "I Can Do")* Mia needs practice stringing and grasping. We can give her a pre-made path drawn on paper (using her "I Can Sort by Color" skill) and ask her to use tweezers/fingers (focusing on tripod grasp) to move the "cargo"

(pom-poms) from one colored "truck" (toy car) to the matching colored "garage."

3. **Differentiated Product (Show):** *(Based on "I Can Do")* Mia will demonstrate success by creating a simple color-sorted "parking lot" (using construction paper cutouts) and verbally explaining which color cargo goes to which car. (Alternative/Scaffolding: If Mia struggles verbally, she can use her painting skill to dab a dot of matching color next to the car instead).

Phase 3: You Do – Independent Design and Application (15 minutes)

Instructions: Now, create a final profile for "Sam." Choose a specific learning goal (e.g., identifying feelings, counting to ten, or matching initial sounds). Using your profile analysis, design three differentiated activities (C, P, P).

Sam's Profile (Learner Choice):

I Can Do	I'm Trying To Do	Likes/Dislikes
(Learner fills in based on typical 4-year-old skills)	(Learner fills in based on emerging skills)	(Learner fills in based on interests/aversions)

Learning Goal: _____

Independent Differentiation Plan:

1. **Content Differentiated:** How will the topic/material be adjusted for Sam? (Connect to "Likes/Dislikes")
2. **Process Differentiated:** How will Sam practice the skill? (Connect to "I Can Do" and "I'm Trying To Do")
3. **Product Differentiated:** How will Sam show what they learned? (Offer choices/adjust complexity)

Conclusion: Reflect and Connect (Tell them what you taught)

Closure and Recap (10 minutes)

Review: What are the three elements of differentiation? (Content, Process, Product).

Feedback: Educator provides specific feedback on the learner's "You Do" plan, ensuring the activities logically align with Sam's profile data.

Summative Assessment (Demonstration)

Task: The learner selects one of the activities designed for Sam (from the "You Do" section) and verbally explains to the educator/peer:

1. Why they chose that activity (C, P, or P).
2. Which part of Sam's profile specifically informed that decision.

(Success is measured by the clarity of the connection between the profile data and the differentiation strategy.)

Differentiation and Extensions

Scaffolding (For learners needing extra support)

- Provide pre-written cards for Content, Process, and Product definitions that can be physically placed next to the profile data to visualize the connection.
- Limit the "You Do" activity to designing only one type of differentiation (e.g., only Product) rather than all three.

Extension (For advanced learners)

- **Advanced Application:** Design a secondary differentiated activity for a group of three 4-year-olds (Alex, Ben, and Chloe) focused on the same goal (e.g., learning numbers 1-10). The learner must explain how they would manage the three differentiated activities simultaneously in a classroom setting (e.g., through learning centers or stations).
- **Reflection Prompt:** Research the role of assessment (formative checks) in informing ongoing differentiation. How often should an educator update a 4-year-old's profile?