



**Differentiated Assessments:  
Alternative Ways to Assess All Students in Your Classroom  
Site-based Participant Syllabus**

### **Course Description**

Differentiated assessment is the key to helping every student have success within their own learning style. This course is designed to help educators discover new ways to assess students from a variety of different learning styles. A focus on strategies for performing pre-assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments as well as alternative assessments such as performance-based assessments, portfolios, presentations and more to give options for students to have success other than the traditional pen-and-paper assessment. Classroom examples will be reviewed to help see how differentiated assessment can provide direction for improvement, promote confidence, and motivate students to do their best. Participants will leave the course with a better understanding of assessment practices and a wealth of resources to effectively differentiate assessments in their classroom.

### **Course Prerequisites**

This course is recommended for K-12 teachers and administrators looking to gain background information on differentiated and alternative assessment types and methods. The course will provide an overview of a variety of different learning styles; for optimal learning success, a basic understanding of learning styles is required. Participants must hold a baccalaureate degree.

### **System Requirements**

- Internet access connection
- Software capable of reading PDF files
- Software capable of viewing PowerPoint presentations

### **Text Books/Supplemental Reading**

No textbook is required for this course. Critical reading of assigned articles and text is embedded throughout the course. Assigned and recommended readings are listed in each milestone.

### **Global Goals of the Course**

1. To examine current research in the area of best practice of alternative assessments (NBPTS 3,4,5)
2. To develop an understanding of the need for effective alternative design and implementation in today's classroom (NBPTS 1,3,4,5)

3. To analyze current alternative assessment instructional practices and methods in order to better support student learning (NBPTS 1,3,4,5)
4. To explore possible applications of alternative assessments in the classroom (NBPTS 1,2,3,4,5)
5. To synthesize best practice alternative assessment research and classroom applications (NBPTS 2,3,4,5)

## **Instructional Objectives**

By the conclusion of this course, each participant should be able to do the following:

1. Develop an understanding of alternative assessments
  - 1.1 Reflect on one's personal experiences using alternative assessments
  - 1.2 Explore the benefits of alternative assessments
  - 1.3 Examine current research on effective alternative assessments
2. Create learning goals for alternative assessments
  - 2.1 Define learning styles and their relationship to develop alternative assessments
  - 2.2 Explore learning styles and corresponding alternative assessments
  - 2.3 Discuss common challenges of alternative assessments
  - 2.4 Examine alternative assessments linked to learning styles
3. Develop alternative assessments for reluctant learners, average learners, and gifted students
  - 3.1 Explore characteristics of reluctant learners, average learners, and gifted students
  - 3.2 Research assessment types that are beneficial to the variety of learners in classroom
  - 3.3 Assess the differences of alternative assessments to learning style applications
  - 3.4 Design a mini outline of an alternative assessment based on a selected learning style
4. Develop lesson plans for alternative assessments
  - 4.1 Explore lesson planning options in relation to alternative learning assessments
  - 4.2 Evaluate templates, resources, and scenarios for best fit alternative assessment application
  - 4.3 Explore options to implement weekly, unit, and yearlong alternative assessment options
  - 4.4 Design a lesson plan that incorporates alternative assessment options for a variety of students
5. Implement alternative assessment methods
  - 5.1 Explore student-created games, assessment questions, tournaments, review guides, and project-based assessments

- 5.2 Assess student-created items and how they can demonstrate mastery of learning targets
- 5.3 Appraise classroom use of alternative assessment methods
- 5.4 Design mini activities based on alternative assessment methods discussed in milestone 5
- 6. Implement alternative assessment methods and effective use of rubrics
  - 6.1 Explore the use of portfolio assessments, problem-based learning activities, and choice boards
  - 6.2 Research alternative assessments for specific content areas and grade level
  - 6.3 Research effective rubric strategies related to alternative assessment
  - 6.4 Assess alternative assessment rubrics ability to demonstrate mastery of a learning target
  - 6.5 Develop a rubric for an alternative assessment
- 7. Assess online resources to enhance and improve alternative assessments application
  - 7.1 Explore online resources that can help in differentiation of assessments
  - 7.2 Examine online resources that can help identify learning styles for a variety of age levels
  - 7.3 Construct a list of online resources that can be used as a guide for alternative assessment development and implementation
- 8. Reflect on alternative assessments and educate parents/guardians of the process and benefits
  - 8.1 Reflect on alternative assessment research and explore ways to educate parents on the benefits of alternative assessments
  - 8.2 Discuss ways to explain classroom practices to students and parents about alternative assessments and the classroom culture
  - 8.3 Devise a plan to improve knowledge and classroom implementation of differentiated assessment after the course has ended

### **Teaching Methodology and Delivery Model**

Teaching methodologies of this course are designed to support intensive, graduate-level course work in an interactive setting. Instructional plans support the content of this course, which focuses on the improvement of professional teaching expertise in any or all of the following categories: assessment, collaboration, communication, diverse learners, educational reform, instructional strategies, planning instruction, productivity, reflection of practice, student learning, subject matter, and/or technology.

1. Methodologies include instructor presentations, specific skill practice, discussions, audio-visual presentations, self-evaluation, project development, course readings, research/inquiry exercises, and the synthesis of new knowledge and skills with previously acquired skills/expertise in relation to transition knowledge and content.

2. The course is taught with instructor-participant and participant-participant feedback. Course content, activities, and assessments are organized into 8 modules totaling 45 seat hours. Assessments are due two-weeks following the end of the course.
3. Research-based content, presentations, educator resources in print and on the Internet, notes from instructor presentations, class activity work pages, references, and assessments are supported by content designed specifically for educators.
4. Daily activities include a variety of research-based instructional approaches appropriate for adult learners. Class participants actively construct their own learning and make it personally relevant by acquiring and applying course knowledge/skills during hands-on practice and problem-solving activities, personal reflection, in-class presentations, whole-class and small group discussions and activities, assigned readings, research/inquiry, projects, and collaborative work in various group formats. All are designed to make it possible for educators and other school-related personnel to learn the same basic content and skills with an emphasis on application to their own specific content area or grade level.

### Learning Assessment

Formative assessment of learning objectives for this course is conducted informally throughout the course via discussion, critiques, peer- and self-evaluations, journal entries, instructor feedback, small-group sharing and activities requiring participants to make sense of new knowledge and/or skills within their realm of teaching. Additionally, three formative assessments are embedded within the course. Summative assessment for the course occurs in the form of a final project which requires each participant to synthesize class content and apply it within the teacher's specific teaching environment. Copies of the course performance assessment rubrics are included in Appendices A-C.

### Compliance with National Board of Professional Teaching Standards

The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards represents the highest level of professional achievement in the continuum of teacher professional development. There are five core principles (standards) which cover five aspects of professional educational practice: (1) commitment to students and their learning, (2) knowledge of subject matter and instructional strategies, (3) management and monitoring of student learning, (4) systematic reflection about the teaching profession to learn and grow from experience, and (5) collaborative participation in the educational learning community.

### Topics Agenda

#### **Milestone One: Why Teachers should Differentiate Assessments**

This milestone introduces the concept of differentiated assessments and how it is related to differentiation of instruction. Participants will learn how important it is to differentiate assessments and the avenues it can provide students' success in the classroom. Current research on the effectiveness of differentiating assessments will be explored to support implementation.

## **Milestone Two: Introduction to Alternative Assessments: Identify Learning Goals**

In this milestone, participants will be introduced to the concept of alternative assessments. A discussion on learning styles and corresponding alternative assessment methods will be explored and discussed. Participants develop an understanding of their students' learning styles, which is important to effectively design differentiated alternative assessments to meet their needs.

## **Milestone Three: Reluctant Learners, Inspiring Average Learners, Growing the Gifted**

In this milestone, research and methods will be discussed on how alternative assessments can be beneficial to all learners in a classroom. Focus rests on how these assessment types can help reluctant learners, average learners, and gifted students grow through assessment. A reflection on the previous two milestones helps develop a complete picture on the importance and impact of alternative assessment and knowing a student's learning style, goals, and classroom behavior.

## **Milestone Four: Alternative Assessment Lesson Planning**

In this milestone, the importance of alternative assessment lesson planning will be discussed. Numerous templates, resources, and scenarios will be reviewed to gain a better understanding of how to plan and implement alternative assessments for all learners in the classroom. Exploration will occur from a weekly level, unit level, and yearlong implementation. Participants leave this milestone with a few lesson plan outlines involving alternative assessments.

## **Milestone Five: Differentiated Assessment Methods - Part One**

In this milestone, participants will learn how student-created games, tournaments, review guides, assessment questions, and project-based assessments can demonstrate mastery of a learning target. Classroom examples of these alternative assessment methods will be explored and participants will develop mini activities based on these assessments.

## **Milestone: Six: Differentiated Assessment Methods - Part Two**

In this milestone, participants will learn how to effectively create portfolio assessments, problem-based learning activities, choice boards, and a plethora of other alternative assessment methods for a variety of content areas. The importance of effective rubrics will be discussed and researched to help identify mastery of content by students. Participants will create two different alternative assessments for online review.

## **Milestone Seven: Online Resources to Differentiate Assessments**

In this milestone, a variety of online resources that can help in differentiation of assessments will be explored. Participants will review current online applications and web resources that may help assess students in a variety of ways aligned to their learning

styles. Participants will leave this milestone with a list of online resources to help differentiate assessments.

### **Milestone Eight: Communicating to Parents about Differentiation of Assessments**

In this milestone, participants will review ways to educate parents on what differentiation of instruction and assessments is and how it is beneficial to all students in the classroom. This milestone will help explore teachers' explanations of their own practices and, further, recommends ways to improve knowledge and application of differentiated assessment. Participants finish the course with alternative assessments ready to implement in their classroom, along with a list of resources to reinforce differentiation.

### **Final Projects**

Assignments/ assessments should reflect that each participant is accountable for a high degree of learning appropriate for graduate level credit. Therefore, instructors will assign 3 formative assignments which can be completed throughout the course. These assignments will correlate to the instructional learning objectives. All courses will also include a final summative project which requires critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluation or application. Assessment of the assignments should not be limited to the quantity of work submitted but should carefully consider the quality and intellectual value of the work.

Final projects are due within two weeks of the end of class. Projects submitted during the third week "grace period" will have their grade reduced one full letter grade. No papers will be accepted past the grace period, and participants will, consequently, forfeit credit for the course. Papers are expected to be properly formatted and submitted to the instructor either in person or via mail or an email attachment.

Participants taking professional development unit (not-for-credit) courses must attend all scheduled class sessions and complete all formative assignments. However, they will be exempt from completing the final summative project unless otherwise noted. Proof of seat hours will be presented to the participants after completing course reflection via the student portal and all hours are met.

### **Grading**

Throughout the course, participants will engage in both formal and informal formative and summative assessments. Points are assigned based on a four-point criterion rubric specifically delineated for each assessment that can be further defined as follows:

**Distinguished:** The assessment is highly imaginative; demonstrates critical thought; is unique; shows substantial application to one's own teaching or professional position; *goes*

*above and beyond requirements*; is creative; demonstrates both breadth and depth of knowledge of transition-related subject matter; shows individual's personality; is professional in presentation and appearance; and demonstrates considerable effort. The assessment is exceptionally completed and demonstrates clear understanding of the tasks, gives explanations, and shows how the assessment applies to a teaching/learning situation. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Distinguished" on the course rubric.

**Proficient:** The assessment is well-organized and complete; is effectively and clearly presented; demonstrates clear understandings; applies what has been learned to the author's own classroom situation; clearly shows connections; is detailed; and is thoughtful and supported with ideas. A thoroughly completed assessment demonstrates that the participant shows awareness of the tasks, gives explanations, and shows how the assessment applies to a teaching/learning situation. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Proficient" on the course rubric.

**Basic:** This is the lowest passing grade. The assessment meets minimum requirements; includes general information but lacks descriptive detail; shows limited application to teaching/learning; and lacks originality. This denotes work that does not meet **all** aspects of standards for academic performance in a graduate-level course. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Basic" on the course rubric.

**Unsatisfactory:** The assessment is missing evidence or information; is sloppy and poorly organized; demonstrates only surface understandings; shows no evidence of application to the author's own teaching situation; is poorly written; and does not meet minimum standards for academic performance in a graduate-level course. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Unsatisfactory" on the course rubric.

The assessments for this course are weighted as follows:

Participation and Reflection	30%
Formative Assessments	30%
Summative Assessments	40%

### **Academic Honesty and Integrity**

All participants are expected to maintain academic honesty and integrity by doing their own work to the best of their ability. Academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, etc.) will result in the participant receiving a zero for that assignment or paper.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance**

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and The Americans with Disabilities Act, participants who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, which might affect their ability to perform in this class, are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the first session. Reasonable academic accommodations, aids, and adjustments may be made as needed to provide for equitable participation.

### **Attendance**

Participants are required to attend all classes as well as participate in class discussions, small group activities, and projects. Absence from any part of the class will require that you withdraw from the class. You will need to contact The Connecting Link at (888) 550-5465 in the event this occurs.

### **Late Work and Make-Up Policy**

Participants are expected to keep pace with assignments and expectations. If a situation arises in which an assignment cannot be completed, the participant is expected to make arrangements with the instructor for the timely submission of such work. Failure to complete all work in this time frame will result in an **incomplete** or a grade of **F** for the work, depending on the reason for the delay.

### **University Compliance**

Course content and instruction are bound by policies associated with the university granting academic credit for the course. Such policies include, but are not limited to: academic integrity and honor codes, institutional objectives and grade grievance procedures. These policies are located within the official academic catalogs which can be accessed through the university's official website.