The Connecting Link

Destination Differentiation:
How to Meet the Needs of 21st Century Learners
Online Participant Syllabus

Course Description

This course is designed to explore the critical need to differentiate instruction for 21st century learners. The philosophy of differentiation will be examined in relationship to cultural needs, learning styles, intelligence theories, and thinking skills. The use of technology and the role of effective feedback will also be addressed. Participants will be provided multiple opportunities to engage in discussions and activities that refine their current differentiation strategies and practices in an effort to meet the needs of all learners.

Course Prerequisites

This course is intended for K-12 teachers who are interested in adjusting instruction to more effectively meet the learning needs of an increasingly diverse student population within the classroom. Participants must hold a baccalaureate degree.

System Requirements

- Computer with word processing software
- Internet access connection

Text Books/Supplemental Reading

No textbook is required for this course. Critical reading of assigned articles and text is embedded throughout the course.

Global Goals of the Course

To deepen and/or apply the content and skills of the teacher's existing professional knowledge base by meeting the following global goals of this course:

1. To understand the need to differentiate instruction in an effort to meet the needs of 21st century learners (NBPTS 1,2,4 & InTasc 1,2,3,5)
2. To synthesize current teaching practices with 21st century beliefs in an effort to expand learning opportunities (NBPTS 1,4,5 & InTasc 4,7,8,9)
3. To analyze empirical and educational research on differentiated learning, learning styles, and assessment (NBPTS 1,2,3,4,5 & InTasc 6)
4. To examine the research findings on the effectiveness of differentiation and to incorporate the essential knowledge into practical applications in the classroom setting (NPTS 1,2,3,4,5 & InTasc 5,10)

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5. To gain knowledge of formal assessments, informal assessments, and grading practices utilized in a differentiated classroom (NBPTS 1,3 & InTasc 6)

Instructional Objectives

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

1. Define *differentiation*
    1.1   Explore multiple aspects of differentiation including content, process, product, readiness, interest, learning profile, access, motivation, and efficiency
    1.2   Construct lessons that ensure all learners are afforded opportunities to learn in a comfortable and challenging environment and are prepared for the demands of the 21st century
    1.3   Customize lessons that incorporate the four tools for differentiation: Instructional Strategies, Assessment Strategies, Grouping Strategies, and Classroom Management Strategies
    1.4   Examine the philosophy of differentiation in relation to 21st century learning needs, brain-based research, learning styles, intelligence theories, and thinking skills

2. Recognize various learners and learning styles
    2.1   Review various types of learning theories including Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, Sternberg's learning styles, Lowry's color learning styles, and Glazvoc's personality traits
    2.2   Examine the challenges of teaching advanced, struggling, and culturally diverse learners in the same classroom
    2.3   Assess personal learning profile
    2.4   Define the learning needs of students in the classroom considering the following groups: gifted learners, special education learners, RtI learners, English language learners, digital learners, and global learners

3. Examine differentiation strategies and tools
    3.1   Discuss how differentiation practices are fair for all learners despite different activities and assessment protocols
    3.2   Address how to use the strategies associated with the four tools for differentiation (instructional strategies, assessment strategies, grouping strategies, and classroom management strategies) to create differentiated lessons for the classroom
    3.3   Review the following instructional techniques: tiering, compacting, agendas, cubing, stations, jigsawing, RAFT activities, choice boards, Socratic seminar, entry points, and Bloom's questioning techniques
    3.4   Describe how to develop lessons based on students' learning characteristics utilizing differentiated strategies

4. Identify digital differentiation
    4.1   Recognize the use of technology as an instructional tool

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      4.2   Explore webquests, independent studies, orbital studies
      4.3   Construct differentiated lessons utilizing technology
      4.4   Customize lessons that meet the needs of digital natives

5. Examine differentiation and assessment
      5.1   Evaluate the purpose of grading in a differentiated classroom
      5.2   Address the challenges associated with grading in a differentiated environment
      5.3   Review what evidence teachers should collect to determine if students have met the KUD goals in a differentiated activity
      5.4   Describe how to incorporate informal and formal assessment techniques

Teaching Methodology and Delivery Model

Teaching methodologies used in this course are specifically designed to maximize learning in a graduate-level, online distance-learning model. Each course facilitator is trained and/or experienced in facilitating graduate-level online courses as well as the specific content and skills of this course.

1. Online methodologies include instructor/expert presentations, directed skill practice, Forum and Assessment completion, as well as the synthesis of new knowledge and skills in designing educational applications.
2. The course is taught in a supportive learning environment with teacher-participant interaction and feedback.
3. Content focuses on the presentation of advanced concepts linked to instructional strategies which accommodate learning needs of a diverse student population.
4. Course content, activities, and assignments are organized into Milestones that participants complete during the 12-week span of the course. Course content is intended to cover material equal to 45 seat hours of instructional time.
5. Class participants actively construct their own learning and make it personally relevant by acquiring and applying course knowledge/skills to their own teaching situation.

Learning Assessment

Formative assessment of learning objectives for this course is conducted informally throughout the course via discussion, critiques, self-evaluations, instructor feedback, 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

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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.

Compliance with Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards

The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium's work is guided by one basic premise: An effective teacher must be able to integrate content knowledge with the specific strengths and needs of students to assure that all students learn and perform at high levels. All teachers should meet the following standards: (1) learner development, (2) learning differences, (3) learning environments, (4) content knowledge, (5) application of content, (6) assessment, (7) planning for instruction, (8) instructional strategies, (9) professional learning and ethical practices, and (10) leadership and collaboration.

Compliance with ISTE Standards for Technology in Education

Effective teachers model and apply the National Educational Technology Standards for Students as they design, implement, and assess learning experiences to engage students and improve learning; enrich professional practice; and provide positive models for students, colleagues, and the community. All teachers should meet the following standards: (1) facilitate and inspire student learning and creativity (2) design and develop digital-age learning experiences and assessments (3) model digital-age work and learning (4) promote and model digital citizenship and responsibility (5) engage in professional growth and leadership.

Final Projects

Participants taking courses for professional development unit (not-for-credit) must follow the same Participation Expectations as posted in the course syllabus. Participants complete readings and tasks as outlined in the Task List. Forum Post Reflections are also required. However, participants will be exempt from completing the Formative and Summative Assessments unless otherwise noted. Proof of seat hours will be presented to the participants after completing the state required course evaluation located on the student portal.

In keeping with best instructional and assessment practices, this course requires participants to demonstrate synthesis and application of course knowledge in an applied final project linked to the instructional objectives of this course. Assessment of the project should not be limited to the quantity of work submitted but should carefully consider the quality and intellectual value of the work.

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Final projects are due and will be submitted to the instructor within 12 weeks of the allotted class time. Unless the instructor states otherwise, all papers are expected to be properly formatted electronically.

Assessments and 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.

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The assessments for this course are weighted as follows:

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

Letter grades are based on 100 points possible and assigned based on the university grading scale.

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 will have 12 weeks from the time of their first date of login to complete the course. They will need to contact their instructor and The Connecting Link at (888) 550-5465 should they not be able to complete the online class in the time given. Failure to complete all work in the 12 week time frame may 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 polices 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.