



## **The Differentiated Classroom: Creating Pathways for All Learners to Succeed Site-based Participant Syllabus**

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to help educators build a classroom structure where differentiated instruction can occur on a daily basis for varying abilities. Through the use of videos, readings, personal reflection, and online forum questions, participants will experience differentiated instruction as well as learn methods to implement strategies in their own classroom. Participants will learn to shape and maintain learning conditions that facilitate differentiated instruction, including how to identify learning styles, create tiered activities, differentiation strategies, effective classroom management, and design the physical space for classroom differentiation scenarios. Participants will leave the course with resources and strategies to reach students of varying abilities, grades, and learning styles and help them take ownership of their education.

### **Course Prerequisites**

This course is recommended for K-12 teachers and administrators looking to gain background information on differentiated instruction and how to facilitate a variety of differentiated instruction learning mediums to meet the needs of different learning styles. 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 differentiating instruction (NBPTS 3,4)
2. To develop an understanding of the need for effective differentiating strategies in today's classroom (NBPTS 1,3,4)
3. To analyze current differentiated instructional practices in order create engaged practices to better support student learning (NBPTS 1,3,4)

4. To explore possible applications of differentiated instruction models in the classroom (NBPTS 1,2,3,4)
5. To synthesize best practice differentiated instruction research and classroom applications (NBPTS 2,3,4)

### **Instructional Objectives**

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

1. Develop an understanding of differentiating instruction for all learners
  - 1.1 Reflect on one's personal experiences in differentiating instruction
  - 1.2 Explore the benefits of differentiating instruction
  - 1.3 Examine current research on effective differentiated instruction methods
2. Identify learning styles to drive differentiation techniques
  - 2.1 Review various learning theory models
  - 2.2 Assess learning theory models and their application to differentiated instruction
  - 2.3 Discuss how student learning styles are an integral part of differentiation
  - 2.4 Examine classroom activities that are linked to individual student learning needs
3. Develop differentiation in a mixed-ability classroom
  - 3.1 Explore Dr. Carol Ann Tomlinson's four elements to differentiate instruction
  - 3.2 Research each element of differentiated instruction to gain a deeper understanding and guide to implementation
  - 3.3 Assess what elements can be modified for the classroom to smoothly integrate differentiated instruction
  - 3.4 Design an outline to help differentiate instruction in the classroom
4. Develop differentiation strategies - part one
  - 4.1 Explore the concepts: tiering, compacting, cross-training, flexible grouping, menus, and pods
  - 4.2 Compare and contrast the different differentiation concepts and the benefits of each concept
  - 4.3 Assess what concepts align to a variety of learning styles for the classroom to smoothly integrate differentiated instruction
  - 4.4 Design a mini lesson plan that differentiates instruction for a variety of learners in the classroom
5. Develop differentiation strategies - part two
  - 5.1 Explore the differentiation strategies of Socratic Seminars, QARS, Mind Movies, concept mapping, and anchoring activities
  - 5.2 Compare and contrast the different differentiation concepts and the benefits of each concept

- 5.3 Assess what concepts align to a variety of learning styles for the classroom to smoothly integrate differentiated instruction
- 5.4 Design a mini lesson plan that differentiates instruction for a variety of learners in the classroom
- 6. Design a classroom layout that supports differentiation strategies
  - 6.1 Explore classroom arrangements related to effective differentiation techniques
  - 6.2 Assess classroom arrangements based on classroom environment, furniture, and school culture
  - 6.3 Research information on how classroom arrangement can improve learning domains
  - 6.4 Design a new classroom floorplan that fits the differentiation plan
- 7. Assess online resources and technology that support differentiation strategies and implementation
  - 7.1 Explore ways technology can help differentiate instruction
  - 7.2 Examine the flipped classroom model, guided online learning programs, independent study assignments, and web resources
  - 7.3 Assess the discussed technologies in milestone 7 for possible classroom implementation
- 8. Examine the concept of differentiated and alternative assessments
  - 8.1 Analyze the role of assessments in a differentiated classroom
  - 8.2 Explore the concepts of pre-testing, formative, and summative testing in relation to a differentiated classroom
  - 8.3 Examine ways to grade in a differentiated classroom and discuss possible roadblocks
  - 8.4 Explore the concept of alternative assessments in a differentiated classroom

### **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: The Importance of Differentiating Instruction for All Learners**

This milestone provides an overview of differentiated instruction and its role in today's classroom. Participants will learn the value of differentiating instruction for all levels of learners and explore resources that will be beneficial throughout the course.

### **Milestone Two: Identifying Learning Styles to Drive Differentiation Techniques**

This milestone allows participants to review various types of learning theories including Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, Sternberg's Learning Styles, Lowry's Color Learning Styles, Kolb's Experiential Learning Profile, McCarthy's 4 Mat Model, and other learning theorists. The process of identifying learning styles will help teachers develop appropriate activities for unique individual student needs in their class.

### **Milestone Three: Introduction to Differentiation in Mixed-Ability Classrooms**

This milestone focuses on the four ways to differentiate instruction. According to Dr. Carol Ann Tomlinson, a professor at the University of Virginia and a scholar in curriculum design and differentiated instruction, she believes teachers can differentiate instruction through four ways: 1) content, 2) process, 3) product, and 4) learning environment. An overview of these elements will be reviewed, explored, and aligned to the participants' classroom to effectively decide which elements can be most easily modified to differentiate instruction. Participants will leave this milestone with a better understanding of how to differentiate instruction for their classroom.

### **Milestone Four: Differentiation Strategies for Success - Part One**

In this milestone, candidates will study tiering, compacting, cross-training learning styles, flexible grouping, menus, and pods. Participants will align these strategies to the learning styles that they want to reach and have opportunities to develop lessons for their specific grade and content areas.

### **Milestone Five: Differentiation Strategies for Success - Part Two**

This milestone helps participants explore strategies that promote higher-order thinking skills. Socratic seminars, QARS, Mind Movies, concept mapping, and anchoring activities will be reviewed and applications for differentiated classroom implementation will be explored. The participant will leave this milestone with more differentiation strategies and develop a brief outline of lessons with these newly learned strategies.

### **Milestone Six: Designing a Classroom Layout that Supports your Differentiation Strategies**

In this milestone, participants will reflect on their classroom differentiation strategies and explore classroom arrangements to effectively implement those strategies. Current research on classroom arrangements and effectiveness will be explored, with the focus of how classroom arrangement can impact different learning domains.

### **Milestone Seven: Online Resources and Technology that Can Help Differentiate**

In this milestone, participants will learn valuable ways technology can be an asset for differentiating instruction. Some examples of digital differentiation include the flipped classroom model, guided online learning programs, independent study assignments, and web resources that can help differentiate content areas. Participants will leave the milestone having a variety of online resources that can help enable classroom

differentiation more effectively.

### **Milestone Eight: Introduction to Differentiated Assessments**

In this milestone, a discussion on the role of class assessments in a differentiated classroom will be explored. Additionally, the importance of pre-testing, formative, and summative assessments will be reviewed and aligned to differentiation goals. Participants will share ways to effectively communicate how to grade in a differentiated classroom. The challenges associated with grading in a differentiated classroom will be analyzed.

### **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.