Professional Development Institute

Flex Course Syllabus

Leading and Managing a Differentiated Classroom
(6-12)

PDI Course Number: 135T02

UCSD Course Number: EDUC42649

If you would like information about receiving post-baccalaureate (graduate) credit for completing this course, please click here.

Course Timeline

Participants have one year to complete the course. Participants must spend a minimum of three weeks in this course.

Course Description

Do you find yourself wondering what it takes to create a classroom where diverse learners feel engaged, supported, and capable of success? This online course for teachers takes a deep dive into a variety of practical strategies to help middle and high school teachers meet the diverse needs of today's learners through the powerful framework of differentiation. This course explores the four key areas of differentiation — by content, process, product, and learning environment — and provides concrete examples for applying them in secondary classrooms. Teachers will learn how to adapt curriculum materials, design flexible learning activities, offer multiple ways for students to demonstrate understanding, and create supportive environments that honor individual differences. Teachers will explore topics such as tiering, implementing choice, using rubrics, and digital differentiation. Finally, teachers will thoroughly examine several real-world examples of how each of the four types of differentiation can be applied at the middle and high school levels in each of the major content areas (ELA/reading, science and math, and history and social science.). By the end of this continuing education course, teachers will have a solid understanding of the necessary differentiation tools needed to foster engagement, equity, and academic growth for all students and intentionally design lessons that balance rigor with accessibility, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to thrive.

Educational Outcomes

1. Teachers will understand what differentiated instruction is, including what it looks like in middle and high school classrooms as a highly effective teaching strategy.
2. Teachers will be introduced to the four different types of differentiation (by content, process, product, and learning environment).
3. Teachers will explore the role that they play in differentiated instruction including the importance of getting to know students, working with families, frequent reflection, flipped learning, and asynchronous learning.
4. Teachers will understand what essential standards and learning targets are, including how they are the backbone of differentiated instruction.
5. Teachers will explore the characteristics of essential learning targets, and they will learn how to successfully develop them using "I Can" statements.
6. Teachers will learn about the different ways to present content (direct, hand's on, visual, contextual, auditory, and written instruction).
7. Teachers will explore how to differentiate the content by student readiness, interest, and learning profiles.
8. Teachers will explore how the content can be differentiated in each of the main content areas (Reading/ELA, math, science, and history and social studies) using strategies such as leveled readings, adaptive learning, providing real-world context, inquiry learning, and Document-Based Questions (DBQs), to name a few.
9. Teachers will explore a variety of ways to digitally differentiate the content, including by such things as games, reviews, worksheets, graphic organizers, notes, images, and videos.
10. Teachers will explore how to differentiate their instruction by adjusting the learning process that students go through so that they can more easily access the content, including such ways as giving students varying amounts of time, providing texts on tape, offering a scribe system, interactive scaffolds, and using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) when planning lessons.
11. Teachers will learn about the four main types of learning modalities (visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic).
12. Teachers will learn strategies for incorporating each of the learning modalities into ELA/humanities, math, and science lessons at the middle and high school level.
13. Teachers will explore a variety of strategies to tier by process in ELA/humanities, math, and science at the middle and high school level.
14. Teachers will examine several strategies for collaboration when differentiating by process, including such things as individual, partner, and small group work strategies.
15. Teachers will learn what differentiating instruction by product means, and they will learn how to best choose products for their middle and high school students.
16. Teachers will explore a variety of strategies to differentiate their instruction by product, including varying the length of the assignment, varying the method of mastery, and changing the structure of the work to include individual, partner, or group work.
17. Teachers will understand what voice and choice is, and they will explore several tips and techniques for incorporating it into their repertoire when differentiating by product including such things as relying on learning targets, using scaffolds, and releasing control to students using the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) method.
18. Teachers will learn how to create choice boards as a way to differentiate by product.

19. Teachers will learn what structured academic choice is and how it can be differentiated to structure classroom lessons and activities.
20. Teachers will learn what rubrics are and how they can be used to differentiate instruction by product.
21. Teachers will understand what differentiating by learning environment means, and they will explore a variety of ways to set up their classrooms accordingly.
22. Teachers will understand the importance of student buy-in as it relates to ensuring that the differentiated classroom runs smoothly and efficiently, including how the concept of fairness/equity is different from the concept of equality.
23. Teachers will learn how to cultivate scaffolded classroom experiences so that students can adopt a differentiated mindset that makes them more open to being vulnerable and taking risks.
24. Teachers will learn about social-emotional learning, including what it is, why it is important in education, and the five competencies that are targeted (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making).
25. Teachers will explore how social-emotional learning can be incorporated into classroom lessons across all the main content areas (ELA, history, math, science).
26. Teachers will learn how social-emotional learning can be assessed using CASEL's Frame, Coach, Reflect model.
27. Teachers will learn how to help students set goals that are S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound).
28. Teachers will explore several real-world examples of differentiation by content, process, product, and learning environment as it relates specifically to the English language arts/Reading classroom at the middle and high school level.
29. Teachers will explore several real-world examples of differentiation by content, process, product, and learning environment as it relates specifically to science and math classrooms at the middle and high school level.
30. Teachers will explore several real-world examples of differentiation by content, process, product, and learning environment as it relates specifically to the history/social sciences classroom at the middle and high school level.

Instructional Media

- Online Discussions
- Online Engagement
- Online Collaboration
- Instructor Feedback
- Instructor Interaction
- Online Resources and Websites
- Supplemental Instructional Materials
- Printable Classroom Resources

Evaluation

- Test #1 (5% of final grade)

- Test #2 (5% of final grade)
- Test #3 (5% of final grade)
- Test #4 (5% of final grade)
- Test #5 (5% of final grade)
- Autobiography and Goals for the Course (10% of final grade)
- Article/Video Reflection (15% of final grade)
- Course Collaboration/Share Ideas with the Class (10% of final grade)
- Cumulative Assignment/Project: Design Two Differentiated Lesson Plans (20% of final grade)
- Culminating Practicum (20% of final grade)

Topical Outline

Unit One

- An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction
- The Role of the Teacher in Differentiated Instruction
- The Role of Essential Learning Targets in Differentiated Instruction
- **Assignment #1**
  Write an autobiography including information about yourself, your grade level and what you specifically hope to learn about implementing differentiated instruction by content, process, product, and learning environment across all content areas at the middle and high school level so that all students can succeed. Your autobiography should be a minimum of three paragraphs.
- **Test #1**

Unit Two

- Strategies to Differentiate by Content
- Differentiating Content within the Content Areas
- Digital Differentiation
- **Assignment #2**
  As an educator, it is important to be aware of the research, studies, and professional work done in the field. In the course, you will find an article and video that are relevant to the specific course content. Read the article and then write an essay with your thoughts.
- **Test #2**

Unit Three

- Strategies to Differentiate by Process
- Incorporating Multiple Learning Modalities
- Tiering by Process and Collaboration
- **Assignment #3**

Online Discussion Board Participation/Engagement: Please post a tip, strategy, or idea that specifically relates to implementing differentiated instruction by content, process, product, and learning environment across all content areas at the middle and high school level so that all students can succeed. The tip, strategy, or idea that you share needs to make a difference to other teachers in their own classrooms. Your assignment should be a minimum of three paragraphs and detailed enough for another teacher to follow easily. This is a great opportunity to share and collaborate with other teachers at your grade level around the country. Take time to review and respond to other postings that are relevant to your classroom population in order to gain effective ideas to use immediately in your classroom.

- **Test #3**

Unit Four

- Strategies to Differentiate by Product
- Implementing Choice in Products
- Using Rubrics to Differentiate by Product
- **Test #4**

Unit Five

- Strategies to Differentiate by Learning Environment
- Integrating a Differentiation Mindset for All
- Incorporating SEL into Differentiation and Setting Goals
- **Test #5**

Unit Six

- Real-World Examples: ELA and Reading
- Real-World Examples: Science and Math
- Real-World Examples: History and Social Science
- **Assignment #4**
  Design two lesson plans to address two of the four main types of differentiation — by content, process, product, or learning environment. The lesson plans should be detailed enough so that another teacher can easily use them. The lesson plans must also reflect best practices as they relate to differentiated instruction. To receive full credit, the lesson plans must meet all the criteria listed in Assignment 4. Follow the example given in Assignment 4.
- **Assignment #5**
  The culminating practicum is a three-step process. (1) In the first assignment, you were asked what goals you had and what you hoped to learn from the course. Think back to your original goals for this course. Write a minimum two-paragraph reflection specifically describing how what you learned can be used to help you reach those goal(s). (2) Next, write a minimum three-paragraph plan that specifically describes the ways in which you intend to implement a particular strategy you learned in this course into your own teaching situation. (3) Last, write a minimum two-paragraph reflection

describing a student you have or have had in the past. Then, discuss how the strategies you learned in this course will specifically benefit that student as you put your plan into action.

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