

Differentiated Instruction: An Introduction

In *Differentiated Instruction: An Introduction*, you will build a conceptual understanding of the model of differentiated instruction (DI), including the philosophical underpinnings of this model. You will explore characteristics and key elements of differentiated instruction, as well as beliefs that guide the DI model and the five nonnegotiables of differentiated instruction: high-quality curriculum, welcoming classroom environment, ongoing assessment, flexible grouping, and respectful tasks. You will also discover how differentiated classrooms differ from traditional classrooms and what concerns teachers have about practicing differentiated instruction. Finally, you will review the steps for getting started with differentiated instruction and obtaining buy-in from students, parents, and other stakeholders.

By the end of this course, through video examples, in-depth readings and reflections, and practical applications, you'll be ready to start planning for differentiation in your teaching practice. More specifically, as a result of the course, you will:

- Evaluate your current beliefs and practices in light of the DI model and philosophy.
- Demonstrate emerging skills in evaluating the use of five nonnegotiables of DI in your own classroom and in classrooms of others.
- Begin differentiating the content, process, and product of your lessons based on the readiness, interests, and learning profiles of your students.
- Map out a plan for getting started with DI.
- Design strategies for creating student and parent buy-in for differentiated instruction.

In the spirit of differentiation, please feel free to choose the sequence of the course modules and module elements in the way that suits your readiness, interests, and learning profile.

Essential Questions and Key Objectives

The following table includes the essential questions that each module of this course is based on, as well as the key objectives—what you will know, understand, and be able to do after completing each of the course modules.

Module 1: What Is Differentiated Instruction, and Why Do We Need It?	
Essential Questions	- What is differentiated instruction? - Why do teachers need to differentiate?
Know	- A definition of differentiated instruction (DI) - What DI is and isn't
Understand	- Differentiated instruction is both a way of thinking about teaching and learning <i>and</i> a model for guiding instructional planning that responds to student needs. - Students' varied needs are the reason for differentiation.
Do	- Explore key characteristics of differentiated instruction. - Assess and reflect on your own teaching beliefs and practices in relation to DI.
Module 2: Beliefs That Guide Differentiated Instruction	
Essential Questions	What teacher beliefs guide a differentiated classroom?
Know	- A definition of the growth and fixed mind-set - What beliefs point to differentiated instruction
Understand	Differentiated instruction is guided by a teacher's core beliefs about the nature of intelligence, the factors influencing motivation for learning, and the roles of teachers and students in the learning process.
Do	- Differentiate between fixed and growth mindset among students and teachers. - Evaluate and reflect on your own teaching beliefs and practices in relation to fixed and growth mindset.
Module 3: Non-Negotiables of Differentiated Instruction	
Essential Questions	What are the nonnegotiable elements of a differentiated classroom?
Know	Nonnegotiable elements of DI: classroom community, high-quality curriculum, ongoing assessment, flexible grouping, and respectful tasks
Understand	Effectively differentiated classrooms are marked by five interdependent nonnegotiable elements.
Do	- Examine the nonnegotiables of DI. - Analyze how nonnegotiables of DI are reflected in classrooms of others and in your own classroom.

Module 4: Key Elements of a Differentiated Classroom	
Essential Questions	- What are the key curriculum-related elements that can be differentiated? - What are the key characteristics of students that drive differentiation?
Know	- Definitions of differentiating content, process, and product - Definitions of student readiness, interests, and learning profiles
Understand	Teachers can differentiate content, process, and product based on student readiness, interests, and learning profiles.
Do	- Explore key elements of a differentiated classroom. - Analyze a differentiated lesson and differentiate your own lesson or unit.
Module 5: Getting Started with Differentiated Instruction	
Essential Questions	What is the best way to get started with differentiated instruction?
Know	Low- and high-preparation strategies used to differentiate instruction
Understand	- Any teacher can begin to proactively incorporate elements of DI into an existing classroom practice. - Low-prep and high-prep instructional strategies can help teachers begin to implement differentiation in manageable ways.
Do	- Review common concerns about implementing differentiated instruction. - Assess how consistently your teaching practices display key characteristics of differentiated instruction. - Map out a plan for enhancing differentiated instruction in teaching practice.
Module 6: Creating Buy-In for Differentiation from Students, Parents, and Others	
Essential Questions	How can teachers create buy-in for differentiation from students, parents, and others?
Know	Six questions teachers should discuss with students when introducing and implementing DI
Understand	- Teachers can create buy-in for differentiation by evaluating what objections others might have to DI—and why. - Teachers can help students, parents, and others understand what DI is and isn't by helping them redefine fairness, providing concrete analogies, and practicing DI effectively in the classroom.
Do	- Create student buy-in for implementing DI by facilitating six discussion topics. - Establish procedures for getting buy-in for implementing DI from parents and other stakeholders.

Course Syllabus

Module 1	What Is Differentiated Instruction, and Why Do We Need It? Module Welcome • Video: Giving Rise to the Idea of Differentiation • Reading: What Is Differentiated Instruction and Why Differentiate? • Video: A Way of Thinking About Teaching and Learning • Video: Meaningful Differentiation Is Proactive • Reading: Differentiating in Mixed-Ability Classrooms • Video: Learning to Differentiate Instruction Check for Understanding • Application: Aligning Beliefs and Practices Reflection
Module 2	Beliefs That Guide Differentiated Instruction Module Welcome • Reading: Beliefs That Guide Differentiated Instruction • Video: Fixed and Growth Mindsets • Reading: <i>Educational Leadership</i> – Even Geniuses Work Hard • Video: The Shift Toward the Growth Mindset • Reading: <i>Educational Leadership</i> – Notes from an Accidental Teacher • Video: Differentiation Philosophy in Action Check for Understanding • Application: Distinguish Between the Fixed and Growth Mindsets Reflection

Module 3	Nonnegotiables of Differentiated Instruction Module Welcome • Reading: Nonnegotiables of High-Quality Differentiation • Video: Differentiation in Action – Nonnegotiables of DI • Reading: <i>Educational Leadership</i> – Deciding to Teach Them All Check for Understanding • Application: Analyzing a Differentiated Classroom Reflection
Module 4	Key Elements of a Differentiated Classroom Module Welcome • Reading: Key Elements of a Differentiated Classroom • Video: Differentiating Content • Video: Differentiating Process • Video: Differentiating Product Check for Understanding • Application: Differentiating a Lesson or Unit Reflection

Module 5	Getting Started with Differentiated Instruction Module Welcome • Video: Getting Started with Differentiated Instruction • Reading: Getting Started with Differentiated Instruction • Video: Barriers to Differentiation • Reading: <i>Educational Leadership</i> – One Kid at a Time Check for Understanding • Application: Enhancing Classroom Practice Competency Reflection
Module 6	Creating Buy-In for Differentiation from Students, Parents, and Others Module Welcome • Video: From Controlling to Inspiring • Reading: Creating Buy-In from Students, Parents, and Others • Video: Introducing Differentiated Instruction to Students • Video: Partnering with Parents Check for Understanding • Application: Introducing Differentiated Instruction to Students Reflection

Resources

Texts

- Brandt, R. (1998). *Powerful learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Dweck, C. S. (2010). Even geniuses work hard. *Educational Leadership*, 68(1), 16–20.
- Johnsen, S. K. & Feuerbacher, S. (2004, Winter). What the research says about differentiation. *Tempo*, 24(1), 9–17.
- Strickland, C. (2007). *Tools for high-quality differentiated instruction: An ASCD action tool*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Stronge, J. (2002). *Qualities of effective teachers*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2003). Deciding to teach them all. *Educational Leadership*, 61(2), 6–11.
- Tomlinson, C. A. [Differentiating instruction]. Unpublished raw data.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (Developer). (1996). *Differentiating instruction for mixed-ability classrooms: An ASCD professional development kit, Folder 6, Activity 1, 1-6*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (Ed.) (2004). *Differentiation for gifted and talented students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2003). *Fulfilling the promise of the differentiated classroom*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*. 2nd edition. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C.A., & Imbeau, M. B. (2010). *Leading and managing a differentiated classroom*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2011). Notes from an accidental teacher. *Educational Leadership*, 68(4), 22–26.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2010). One kid at a time. *Educational Leadership*, 67(5), 12–16.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Video

- ASCD (2001). *At Work in the Differentiated Classroom: Managing the Classroom*. [DVD]. Alexandria, VA.

ASCD (1997). *Differentiating Instruction: Creating Multiple Paths for Learning*. [Video Program]. Alexandria, VA.

ASCD (1997). *Differentiating Instruction: Instructional and Management Strategies*. [Video Program]. Alexandria, VA.

ASCD (2008). *Differentiated Instruction in Action: High School* [DVD]. Alexandria, VA.

Tomlinson, C. A. (Speaker). (2011). Interview by David Hargis [DVD]. Unpublished interview.