Differentiated Instruction for Today’s Classroom®

Course Description

Differentiated Instruction for Today’s Classroom® is a PLS 3rd Learning course that equips experienced and beginner educators with the essential knowledge and skills to implement differentiated instruction (DI) successfully in their own classrooms. As a widely respected, research-based instructional approach, DI provides teachers with effective, manageable strategies for meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population within the context of today’s challenging standards-based curriculum. In a highly interactive learning environment that models the DI principles and processes, class members will gain expertise in understanding and implementing a broad range of strategies associated with three essential, distinguishing components of DI: first, the teacher’s role as guide and facilitator in a classroom environment specifically designed to support self-directed student learning and teacher-student collaboration; second, the interdependent nature of flexible grouping and assessment in a DI classroom; and third, the adaptation of curriculum content, processes (activities), and products to provide students with entry points to learning that match their readiness, interests, and/or learning profiles.

Course Alignments

This PLS 3rd Learning course is aligned to Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching:

Domain 1 – 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, and 1F
Domain 2 – 2A, 2B, and 2D
Domain 3 – 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, and 3E
Domain 4 – 4A, 4B, 4C, 4E, and 4F

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of this class, the learner will be able to:

1. Discuss and apply current, validated research underlying the theory, principles, and practices of differentiated instruction (DI).
2. Discuss the spectrum of learner variance that teachers in today’s classrooms must address.
3. Identify and explain the core principles of DI and the ways in which these principles inform and guide all aspects of DI implementation.
4. Identify and explain the role of a DI teacher as facilitator and guide in the learner-centered environment of a differentiated classroom.

5. Evaluate personal growth in the skills associated with effective DI teachers.

6. Identify, explain, implement, and evaluate DI classroom management strategies and procedures that increase student success in a DI learning environment.

7. Identify, explain, and implement plans to support the development of 13 skills of self-directed learners in his/her classroom.

8. Analyze the ways in which the FRAME-CAB principles, the DI teacher’s role, DI classroom management basics, and student self-directed learning work together to create the essential elements of the DI learning environment.

9. Discuss the interdependent relationship between assessment and instruction in a DI learning environment.

10. Explain how assessment in a DI classroom is “assessment for learning.”

11. Use formal and informal assessment tools to collect data on the readiness, interests, and learning profiles of his/her students as the basis for differentiation before and during instruction.

12. Use the Model for Differentiated Instruction to create units of study based on standards and major assessment K-U-Dos (what a student knows, understands, and can do).

13. Create lessons that focus on core knowledge and skills identified through the planning process outlined in the Model for Differentiated Instruction.

14. Experience, evaluate, and apply a range of DI instructional strategies designed to support differentiated instruction of lesson content, processes, and/or products based on the readiness, interests, and/or learning profiles of specific students in his/her classroom.

15. Use specific DI instructional strategies to balance choice and self-directedness; flexibly differentiate before and during implementation of DI lessons; support the development of self-directedness in students; orchestrate fully differentiated lessons for two or more groups of students at the same time; and provide individualized instruction for specific students in the context of the DI learning environment.

16. Experience, evaluate, and apply a range of flexible DI grouping strategies for whole-class, small-group, and individualized learning experiences during a DI lesson in his/her classroom.

17. Generalize course content to reflect how the multicultural, special needs, gifted students, and other diverse populations within classrooms have their needs met by the application of the skills, strategies, and knowledge gained in this course.

18. Reflect continuously upon personal expertise using the knowledge and skills associated with this course, and use these insights actively as the basis for ongoing professional growth.

19. Work collaboratively to share knowledge, skills, and experiences, refine understanding of content, give and receive feedback, and improve expertise.
Institutional Outcomes
(To be listed here)

Required Text
Selected research articles, research summaries, and topical articles drawn from educational literature and the course manual.

Topical Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Concepts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Differentiated Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity statistics; learner variance; a picture of diversity in today’s classrooms; what differentiated instruction (DI) is and is not; the what, why, and how of DI; the course model; self-assessment; the FRAME-CAB principles of differentiation (flexibility; respectful work; attention to student differences; modifications in content, process, and products of instruction; essential concepts as the basis for differentiation; collaboration between teacher and students; assessment and instruction are inseparable; and belonging); KIM graphic organizers; the DI basis in theory; supportive research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essentials of a DI Learning Environment</td>
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<td>Metaphors for the teacher’s role in a DI classroom; basic skill set of a DI teacher (knows students, creates a classroom environment that supports successful DI, adapts instruction to meet existing and emerging student needs); policies of effective DI classroom management (assign students to groups efficiently, establish a “home base,” establish procedures for students to get help, minimize noise, establish procedures for students to turn in work, minimize stray movement, establish the expectation for excellence in all work, make a plan for calling a halt, regularly ask students for their input); developing student self-directedness, classroom management strategies that support self-directed learning; using DI to create a student-centered classroom environment; the anchor strategy, giving clear directions; the nature of flexible grouping in a DI classroom; the interdependent nature of flexible grouping and assessment; exit question strategy; reflective journal strategy</td>
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<td>Connecting Assessment &amp; Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Standards-Based Context for</td>
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<td>Differentiating Instruction</td>
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<td>Introduction to DI Instructional</td>
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<td>Strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaining Instructional Flexibility in</td>
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<td>Using DI Strategies</td>
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<td>DI Strategies to Reinforce Student</td>
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<td>Self-Directedness</td>
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<td>Fully Differentiated Instruction</td>
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**DI Strategies for Individualized Learning**
Connections between flexible grouping and flexible instruction, using informal assessment to guide in-the-moment grouping, differences between tracking and DI ability grouping, types of grouping in a DI classroom (whole-class, small-group, heterogeneous, homogeneous, teacher-selected, student-selected, readiness-based, interest-based, learning-profile-based); learning contracts; differentiating for gifted learners; myths and truths about gifted students; curriculum compacting

**Planning for Full Implementation**
“Fair” vs. “equal”; grading practices (formative, summative, diagnostic assessments); assessment and grading for learning; position statements about DI

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**Course Assessments and Links to Institutional Outcomes and Course Outcomes**
Throughout the course, the learner will be assessed and evaluated on the completion of the following assessments. There are four mandatory assessments in this course (participants choose between No. 1 and No. 2) for a total of 50 points. Participants choose from the optional (non-bolded) assessments below for an additional 50 points. There are 100 possible assessment points in this course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Correlations With Institutional Outcomes</th>
<th>Correlations With Course Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment No. 1:</td>
<td>Article Review</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Assessment No. 2:</td>
<td>Web Search</td>
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<td>Assessment No. 3:</td>
<td>Learner Variance</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Assessment No. 4:</td>
<td>Essentials of a DI Learning Environment</td>
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<td>Assessment No. 5:</td>
<td>Connecting Assessment &amp; Instruction</td>
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<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment No. 6:</td>
<td>A Standards-Based Context for Differentiating Instruction</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17</td>
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</table>
Assessment No. 7: Introduction to DI Instructional Strategies 10  1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

Assessment No. 8: Gaining Instructional Flexibility in Using DI Strategies 10  1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

Assessment No. 9: DI Strategies to Reinforce Student Self-Directedness 10  1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18

Assessment No. 10: Fully Differentiated Instruction 15  1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

Assessment No. 11: DI Strategies for Individualized Learning 10  1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

Assessment No. 12: Reflection 10  1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

Assessment No. 13: Action Plan 10  1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

Total 100

Criteria specific to each assessment will be explained in conjunction with the instructional activities.

**Instructional Materials**
Instructors and learners will use instructor-generated materials, learner-generated materials, print resources, and Web-based resources to facilitate learning.

**Instructional Methodology**
The instructional methodology of this course focuses on developing, enhancing, and improving the instructional expertise and pedagogical knowledge base of practicing educators. Strategies include instructor presentation of new content through short lecturebursts, active construction of knowledge during hands-on practice and problem solving, collaborative group work, personal reflection, in-class presentations and demonstrations, ad hoc and structured small-group or whole class discussion, analysis of assigned reading, and application of course content and skills to each participant’s individual grade level, subject area, and classroom.

**Evaluation**
The evaluation of learner work will be based on the defined criteria for learner assessments, which will be processed with learners prior to their instructional activities and engagement with the student learning targets (outcomes). Grading is
based solely on the evaluation of student learning targets and defined criteria for learner assessments.

Formative assessment of learning outcomes is conducted throughout the course, using a variety of means that include the following: completion of assessments; constructive contributions to class discussions (whole-class as well as small-group); sharing of valuable, pertinent, and/or applicable ideas and experiences; involvement in the inductive process; interactive journal entries with written instructor feedback; critical or reflective responses to assigned readings; oral discussions in a whole-class or small-group setting; active participation and general attentiveness to the instructor and others. It is expected that each student will contribute to the academic quality of the course.

Summative assessment includes the completion of a culminating assignment that requires the participant to synthesize class content, apply it to his or her specific teaching situation, and complete a reflective action plan for implementing the major components of content and skill acquired during the course.

**Grading Policy**
(To be listed here)

**Absence and Tardy Policy**
(To be listed)

**PLS 3rd Learning’s Academic Integrity Policy**
PLS 3rd Learning expects absolute academic honesty and integrity from every course participant. The specific Academic Integrity and Honor Code Policies of our partner colleges and universities are embraced and enforced by PLS 3rd Learning instructors. The following are considered to be serious violations:

- Plagiarism: the use of another’s ideas, data, or words without proper acknowledgement.
- Fabrication: the use of invented information or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive.
- Collusion: improper collaboration with another in preparing assignments or projects.
- Cheating: an act of deception by which a student misrepresents that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered.
- Academic Misconduct: tampering with grades, or taking part in obtaining or distributing any part of student work that is not his or her own.

Violation or suspected violation will be investigated and pursued according to specific college/university procedures.

**Identity Authentication**
The college/university, PLS 3rd Learning, and students share a joint responsibility to ensure that each student’s contribution in an online course activity comes from that student alone. For the student, this responsibility has two parts:

1. Students are responsible for positively ensuring that every contribution to an online course created with the students’ computer account is made by the
student alone. Contributions covered under this policy include: written assignments; quiz and exam submissions; discussion forum postings; live participation in text-based chat sessions, phone conferences, and videoconferences. If a student allows another person to write or make any kind of submission to an online activity in the student’s name, then this constitutes cheating and will be treated as a violation of academic honesty.

2. Students are responsible for ensuring the integrity of their computer account security by following the actions required of them by the PLS 3rd Learning Acceptable Use Policy. These actions include keeping passcodes private, updating passcodes when required by PLS 3rd Learning, and reporting breaches of the security policy to the IT Helpdesk.

**Participant Professionalism Policy**
As a courtesy to other participants and to your instructor, please refrain from text messaging, checking e-mail, or answering your cell phone during class time. Breaks are provided throughout the course so you can attend to personal matters. Using your personal electronic devices during class time is distracting and disrupts instruction and participant communication and collaboration. If you have an emergency or justifiable reason to leave your cell phone turned on during class time, please make arrangements with the instructor prior to the beginning of class.
Alignments to Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*

Each PLS 3rd Learning course is aligned to the components in Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*. The alignments for this course are listed below.

**DOMAIN 1: PLANNING AND PREPARATION**
1A. Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy  
1B. Demonstrating Knowledge of Students  
1C. Setting Instructional Outcomes  
1D. Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources  
1E. Designing Coherent Instruction  
1F. Designing Student Assessments

**DOMAIN 2: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**
2A. Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport  
2B. Establishing a Culture for Learning  
2D. Managing Student Behavior

**DOMAIN 3: INSTRUCTION**
3A. Communicating with Students  
3B. Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques  
3C. Engaging Students in Learning  
3D. Using Assessment in Instruction  
3E. Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

**DOMAIN 4: PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**
4A. Reflecting on Teaching  
4B. Maintaining Accurate Records  
4C. Communicating with Families  
4E. Growing and Developing Professionally  
4F. Showing Professionalism
Course Outcome Correlations With INTASC Standards for Teachers

**Standard 1: Learner Development**

The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

2, 3, 6, 8, 14, 15

**Standard 2: Learning Differences**

The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17

**Standard 3: Learning Environments**

The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation.

2, 4, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16

**Standard 4: Content Knowledge**

The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

1, 12, 13

**Standard 5: Application of Content**

The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

2, 6, 7, 8, 14, 15

**Standard 6: Assessment**

The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making.

9, 10, 11, 12
Standard 7: Planning for Instruction
The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

Standard 8: Instructional Strategies
The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

Standard 9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice
The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

Standard 10: Leadership and Collaboration
The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and the Support for Consortium (InTASC) standards were developed by the Council of the Chief State School Officers and member states. Copies may be downloaded from the Council’s website at http://www.ccsso.org/intasc.


## Course Outcome Correlations With National Board of Professional Teaching (NBPTS) Five Core Propositions

### Proposition 1: Teachers are Committed to Students and Their Learning.

NBCTs are dedicated to making knowledge accessible to all students. They believe all students can learn.  

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They treat students equitably. They recognize the individual differences that distinguish their students from one another and they take account for these differences in their practice.  

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NBCTs understand how students develop and learn.  

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They respect the cultural and family differences students bring to their classroom.  

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They are concerned with their students’ self-concept, their motivation and the effects of learning on peer relationships.  

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NBCTs are also concerned with the development of character and civic responsibility.  

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### Proposition 2: Teachers Know the Subjects They Teach and How to Teach Those Subjects to Students.

NBCTs have mastery over the subject(s) they teach. They have a deep understanding of the history, structure and real-world applications of the subject.  

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They have skill and experience in teaching it, and they are very familiar with the skills gaps and preconceptions students may bring to the subject.  

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They are able to use diverse instructional strategies to teach for understanding.  

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### Proposition 3: Teachers are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning.

NBCTs deliver effective instruction. They move fluently through a range of instructional techniques, keeping students motivated, engaged and focused.  

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They know how to engage students to ensure a disciplined learning environment, and how to organize instruction to meet instructional goals. 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

NBCTs know how to assess the progress of individual students as well as the class as a whole. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

They use multiple methods for measuring student growth and understanding, and they can clearly explain student performance to parents. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

**Proposition 4: Teachers Think Systematically about Their Practice and Learn from Experience.**

NBCTs model what it means to be an educated person – they read, they question, they create and they are willing to try new things. 1, 2, 5, 6, 18

They are familiar with learning theories and instructional strategies and stay abreast of current issues in American education. 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 17, 18

They critically examine their practice on a regular basis to deepen knowledge, expand their repertoire of skills, and incorporate new findings into their practice. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 18

**Proposition 5: Teachers are Members of Learning Communities.**

NBCTs collaborate with others to improve student learning. 1, 2, 7, 8, 14, 15, 16, 18

They are leaders and actively know how to seek and build partnerships with community groups and businesses. 1, 17

They work with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum development and staff development. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

They can evaluate school progress and the allocation of resources in order to meet state and local education objectives. 1, 6, 16, 17

They know how to work collaboratively with parents to engage them productively in the work of the school. 1, 2, 17

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Bibliography


Hertberg-Davis, H. (2009). Myth 7: Differentiation in the regular classroom is equivalent to gifted programs and is sufficient: Classroom teachers have the time, the skill, and the will to differentiate adequately. Gifted Child Quarterly, 53, 251–253.


