

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 key characteristics and elements of differentiated instruction, as well as beliefs that guide the DI model and five nonnegotiables of differentiated instruction: an environment that supports learning, high-quality curriculum, ongoing assessment to inform instruction, instruction that responds to student differences, and leadership and flexible classroom management. 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.

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.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is differentiated instruction? • Why do teachers need to differentiate?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition of differentiated instruction (DI). • What DI is and isn't. • Key characteristics of DI.
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify 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 Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What teacher beliefs guide a differentiated classroom?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition of the growth and fixed mindset. • Beliefs that underlie the philosophy of differentiated instruction.
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: Nonnegotiables of Differentiated Instruction	
Essential Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the nonnegotiable elements of a differentiated classroom?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nonnegotiable elements of DI: an environment that supports learning, high-quality curriculum, ongoing assessment to inform instruction, instruction that responds to student differences, and leadership and flexible classroom management.
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively differentiated classrooms are marked by five interdependent nonnegotiable elements.
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Differentiated Instruction	
Essential Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key elements of instruction that can be differentiated? What are the key characteristics of students that drive differentiation?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definitions of differentiating content, process, product, and affect/learning environment. Definitions of student readiness, interests, and learning profiles.
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers can differentiate content, process, product, and affect/learning environment based on student readiness, interests, and learning profiles.
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key elements of instruction that can be differentiated. Identify key characteristics of students that drive differentiation. Analyze a differentiated lesson and differentiate some elements of your own lesson or unit based on your students' needs.
Module 5: Getting Started with Differentiated Instruction	
Essential Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do teachers get started with differentiated instruction?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low- and high-preparation strategies used to differentiate instruction. Common concerns about implementing DI.
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All teachers 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.
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify common concerns about implementing differentiated instruction. Assess how consistently your teaching practices display key characteristics of differentiated instruction. Map out a plan for incorporating or enhancing differentiated instruction in teaching practice.

Course Syllabus

Module 1	<p>What Is Differentiated Instruction, and Why Do We Need It?</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Check for Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application: Aligning Beliefs and Practices <p>Reflection</p>
Module 2	<p>Beliefs That Guide Differentiated Instruction</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Check for Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application: Distinguish Between the Fixed and Growth Mindsets <p>Reflection</p>

<p>Module 3</p>	<p>Nonnegotiables of Differentiated Instruction</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: Nonnegotiables of Differentiation • Reading: Nonnegotiables of Effective Differentiation • Video: Nonnegotiables of DI in Action • Reading: <i>Educational Leadership</i>—Deciding to Teach Them All <p>Check for Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application: Analyzing a Differentiated Classroom <p>Reflection</p>
<p>Module 4</p>	<p>Key Elements of Differentiated Instruction</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: Key Elements of Differentiated Instruction • Video: Differentiating Content • Video: Differentiating Process • Video: Differentiating Product <p>Check for Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application: Key Elements of Differentiated Instruction <p>Reflection</p>
<p>Module 5</p>	<p>Getting Started with Differentiated Instruction</p> <p>Module Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Video: Staying on the Right Track <p>Check for Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application: Differentiated Instruction: Planning for Growth <p>Reflection</p>

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. (2001). *At Work in the Differentiated Classroom: Planning Curriculum and Instruction* [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.
- Tomlinson. C. A. (Speaker). (2011). Interview by David Hargis [DVD]. Unpublished interview.