



Why DI?: An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction

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Introduction

Welcome to *Why DI?: An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction*, an interactive computer-based instruction course, designed to give you an understanding of the framework of and need for creating supportive learning environments for diverse learning populations. In this course you will learn what is meant by Differentiated Instruction (DI) and the common myths associated with creating the differentiated classroom. We will discuss the legal, theoretical, and pedagogical foundations in the field of education that support the utilization of differentiated instructional practices and principles. We will reflect on best practices and national trends in the design of the educational setting to meet the needs of a diverse learning population. Participants will learn how a differentiated approach invites educators to consider any approach that supports student access to the general education curriculum and success in learning.

Why DI?: An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction will also provide connections to a variety of concepts, variables, and resources that will assist practitioners in aligning their own professional practices with those found in the differentiated classroom.

This computer-based instruction course is a self-supporting program that provides instruction, structured practice, and evaluation all on your home or school computer. Technical support information can be found in the Help section of your course.

Course Materials (Online)

Title: *Why DI?: An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction*
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Academic Integrity Statement

The structure and format of most distance-learning courses presumes a high level of personal and academic integrity in completion and submission of coursework. Individuals enrolled in a distance-learning course are expected to adhere to the following standards of academic conduct.

Academic Work

Academic work submitted by the individual (such as papers, assignments, reports, tests) shall be the student's own work or appropriately attributed, in part or in whole, to its correct source. Submission of commercially prepared (or group prepared) materials as if they are one's own work is unacceptable.

Aiding Honesty in Others

The individual will encourage honesty in others by refraining from providing materials or information to another person with knowledge that these materials or information will be used improperly.

Violations of these academic standards will result in the assignment of a failing grade and subsequent loss of credit for the course.

Level of Application

This course is designed for anyone working with a diverse learning population across the K-12 spectrum. While the information presented may have relevance to any student-centered educational setting, it will have the most relevance for K-8 mixed ability classrooms.

Expected Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course, participants will demonstrate their ability to:

1. Understand how differentiated instruction is defined.
2. Articulate why differentiated instruction is not a prescriptive approach.
3. Outline the major elements within a classroom that teachers typically differentiate.
4. Explain the role of curriculum and instruction in a differentiated classroom.
5. Relate ways in which differentiated instruction may be useful when creating a personal teaching philosophy.
6. Identify the core principles of classrooms reflecting a differentiated instructional approach.
7. Outline the current systems-level, theoretical, legal, and pedagogical foundation for differentiation.
8. Identify ways in which differentiated instruction compares and contrasts with specially designed instruction for students with disabilities.
9. Explain how assessment in a classroom best exemplifies a differentiated approach.
10. Articulate the primary methods for obtaining information about student interests, preferences, and overall learning profile.
11. Understand the rationale for synthesis between leading curricular design method, Understanding by Design (UBD), and the differentiated instruction approach.
12. Distinguish elements of a differentiated approach from those of a non-differentiated, or "one size fits all" approach.

13. Articulate the range of barriers when implementing a differentiated classroom including the importance of selecting accessible instructional materials (AEM).
 14. Analyze ways in which a differentiated approach addresses the role of ESSA in shaping professional practice and understanding of quality teaching.
 15. Understand the systemic pressures placed upon teachers and ways in which differentiation helps re-focus attention on the needs of students.
 16. Outline a framework for motivating all students in a way that is respectful, student-centered, and reflective of a differentiated approach.
 17. Relate to differentiated instruction's concept of reciprocity of accountability for success of both teachers and students.
 18. Articulate how the current emphasis on teacher beliefs about learning and dispositions toward students are embraced within a differentiated approach.
 19. Articulate barriers that exist for those who are genuinely interested in implementing a differentiated approach.
 20. Articulate the role of the teacher, student, and parents in a differentiated classroom.
 21. Articulate the ways in which administrators can support teachers who are implementing a differentiated classroom.
 22. Discuss an expanded concept of diversity and learner variance to which teachers must respond.
 23. Identify characteristics of and initial strategies for creating a culturally responsive approach to student diversity.
 24. Assess current understanding of and willingness to implement a classroom aligned with differentiated instructional approach.
 25. Understand how a differentiated approach welcomes other approaches as broad as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or as specific as Explicit Instruction.
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Course Description

This course, *Why DI?: An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction*, has been divided into four chapters. The organization of the course covers the **What, Why, and Who** of a classroom that reflects a Differentiated Instruction approach.

- Chapter 1: The What of Differentiated Instruction
 - Chapter 2: The Why of Differentiated Instruction (Part 1)
 - Chapter 3: The Why of Differentiated Instruction (Part 2)
 - Chapter 4: The Who of Differentiated Instruction
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Course Overview

In **Chapter 1**, we outline **what** a differentiated instructional approach entails. A framework for those elements that are typically differentiated in a differentiated classroom is provided. Characteristics and principles that best describe the DI approach across the K-12 spectrum are outlined. General considerations of what DI is not, or common misconceptions associated with the DI approach, are also considered. Attention is given to ways in which the differentiated approach aligns with current expectations of professionals and anticipated needs for classrooms in the future.

In **Chapter 2**, we explore **why** the differentiated approach is receiving so much attention. The historical, theoretical, systems-level, legal, and pedagogical factors that provide a supporting framework for implementing a differentiated instructional approach are defined. The role that instruction and assessment play in a differentiated classroom are discussed within a context of what are currently

believed to be optimal learning conditions for students. A synthesis of ways in which differentiated instruction and “Understanding by Design” (UBD) mutually reinforce each other is provided.

In **Chapter 3**, we explore a range of variables in support of the alignment of the differentiated approach with the needs of professionals, the needs associated with educational reform in general, and ultimately the needs of individual students. Particular attention is given to the role of teacher beliefs and dispositions toward students within a differentiated model. A metaphor for differentiated instruction is explored which reinforces a reciprocal responsibility for both teachers and students for creating the conditions for mutual success. The orientation of teachers to student failure within a differentiated approach is discussed. Barriers that exist for teachers desiring to implement a differentiated approach are explored.

In **Chapter 4**, we explore who is involved in a differentiated classroom and how this approach differs from many traditional classrooms. Clarification of the roles of the teacher, students, and administrators in a differentiated instruction classroom are provided. The skills, interests, dispositions, and goals of course participants are explored within the framework of a differentiated approach. Barriers to the implementation of a differentiated approach are explored, allowing for discussion of your particular role or context in education, the kind of school system you function in, and the degree to which you would identify yourself as a teacher who differentiates.

Each chapter contains additional handouts that cover specific topics from the chapter in greater depth. They are provided for you to read, ponder, and apply to the setting in which you work. Some of the handouts are directly related to the concepts and content of the specific chapter, but also included are handouts indirectly related to provide extended learning connections.

Student Expectations

As a student you will be expected to:

- Complete all four information sections showing a competent understanding of the material presented in each section.
- Complete all four section examinations, showing a competent understanding of the material presented. **You must obtain an overall score of 70% or higher, with no individual exam score below 50%, and successfully complete ALL writing assignments to pass this course. *Please note: Minimum exam score requirements may vary by college or university; therefore, you should refer to your course addendum to determine what your minimum exam score requirements are.**
- Complete a review of any section on which your examination score was below 50%.
- Retake any examination, after completing an information review, to increase that examination score to a minimum of 50%, making sure to also be achieving an overall exam score of a minimum 70% (maximum of three attempts). ***Please note: Minimum exam score requirements may vary by college or university; therefore, you should refer to your course addendum to determine what your minimum exam score requirements are.**
- Complete all course journal article and essay writing assignments with the minimum word count shown for each writing assignment.
- Complete a course evaluation form at the end of the course.

Examinations

At the end of each course section, you will be expected to complete an examination designed to assess your knowledge. You may take these exams a total of three times. Your last score will save, not the highest score. After your third attempt, each examination will lock and not allow further access. The average from your exam scores will be printed on your certificate. However, this is not your final grade since your required writing assignments have not been reviewed. Exceptionally written or poorly written required writing assignments, or violation of the academic integrity policy in the course syllabus, will affect your grade. As this is a self-paced computerized instruction program, you may review course information as often as necessary. You will not be able to exit any examinations until you have answered all questions. If you try to exit the exam before you complete all questions, your information will be lost. You are expected to complete the entire exam in one sitting.

Writing Assignments

All assignments are reviewed and may impact your final grade. Exceptionally or poorly written assignments, or violation of the Academic Integrity Policy (see course syllabus for policy), will affect your grade. Fifty percent of your grade is determined by your writing assignments, and your overall exam score determines the other fifty percent. ***Refer to the Essay Grading Guidelines, which were sent as an attachment with your original course link. You should also refer to the Course Syllabus Addendum, which was sent as an attachment with your original course link, to determine if you have any writing assignments in addition to the Critical Thinking Questions (CTQ) and Journal Article Summations (JAS). If you do, the Essay Grading Guidelines will also apply.***

Your writing assignments must meet the minimum word count and are not to include the question or your final citations as part of your word count. In other words, the question and citations are not to be used as a means to meet the minimum word count.

Critical Thinking Questions

There are four CTQs that you are required to complete. You will need to write a minimum of 500 words (maximum 1,000) per essay. You should explain how the information that you gained from the course will be applied and clearly convey a strong understanding of the course content as it relates to each CTQ. To view the questions, click on REQUIRED ESSAY and choose the CTQ that you are ready to complete; this will bring up a screen where you may enter your essay. Prior to course submission, you may go back at any point to edit your essay, but you must be certain to click SAVE once you are done with your edits.

You must click SAVE before you write another essay or move on to another part of the course.

Journal Article Summations

You are required to write, in your own words, a summary on a total of three peer-reviewed or scholarly journal articles (one article per JAS), written by an author with a Ph.D., Ed.D. or similar, on the topic outlined within each JAS section in the "Required Essays" portion of the course (blogs, abstracts, news articles, or similar are not acceptable). Your article choice must relate specifically to the discussion topic listed in each individual JAS. You will choose a total of three relevant articles (one article per JAS) and write a thorough summary of the information presented in each article (you must write a minimum of 200 words with a 400 word maximum per JAS). Be sure to provide the URL or the

journal name, volume, date, and any other critical information to allow the facilitator to access and review each article.

To write your summary, click on REQUIRED ESSAYS and choose the JAS that you would like to complete. A writing program will automatically launch where you can write your summary. When you are ready to stop, click **SAVE**. Prior to course submission you may go back at any point to edit your summaries but you must be certain to click SAVE once you are done with your edits. For more information on the features of this assignment, please consult the HELP menu.

You must click SAVE before you write another summary or move on to another part of the course.

Facilitator Description

Why DI?: An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction has been developed with the widest possible audience in mind because the core principles of a differentiated approach can be applied to grades K–12. The primary goal of the course is to provide both an accurate overview of the approach and an opportunity for reflection to professionals who are interested in assessing how their current practice does, or doesn't, align with a differentiated one. Steve Dahl has served as a district-level and regional-level administrator overseeing a variety of federal programs, such as Special Education and Title 1. He has a master's degree in special education and has completed post-master's coursework to obtain a Washington State Administrator Credential, which certifies him to oversee programs ranging from preschool settings through 12th grade (as well as post-secondary vocational programs for 18–21-year-old students). He has 21 years of combined experience in resource-room special education classrooms, inclusion support in a comprehensive high school, and provision of support to adults with disabilities in accessing a wide range of community settings. He most recently served 4 years as a special programs administrator, overseeing multiple programs ranging from institutional education settings (juvenile detention) to K–12 social-emotional programs designed to support students whose disability interferes with their academic learning. He currently serves as director of Learning Solutions for Striven Media, creators of VirtualJobShadow.com and VJS Junior, K–12 career exploration platforms. **Please contact Professor Dahl if you have course content or examination questions.**

Instructor Description

Pamela Bernards has 30 years of combined experience in diverse PK–8 and high school settings as a teacher and an administrator. In addition to these responsibilities, she was the founding director of a K–8 after-school care program and founder of a pre-school program for infants to 4-year-olds. As a principal, her school was named a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 1992, as was the school at which she served as curriculum coordinator in 2010. She currently serves as a principal in a PK3–Grade 8 school. Areas of interest include curriculum, research-based teaching practices, staff development, assessment, data-driven instruction, and instructional intervention (remediation and gifted/talented). She received a doctorate in Leadership and Professional Practice from Trevecca Nazarene University. **Please contact Professor Dahl if you have course content or examination questions.**

Contacting the Facilitator

You may contact the facilitator by emailing Professor Dahl at steve_dahl@virtualeduc.com or calling him at 509-891-7219, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. PST. Phone messages will be answered

within 24 hours. Phone conferences will be limited to ten minutes per student, per day, given that this is a self-paced instructional program. Please do not contact the instructor about technical problems, course glitches, or other issues that involve the operation of the course.

Technical Questions

If you have questions or problems related to the operation of this course, please try everything twice. If the problem persists please check our support pages for FAQs and known issues at www.virtualeduc.com and also the Help section of your course.

If you need personal assistance, then email support@virtualeduc.com or call 509-891-7219. When contacting technical support, please know your course version number (it is located at the bottom left side of the Welcome Screen) and your operating system and be seated in front of the computer at the time of your call.

Minimum Computer Requirements

Please refer to VESi's website: www.virtualeduc.com or contact VESi if you have further questions about the compatibility of your operating system.

Refer to the addendum regarding Grading Criteria, Course Completion Information, Items to be Submitted, and how to submit your completed information. The addendum will also note any additional course assignments that you may be required to complete that are not listed in this syllabus.

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Resources on Developing a Personal Teaching Philosophy (PTP)

Ohio State University: University Center for the Advancement of Teaching.

<https://drakeinstitute.osu.edu/instructor-support/teaching-portfolio-development/philosophy-teaching-statement>

University of Minnesota: Center for Innovation in Education. <https://cei.umn.edu/writing-your-teaching-philosophy>

Differentiation Resources by Selected State

Kentucky Department of Education

<https://education.ky.gov/educational/diff/Pages/default.aspx>

Secondary Differentiation Resource

<https://education.ky.gov/educational/diff/Pages/differentiationSecResources.aspx>

Universal Design for Learning

<https://education.ky.gov/educational/diff/Pages/UDL.aspx>

Crosswalk between Danielson FtF and UDL

https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/tpep/frameworks/danielson/danielson_udl_crosswalk.pdf

US Department of Education Resources

Dear Colleague Letter on Students with Disabilities and FAPE:

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/idea/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guidance-on-fape-11-17-2015.pdf>

Parent Center Hub (Resources for Parents of students with disabilities)

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/brief-fape/>

US Department of Ed Tech (USDET)

<https://tech.ed.gov/>

National Ed Tech Plan (ETP)

<https://tech.ed.gov/netp/>

IES What Works Clearinghouse Resources (Find What Works)

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW>

Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral and Mental Health Needs.

<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/students/summary-supporting-child-student-social-emotional-behavioral-mental-health.pdf>

Other Helpful Websites

<https://aem.cast.org/create/perceivable>

All Things PLC: <http://www.allthingsplc.info/blog/view/32/Student+Grouping+in+a+PLC>

CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/school_connectedness.htm

ERIC Resources: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ976481>

Every Student Succeeds Act: <https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn>

NAEP website: <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

College and Career Readiness Standards, Reading:

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/>

College and Career Readiness Standards, Writing:

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W/>

College and Career Readiness Standards, Speaking and Listening:

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/SL/>

College and Career Readiness Standards, Language:

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/L/>

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (2007). *A 7-step process for creating standards-based IEPs*.

https://nasdse.org/docs/36_a7f577f4-20c9-40bf-be79-54fb510f754f.pdf

National Center for Accessible Educational Material (AEM).

<http://aem.cast.org/>

<https://aem.cast.org/create/perceivable>

National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt).

<https://nccrest.edreform.net/>

Course content is updated every three years. Due to this update timeline, some URL links may no longer be active or may have changed. Please type the title of the organization into the command line of any Internet browser search window and you will be able to find whether the URL link is still active or any new link to the corresponding organization's web home page.

6/13/23 JN



COURSE SYLLABUS ADDENDUM

Important - Please Read - Do Not Discard

It is each student's responsibility to read all course materials, including course syllabus and addendum, and to know and understand the course requirements, exam score minimum requirements, and deadlines. Students enrolled in VESi courses are required to check their email for any communications regarding the course until their final grade is posted with the college or university. Once your course materials are received by VESi and have been reviewed, the **GRADE IS FINAL**.

Grading Criteria:

You must obtain an overall score of 70% or higher, with no individual exam score below 50%, and successfully complete ALL writing assignments to pass this course. This course requires a minimum overall passing grade of "C-" to receive credit. The average from your exam scores will be printed on your certificate. However, this is not your final grade since your required writing assignments have not been reviewed. Exceptionally written or poorly written required writing assignments, or violation of the academic integrity policy in the course syllabus, will affect your grade. Fifty percent of your grade is determined by your writing assignments, and your overall exam score determines the other fifty percent.

No grade will be submitted for partial completion of course assignments, regardless of partial score. An F will be reported if course is not completed by the end of the term enrolled. Exceptions only apply to those that request an extension (must have extenuating circumstances) prior to course deadline.

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Letter grades will be assigned as follows: | 90% to 100% A |
| | 80% to 89% B |
| | 70% to 79% C |
| | 69% - lower F |

Course Completion Information:

Grading will take approximately two weeks from the time your materials are received by the instructor, after which we will submit grades to the college/university weekly. If you have a timeline to meet certain school or state requirements, please keep this time period in mind when planning your course completion dates.

Course Completion Instructions

- **Once you have completed all of the course requirements, follow the instructions from the Complete Course toolbar to submit your materials to VESi's office for processing. You can only submit the course ONE TIME. Be sure that you have completed all requirements and exams.**
- **Course Evaluation:** Please take a moment to fill out the course evaluation which is also found under the Complete Course toolbar.

- **Print Certificate:** You can print a copy of your course certificate for your records.

Accessing your NDSU Transcript:

After the grade for your course(s) is posted, approximately two weeks after the course submission, you can access your NDSU transcript for documentation of course completion and performance. Instructions are found at this link: [Transcript Instructions | Distance and Continuing Education | NDSU](#)

Drops & Refunds:

Once learners have received the course materials, they are no longer eligible for a refund. Appeals will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Questions or Concerns:

Please direct any questions or concerns regarding this class to ndsu.dce@ndsu.edu. Please include the title of the course in your correspondence.