



## Try DI!: Planning & Preparing a Differentiated Instruction Program

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### Introduction

Welcome to *Try DI!: Planning & Preparing a Differentiated Instruction Program*, an interactive computer-based instruction course. This course is designed to provide you an opportunity to learn about an instructional framework, Differentiated Instruction (DI), aimed at creating supportive learning environments for diverse learning populations. Students will be presented a method for self-assessment of the extent to which their current instructional approach reflects the perspective, principles, and practices of the DI approach. The course reflects an approach that aligns the principles of DI with the practices of DI. The concept of a “theory of action” will also be provided within a DI context. The course has also been designed to introduce students to a range of strategies associated with a DI approach. Strategies included in this course have been selected on the basis that they are effective in the widest possible range of educational K–12 settings. This course follows *Why DI?: An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction*, which addressed the **What**, **Why**, and **Who** of a classroom that reflects a DI approach. The focus of *Try DI!: Planning & Preparing a Differentiated Instruction Program* is on the **When**, **Where**, and **How** of the DI approach.

*Try DI!: Planning & Preparing a Differentiated Instruction Program* is an invitation to reflect, explore, and anchor professional practices in the current literature and growing research base in support of DI. This course is designed for anyone working with a diverse learning population across the K–12 spectrum and will have the most direct application to professionals serving students within a mixed-ability classroom setting.

## Course Materials (Online)

Title: *Try DI!: Planning & Preparing a Differentiated Instruction Program*  
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Instructor: Dr. Pamela Bernards, Ed.D.  
Facilitator: Professor Steven Dahl, M.Ed.

## Academic Integrity Statement

The structure and format of most distance-learning courses presume 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 as the second course in a series of courses on meeting the needs of a diverse learning population served across the K-12 continuum.

### Expected Learning Outcomes

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

1. Understand how differentiated instruction is defined and the distinctive elements of a classroom where DI is practiced.
2. Outline elements of the rationale supporting implementation of a DI approach (i.e., why DI?).
3. Identify the essential principles from which a DI approach is developed and implemented.
4. Demonstrate understanding of a teacher reflection strategy aligned with principles of DI.
5. Understand the need for alignment between instructional paradigm, educational priorities, principles of differentiation, and practices selected on a daily basis.

6. Demonstrate understanding of a self-assessment tool used to reflect on current practice in comparison with elements of the DI approach.
7. Understand the importance of having a “theory of action” as a teacher and the potential for elements entailed in the DI approach to enhance current practice.
8. Identify several methods for gathering information about student-specific readiness.
9. Understand the relationship between instructional decision making and student motivation.
10. Identify DI strategies for designing environments that reflect Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.
11. Articulate some of the challenges when differentiating based on student readiness.
12. Demonstrate understanding of strategies for differentiation to meet student-specific needs.
13. Articulate the advantages of differentiating with regard to student interest.
14. Explain the relationship between planning effective instruction and student motivation.
15. Demonstrate understanding of methods for flexible grouping commonly used in a DI classroom.
16. Identify general considerations to make when differentiating based on student-specific variables in the areas of interest and learning profiles.
17. Explain the general parameters necessary for creating a positive learning environment.
18. Outline a variety of teaching decisions that could be made in response to observations of students struggling to maintain progress.
19. Articulate a number of instructional management strategies for improving the learning environment.
20. Understand the significance of creating opportunities for students to reflect on and represent progress, achievement, and understanding.
21. Outline the relevance of the DI approach to the topics of “traditional grading,” “competition,” “fairness,” and “equity.”
22. Articulate difference between “assessment for learning” and “assessment of learning” within a DI approach.
23. Outline the range of assessment choices and barriers most often encountered when implementing a differentiated classroom.
24. Identify possible steps of a course of action for teachers transitioning from a non-DI (i.e., “one size fits all”) approach to a DI (i.e., “whatever it takes”) approach.
25. Understand the functionality of an observation tool that reflects both the theories and practices with a DI approach.

## Course Description

This course, *Try DI!: Planning & Preparing a Differentiated Instruction Program*, has been divided into four chapters. As the second course in a multi-course series on Differentiated Instruction, the emphasis is on providing examples of strategies and methods associated with a DI approach. The course has been organized to ensure that each strategy, or idea on “how to” implement DI, is an extension of the DI approach as a whole and not just presented as a disjointed list of ideas to try. The first course in the series, *Why DI?: An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction*, focused on the **What**, **Why**, and **Who** of a classroom that reflects a Differentiated Instruction approach. *Try DI!:*

*Planning & Preparing a Differentiated Instruction Program*, will indirectly address the conditions, or **When, Where, and How** of the DI approach. Because DI is not a recipe for teaching or a prescriptive model, the structure of the course reflects a range of entry points for educators to consider as they reflect on the considerations teachers make when differentiating.

Chapter 1: How DI Provides Teachers a Theory of Action

Chapter 2: How DI Equips Teachers to Become Students of Their Students

Chapter 3: How DI Provides a Framework for Creating a Community of Learners

Chapter 4: How DI Promotes Equity & Excellence

In **Chapter 1: How DI Provides Teachers a Theory of Action**, we will begin by reviewing the rationale for Differentiated Instruction presented in the first course in this series, *Why DI?: An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction*. Using the terminology from the first course, a framework for reflecting on how best to create a differentiated classroom will be provided. Principles that best describe a non-prescriptive DI approach across the K–12 spectrum will be outlined. Using these principles, a tool for reflection will be presented for educators to employ as they consider elements of effective instruction from within a DI perspective. The concept of a “theory of action” will be presented and the connections to this concept will be explored in relation to the DI approach. At the conclusion of Chapter 1, course participants will complete a reflection activity.

In **Chapter 2: How DI Equips Teachers to Become Students of their Students**, we will articulate the connection between instructional planning and student readiness. Several methods for identifying student-specific interests will be provided. The relevance of these student-specific variables will be expounded on as a means for creating conditions for teacher-student collaboration. The connection between instructional decision-making and student motivation will be emphasized. DI teaching strategies will be outlined in support of the principles of DI explored in Chapter 1.

In **Chapter 3: How DI Provides a Framework for Creating a Community of Learners**, we will explore the advantages of differentiating with student interests and learning profiles in mind. The curricular, instructional, and environmental variables teachers consider in a DI classroom will be explored. The importance of creating a positive classroom work environment will be discussed. Several methods for grouping students flexibly in a DI classroom will be provided. With an emphasis on the teacher’s awareness of each student’s readiness to benefit from instructional planning, a variety of methods for matching tasks, activities, and learning environment to students will be reviewed. We will also identify the advantages of the DI approach when designing learning environments that reflect the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) backward design approach.

In **Chapter 4: How DI Promotes Equity and Excellence**, we will explore the significance of creating opportunities for students to represent and reflect on their own progress, achievement, and understanding within a DI classroom. In order to do this, the topics of “traditional grading,” “competition,” “fairness,” and “equity” will be explored from a DI perspective. The difference between “assessment for learning” and “assessment of learning” and the importance of assessment being motivating to students will also be considered. An outline of the range of barriers most often encountered when implementing a differentiated classroom will be provided. Course

participants will also reflect on the best course of action for teachers in the initial stages transitioning from a “one size fits all” approach to a “whatever it takes” approach. A multi-purpose reflection tool will be provided that ties together many of the key objectives from the course. A reflection exercise will also provide a sense of professional development direction.

### **General**

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, while others are 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**

*Try DI!: Planning & Preparing a Differentiated Instruction Program* has been developed with the widest possible audience in mind because the core principles of a differentiated approach can be applied K–12. The primary goal of the course is to provide an overview of DI principles as well as DI strategies that will help teachers to implement a “theory of action.” The course will invoke a metaphor for teaching that is woven throughout the course and extends as the course unfolds. The course offers a variety of opportunities for reflection and culminates with an observation tool that will help professionals to align their theories with the actions they take in the classroom.

Steve Dahl, the instructor of record, 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 served as an adjunct faculty at the university level in addition to teaching high school special education. Most recently, he served as a national-level organizational change consultant with the Center for Educational Effectiveness. 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](mailto: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](http://www.virtualeduc.com) and also the Help section of your course.

If you need personal assistance then email [support@virtualeduc.com](mailto: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](http://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.***

### **Bibliography (Suggested Readings)**

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## Relevant Websites

[www.air.org](http://www.air.org)

PELP Framework: <http://www.hbs.edu/pelp/framework.html>

ThinkDOTS©: <https://www.jigsaw.org/index.html>



*Cipher in the Snow* [short film]:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8gilSE0tE&ab\\_channel=LatterDayFilms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8gilSE0tE&ab_channel=LatterDayFilms)

National Center for Accessible Educational Material [AEM]: <http://aem.cast.org/>

IES What Works Clearinghouse Resources (Find What Works): <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW>

U.S. Department of Ed Tech (USDET): <https://tech.ed.gov/>

Stopbullying.gov ([www.stopbullying.gov/](http://www.stopbullying.gov/)). Government resources on bullying prevention and intervention.

### **Handout Sources**

Multiple Intelligence Theory Handout. Source: National Institute for Urban School Improvement (NIUSI).

An Educator's Journey Toward Multiple Intelligences Handout. (Source: Scott Seider, assistant professor of education at Boston University).

Threats to Student Success Handout. (Source: Adapted from Kovalik & Olsen, 2001, pp. 2.9–2.10)

*Changing teaching practices: Using curriculum differentiation to respond to students' diversity* (printed by UNESCO in Paris, France).

The Public Education Leadership Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education and Harvard Business School.

### **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>

*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.*

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## **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 | Continued Learning | 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 [ndsudce@ndsudce.edu](mailto:ndsudce@ndsudce.edu). Please include the title of the course in your correspondence.