Differentiated Instruction: Creating an Environment That Supports Learning

In *Differentiated Instruction: Creating an Environment That Supports Learning,* you will gain an understanding of the role that a classroom environment plays in differentiated instruction. Throughout this course, you will explore the key elements of a supportive environment that encourage the implementation of the philosophy of differentiation.

You will learn how to encourage and facilitate community building that creates a classroom where teachers and students work together to collaborate and share responsibility for learning. Along with creating the physical environment, you will learn specific strategies to identify student needs, strengths, and interests. Finally, you will be able to foster positive communication with students and provide constructive feedback on their growth and progress.

By the end of this course, through video examples, in-depth readings, practical applications, and personal reflections, you'll be ready to plan for an environment that facilitates the differentiated classroom. More specifically, as a result of the course, you will:

- Assess the elements of environment and community in the classroom.

- Adapt a tool to help students assess themselves on a variety of classroom and life skills.

- Design and implement a strategy that helps students get to know each other and build classroom community.

- Assess a classroom set-up for ways the physical space contributes to the quality of the lesson.

- Plan flexible room arrangements to support an effective learning environment.

- Create a strategy for empowering students to take ownership of their learning.

- Foster regular positive communication with students and provide constructive feedback on their growth and progress.

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: A Classroom Environment That Supports Differentiated Instruction	
Essential Question	• What does an effective differentiated classroom look like and sound like?
Know	• The elements of a classroom environment. • Indicators of an effective differentiated classroom.
Understand	• Classroom environments that support differentiated instruction encourage and facilitate community building.
Do	• Assess the elements of climate and community in your classroom.
Module 2: Getting to Know Students	
Essential Questions	• Where does differentiation begin? • What does it mean to know our students?
Know	• The value of getting to know students as learners. • Specific strategies for getting to know students.
Understand	• Teachers can create an environment that supports learning by getting to know the strengths, needs, and interests of individual students. • Teachers can use specific strategies to identify student needs, strengths, and interests.
Do	• Adapt a tool to help students assess themselves on a variety of classroom and life skills.

Module 3: Building a Community in the Classroom	
Essential Question	• How do teachers intentionally build community in the classroom?
Know	• How to make connections with and among students. • Specific strategies to develop classroom communities that support differentiation.
Understand	• In a differentiated classroom, students and teachers collaborate to create a classroom community.
Do	• Design and implement a strategy that helps students get to know each other and build classroom community.
Module 4: Designing a Physical Environment to Support Learning	
Essential Question	• What physical arrangements need to be in place to support a differentiated classroom?
Know	• The physical elements of an effective classroom environment.
Understand	• The goal of planning the physical environment of a classroom is to maximize opportunities for teaching and learning. • The physical environment should provide structure and predictability so that students feel secure. • The physical environment should allow for flexibility to attend to both group and individual needs.
Do	• Assess a classroom set-up for ways the physical space contributes to student learning. • Plan flexible room arrangements to support an effective learning environment.

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Module 5: Involving Students in Decision Making	
Essential Question	• How do I involve students in decision making?
Know	• Examples of shared responsibility. • Strategies for involving students in sharing responsibility in the classroom.
Understand	• In a differentiated classroom, students and teachers collaborate to create a positive, supportive learning environment. • When students assume ownership and responsibility for learning, the result is high motivation and achievement.
Do	• Create a strategy for empowering students to take ownership of their own learning.
Module 6: The Role of Teacher Feedback	
Essential Questions	• What role does mindset have in the classroom? • What is the role of feedback in the differentiated classroom?
Know	• Definitions of growth and fixed mindset. • The impact of mindset on student achievement. • The impact of feedback on student mindset.
Understand	• Teachers play a key role in cultivating a student's mindset. • DI is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that fosters a growth mindset.
Do	• Establish a vehicle for fostering regular positive communication with students and providing constructive feedback on their growth and progress.

Course Syllabus

Module 1	**A Classroom Environment That Supports Differentiated Instruction**
	Module Welcome
	- Video: An Environment for Differentiation
	- Reading: A Classroom Environment That Supports DI
	- Video: Supportive Learning Environments
	- Reading: Learning Environments That Support Differentiated Instruction
	- Knowledge Check
	- Application: My Environment
	- Post-Module Reflection
Module 2	**Getting to Know Students**
	Module Welcome
	- Video: Getting to Know Students
	- Reading: Getting to Know Students
	- Video: Discovering Learner Needs
	- Reading: Learning Environment—Setting the Stage for Academic Success
	- Reading: Tools for Getting to Know Students
	- Knowledge Check
	- Application: Getting to Know Students
	- Post-Module Reflection

Module 3	**Building a Community in the Classroom**
	Module Welcome
	• Reading: Building Classroom Communities
	• Video: A Classroom That Works for Everyone
	• Reading: *Educational Leadership*—Hearts and Minds
	• Video: Creating a Community
	• Knowledge Check
	• Application: Designing a Community-Building Task
	• Post-Module Reflection
Module 4	**Designing a Physical Environment to Support Learning**
	Module Welcome
	• Reading: Physical Environments That Support Learning
	• Video: A Physical Environment That Supports Learning
	• Reading: Designing the Physical Environment
	• Video: Effective Learning Environments—High School
	• Video: Effective Learning Environments—Elementary School
	• Knowledge Check
	• Application: Planning for Support, Security, and Flexibility
	• Post-Module Reflection

Module 5	**Involving Students in Decision Making**
	Module Welcome
	• Reading: Sharing the Classroom
	• Video: Sharing Responsibility for Learning
	• Reading: Power in the Classroom
	• Video: Involving Students in Decision Making—Elementary School
	• Video: Involving Students in Decision Making—Middle School
	• Knowledge Check
	• Application: Shared Responsibility in the Classroom
	• Post-Module Reflection
Module 6	**The Role of Teacher Feedback**
	Module Welcome
	• Video: Coaching for Success
	• Reading: The Role of Teacher Feedback
	• Reading: *Educational Leadership*—The Perils and Promises of Praise
	• Video: Practicing Self-Reflection
	• Knowledge Check
	• Application: Feedback for Growth and Progress
	• Post-Module Reflection

Resources

Texts

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success.* New York, NY: Random House Publishing.

Dweck, C. S. (2007). The Perils and Promises of Praise. *Educational Leadership, 65*(2), 34–39.

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Voltz, D. L., Sims, M. J., & Nelson, B. (2010). *Connecting teachers, students, and standards.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

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Wolk, S. (2003). Hearts and minds. *Educational Leadership, 61*(1), 14–18.

Video

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ASCD. (2001). *A Visit to a Differentiated Classroom* [DVD]. Alexandria, VA.

ASCD. (2005). *Breaking Through Barriers to Achievement: Building Resiliency in the Classroom.* [DVD]. Alexandria, VA.

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

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

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ASCD. (2005). *The Common Sense of Differentiation: Discovering Learner Needs.* [DVD]. Alexandria, VA.

Tomlinson. C. A. (Speaker). (2011). Interview by Nataliya Schetchikova [DVD]. Unpublished interview.