

Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom

This course is designed for educators who are interested in learning more about how assessment in a differentiated classroom can assist teachers in promoting student learning. In many ways, the goal of using assessment is to help all students succeed and to provide teachers with guidance in designing instruction to meet varied learning needs in their classrooms.

The course uses the ASCD book, *Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom* by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Tonya R. Moon, for its main readings, along with articles and videos that focus on a particular module's topic. Each module also contains application tasks that will help you use key concepts and practical strategies found in that module. At the end of each module, you can also choose from a variety of prompts to reflect on further implications for your classroom practice and/or to summarize your understanding. Each module also includes a brief quiz that allows you to review what you have learned from the readings.

The module topics follow the chapters from Tomlinson and Moon's book *Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom*. Each topic is thoroughly explained using current research to support best practice teaching, and each module offers several practical suggestions for using the ideas in a variety of classrooms. The examples provided throughout the readings should also prove useful to educators who want models for designing new student assessments.

By the end of this course, you'll be equipped to plan a range of assessments, from pre-assessments to formative or ongoing assessments to summative assessments. This course's video examples, in-depth readings, practical applications, and personal reflections will help inform your instruction so that you can best meet the needs of the students in your classroom.

As a result of the course, you will

- Examine the powerful role assessment plays in a differentiated classroom;
- Identify how curriculum, assessment, and instruction are inextricably linked for effective teachers' planning and practice; and
- Review various assessment strategies and how they can guide teachers' instruction.

Essential Questions and Key Objectives

The following tables include the essential questions that serve as the foundation for each module of this course, as well as the course's key objectives—what you will know, understand, and be able to do after completing each module.

Module 1: Differentiation: An Overview	
Essential Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is differentiation a system for effective teaching?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The five principles of differentiation are learning environment, curriculum, assessment, instruction, and flexible management. Elements that can be differentiated are content, process, product, and affect/learning environment. Student traits are readiness, interest, learning profiles, or preferences.
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching that requires educators to proactively plan for the varied learning needs of all students. Differentiation is a philosophy (more than a set of strategies) designed to maximize the capacity of each learner. Differentiation is a system of interdependent elements that flow from, feed off, and enhance one another.
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the elements of differentiated instruction using a specific format appropriate for a particular audience.
Module 2: Assessment and Differentiation	
Essential Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What role does assessment play in a teacher's classroom practice?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The types of assessments: formative (including pre-assessment and ongoing assessments) and summative assessment The roles of assessment—of learning, for learning, and as learning Informal and formal types of assessments and the types of data each might offer the teacher How assessment relates to curriculum and instruction
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment is an invaluable element of teachers' classroom practices and the foundation of successful instructional planning in an effectively differentiated classroom. The decisions teachers make regarding assessment in a differentiated classroom affect every classroom element (learning, environment, curriculum, instruction, and leadership and management). Assessment in an effectively differentiated classroom should guide, direct, and encourage student growth.
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the role assessment plays in teachers' decision making in an effectively differentiated classroom.

Module 3: Pre-Assessment	
Essential Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the role of pre-assessment in the learning process?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-assessments are used to establish students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Formal and informal formats for pre-assessing students' readiness (e.g., <i>informal</i>—hand signals, KWL charts, conversations or discussions, etc., and <i>formal</i>—Frayer Diagrams, interviews, quizzes, surveys, etc.) Quality indicators for pre-assessing students' readiness and suggestions for pre-assessing interests and learning profiles How pre-assessment might aid teachers' planning
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-assessments are useful in gathering evidence of students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Pre-assessments provide teachers with the critical information needed to develop appropriate instructional plans, including sequences. Effective teachers carefully select the type of pre-assessment method they will use based on the information they seek to gather.
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a pre-assessment that is aligned to instructional goals. Communicate effectively about the intention and use of pre-assessments in the classroom. Interpret and make instructional/curricular decisions based on pre-assessment results.
Module 4: Ongoing Assessment	
Essential Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways can teachers use feedback gained through ongoing assessments to improve teaching and learning?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to distinguish terms: formative assessment, pre-assessment, ongoing assessment, feedback, and grading Characteristics of positive feedback Ongoing assessment formats (e.g., exit slips, windshield checks, quizzes, etc.) The role that clear learning goals and instructional sequences play in developing appropriate formative assessments
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective ongoing assessment is based on clearly defined learning goals (K-U-Ds), instructional sequences or learning progressions, and knowledge of individual students. Making sense of formative assessment results requires teachers to carefully analyze students' current development to plan new learning opportunities that ensure continued academic growth. Effective feedback from teachers can positively influence students' learning and motivation.

Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a formative assessment aligned to specific K-U-Ds. • Explain how assessment results were analyzed to plan the next steps in instruction. • Provide an example of effective feedback.
Module 5: Summative Assessment	
Essential Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do summative assessments contribute to students' growth as learners?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summative assessment is the assessment of learning. • Summative assessment types—midterms, chapter tests, unit tests, final exams, projects, and papers • Reliability and validity of assessments • Performance assessments can include essays, extended projects or products, portfolios, and authentic assessments.
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summative assessments should focus all students on the same essential learning goals (K-U-Ds), with the exception of students who have particular learning needs. • Assessments should allow students ample opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and skills. • The scoring criteria used for evaluating differentiated assessments should be the same regardless of the products produced.
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a summative assessment according to specific criteria differentiated by readiness, interest, or learning profiles. • Explain the role of summative assessment in relation to other assessment types. • Discuss how different summative assessment formats can yield different results.
Module 6: Assessment, Grading, and Differentiation	
Essential Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways is best practice grading supportive of differentiation?
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terminology: error, reliability, validity, and bias • The role that clear learning targets play in the grading process • Principles and practices for quality assessment and grading • 3-P grading (performance, process, and progress)

Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assessment and grading are based on principles aimed at promoting student success. • Teachers' grading practices can affect the errors, reliability, validity, and bias inherent in all assessment data. • Grading is judgment-based and represents a student's achievement at a given time. • Best practice grading requires teachers to clearly distinguish students' performance from their process or progress. • Grading later in the learning cycle improves students' chances of successfully accomplishing the learning goals.
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a best practice grading presentation to share with an audience. • Provide a rationale for why a current grading practice should change to match what experts suggest. • Develop a grading policy to share with students and parents. • Explain how best practice grading can support differentiation goals.

Course Syllabus

Module 1	Differentiation: An Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Welcome • Reading: Differentiation: An Overview • Video 1: Carol Ann Tomlinson: How DI Works for Teachers and Students • Reading 1: <i>Educational Leadership</i>—One Kid at a Time • Reading 2: <i>Educational Leadership</i>—Recognizing Neglected Strengths • Video 2: The Elements of DI Reinforce One Another • Knowledge Check • Application: Understanding the Link Between Differentiation and Classroom Effectiveness • Post-Module Reflection
Module 2	Assessment and Differentiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Welcome • Reading 1: Assessment and Differentiation: A Framework for Understanding • Video 1: Carol Ann Tomlinson: The Roles of Assessment in DI • Reading 2: <i>Educational Leadership</i>—The Bridge Between Today's Lesson and Tomorrow's • Video 2: The Experts: Smart Approaches to Assessment • Knowledge Check • Application: Evaluating My Current Approach to Assessment • Post-Module Reflection
Module 3	Pre-Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Welcome • Reading 1: Pre-Assessment: Knowing Where Students Are as a Unit Begins • Video 1: Carol Ann Tomlinson: Pre-Assessment Is Key for Planning • Reading 2: <i>Educational Leadership</i>—Turning on the Lights: What Pre-Assessments Can Do • Video 2: Pre-Assess to Discover Learners' Needs • Knowledge Check • Application: Create and Administer a Pre-Assessment • Post-Module Reflection

Module 4	Ongoing Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Welcome • Reading 1: Ongoing Assessment: Knowing Where Students Are as a Unit Evolves • Video 1: Carol Ann Tomlinson: Formative Assessment and Feedback • Reading 2: <i>Educational Leadership</i>—The Right Questions, The Right Way • Video 2: Using Bell Work or Exit Cards for Ongoing Assessment • Knowledge Check • Application: Honing Effective Feedback When Using Ongoing Assessment • Post-Module Reflection
Module 5	Summative Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Welcome • Reading 1: Summative Assessment: Measuring Student Learning at Key Points in a Unit • Video 1: Carol Ann Tomlinson: Summative Assessments to Demonstrate Learning • Reading 2: <i>Educational Leadership</i>—Seven Practices for Effective Learning • Video 2: Performance as Summative Assessment • Knowledge Check • Application: Designing and Evaluating Summative Assessments • Post-Module Reflection
Module 6	Assessment, Grading, and Differentiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Welcome • Reading 1: Assessment, Grading, and Differentiation • Video 1: Carol Ann Tomlinson: Best Practice Grading • Reading 2: <i>Educational Leadership</i>—Grading Exceptional Learners • Video 2: The Three Ps of Assessment: Performance, Process, and Progress • Knowledge Check • Application: Explaining the Implementation of Best Practice Grading • Post-Module Reflection

Resources

- Hockett, J., & Doubet, K. (2013). Turning on the lights: What pre-assessments can do. *Educational Leadership*, 71(4), 50–54.
- Jung, L., & Guskey, T. (2010). Grading exceptional learners. *Educational Leadership*, 67(5), 31–35.
- McTighe, J., & O'Connor, K. (2005). Seven practices for effective learning. *Educational Leadership*, 63(3), 10–17.
- Sternberg, R. (2006, September). Recognizing neglected strengths. *Educational Leadership*, 64(1), 30–35.
- Tomlinson, C. (2014). The bridge between today's lesson and tomorrow's. *Educational Leadership*, 71(6), 10–14.
- Tomlinson, C., & Moon, T. (2013). *Assessment and success in a differentiated classroom*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C. (2010, February). One kid at a time. *Educational Leadership*, 67(5), 13–16.
- William, D. (2014). The right questions, the right way. *Educational Leadership*, 71(6), 16–19.

Video

- ASCD. (2010). *Assessment for 21st century learning disc 2: 21st century assessment principles and practices*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- ASCD. (2005). *The common sense of differentiation: Meeting specific learner needs in the regular classroom*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- ASCD. (2008). *Connecting differentiated instruction, understanding by design, and what works in schools: An exploration of research-based strategies*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- ASCD. (2008). *Differentiated instruction in action (Program 2: Middle school)*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- ASCD. (2008). *Differentiated instruction in action (Program 3: High school)*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.