

Course Syllabus

Course:	EDZU 9017 Differentiation: Putting Theory into Practice
Credit Hours:	3.0 credits / 45 hours
Instructors:	Dawn Nachtigall

Course Description

Creating lessons and assessments that meet the needs of all the types of learners in our classrooms can be a very daunting task. Students are unique individuals and learn in very different ways. In this course, we will explore why differentiation is necessary and how to implement it. We will create lessons differentiated by learning styles as well as ability levels. In the end, we will critique what we already do in our classrooms and design new ideas that will lead to effective instruction for all our students.

Course Goals

Know

1. What differentiation is
2. When it is appropriate to differentiate
3. Where teachers can get the time & resources to create a differentiated classroom
4. How differentiation can be implemented in all types of classrooms
5. What a tiered lesson is and the steps necessary to create one

Understand

1. Why it is important to differentiate
2. How students can be smart in many ways
3. How to create lessons that speak to many different learning styles
4. The importance of getting students to recognize their own learning styles
5. How tiered activities can be used to meet the needs of above level, at level and below level learners

To Be Able To

1. Evaluate how well previously used lessons are meeting the needs of a variety of learners
2. Design ways to adapt previously used lessons to address different learning styles and ability levels
3. Incorporate choice into lessons and assessments so that all types of learners find the content accessible to them
4. Design tiered lessons and assessments for use in their current teaching situations

Course Outline

Part 1- Introduction

- Participants will be introduced to the basic layout of the course.
- Participants will examine what their current understanding of differentiation is.
- Participants will share if they currently use differentiated lessons in their classrooms and if so, they will explain how.

Part 2- The Five W's of Differentiation?

- Many educators have questions about differentiation. We will explore each of these in depth:
- Who needs to differentiate: teachers of students with special needs, those with mixed ability classes, all educators?
- What exactly is differentiation?
- Where do teachers get the time and resources to create a differentiated classroom?
- When is it appropriate to differentiate?
- Why is differentiation important?

Part 3- Differentiation based on Learning Style

- We will discuss current theory on Multiple Intelligences and explore how students can be smart in many ways.
- We will explore our own learning style.
- We will discover ways to help students recognize their own strengths and weaknesses.
- We will reevaluate lessons we already use and design a way to adapt them to meet the needs of all learners.
- We propose ways of incorporating choice into our lessons and assignments so that learners of all types find the content accessible to them.

Part 4- Differentiation based on Ability

- We will reflect on our own understanding, use and feelings about differentiating lessons and assessments.
- We will discuss the implications of varying student work by ability. We will discuss the complications that exist with grading, parents, etc.
- We will explore what “Tiered Activities” are and how they can be used to meet the needs of above level, at level and below level learners.
- We will discuss how tiered activities can be incorporated into the classroom at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

Part 5- Steps to Creating a Tiered Lesson

- We will explore the importance of pre-testing before using a tiered activity.
- We will discuss how to instruct students that pre-tested at a below satisfactory level.
- We will design lessons that offer content altered in some way (ability, intelligence style, other) so as to promote growth and understanding within the individual student's parameter of learning.
- We will discuss the importance of providing multiple options for students when taking in content, processing information and producing products.
- We will examine elementary, middle and high school level differentiated activities that other educators have used.
- We will design tiered lessons and assessments for use in our own classes.

- We will share our designed lessons with the class. The class will provide constructive comments for their peers.

Methods of Instruction

Teachers enrolled in this course will investigate what differentiation is and how to apply its ideals to their classrooms. Participants will critically analyze current research articles on differentiation as well as case studies. They will consider why it is important to differentiate in all classes and levels. Throughout class forums, participants will discuss how to make differentiation feasible in their classes as well as how to deal with parent and administrator concern about differentiated lessons. Participants will explore the two main types of differentiation: differentiating based on ability and differentiating based on learning style. They will evaluate the merits of both. In the end, they will design lessons with the principles of both in mind.

Students will connect with each other throughout the course within forums and various other types of online feedback options built into each class.

Methods of Assessment

Teachers enrolled in this course will be evaluated on various activities including participation in online forums, analyses of articles, examination of case studies and creation of lesson plans. In order to receive credit, all students must participate in online forums and complete all assignments.

Additionally, to earn a “B”, participants must complete 1 of the 3 assignments described below. To earn an “A”, participants must complete 2 of the 3.

- Choice #1: Design a test or project that you could use in your current teaching situation. Create tiered levels of the assessment to differentiate based on ability. Create three versions of the activity: below level, at level and above level.
- Choice #2: Create a project or class activity that is differentiated based on choice. Provide at least three choices of the activity. Explain the choices and the MI that each one speaks to.
- Choice #3: Do an online search for tiered lessons that have been created in your field. Review 2 different lessons that you found. Explain what you liked / disliked about each lesson. Explain if you would use each one. If so, how? If not, explain how you would modify it to make it work.

Instructors are online each day of the course and correspond with students through the course itself, feedback on assignments, e-mail, and by phone.

Time Validation

Assignment	Time (in hours)
Students will complete an introductory forum. They are required to read and comment on each other's posts.	1.00
In a forum setting, students will consider a currently accepted definition of differentiation. They will discuss what the definition means in reality and whether or not they currently differentiate in their classes. They will also read and comment on other participants' posts.	1.00
Through a PowerPoint presentation, students will explore the five W's of differentiation. They will submit a paper addressing several questions including who should differentiate and why.	1.50
Students will watch a video that compares traditional classrooms and differentiated ones. They will create a Venn diagram or t-chart that compares and contrasts the virtues of each.	1.50
Students will investigate the 4 main areas that teachers differentiate on a daily basis: content, process, product and learning environment. Through a PowerPoint presentation, students will explore the easiest ways to differentiate in these areas. They will then describe 2 classroom activities that provide differentiation in at least 2 of these domains.	3.00
Students will read a detailed article that attempts to dispell 10 common misconceptions that cause teachers to shy away from differentiating. Students will then analyze the author's attempt to dispell each myth. They will decide whether each myth was busted and then explain why.	2.00
Students will read an article by a teacher that uses differentiation regularly. The author explains how she learned to put the theory of differentiation into the reality of her classroom. After analyzing the 8 lessons the author learned, they will discuss in a forum setting whether or not differentiation is doable in their own classes. They will also read and comment on other participants' posts.	2.00
Students will refresh their knowledge of Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Using several online resources, they will summarize his theory and the different types of intelligence he discusses.	2.00
Student will explore four different online intelligence inventories. They will take each test for themselves and then evaluate the usefulness of the tool for their students.	2.00
Students will use an online tool that lists different materials and activities that classroom teachers can use to reach one of Gardner's "intelligences". Students will create a personal list for each of the 8 intelligences by sifting through the resources provided.	2.00
Students will decide whether or not accepting Multiple Intelligence Theory changes education. Students will evaluate 4 statements by leaders in the field that address how accepting differences in how children learn requires a shift in how schools are run. Students will then state for themselves how they feel on the matter.	2.00
After analyzing a sample provided by the instructor, students will revamp a previously used lesson to address the ideals of Multiple Intelligence Theory. The revised lesson must include 4 different choices that address 4 different intelligences. They need to fully design each choice and describe how it speaks to that particular intelligence.	4.50

In a forum setting, students will present a lesson they currently use that addresses one intelligence particularly well. Then they will evaluate another participant's lesson and suggest a change to the lesson that could help it address a different intelligence.	2.00
Students will refresh their knowledge of Bloom's Taxonomy by reading an article and using online resources. Then using an online tool, they will create objectives for their students that require higher level thinking skills.	2.00
Through a PowerPoint presentation, students will explore the concept of tiered lessons. Students will also read an article detailing what tiering is, how it works and 7 strategies teachers can use to tier their lessons. Students will choose 3 of those strategies and explain how they can incorporate them into their current teaching situation.	2.00
Students will choose a topic that they would like to tier with their current classes. They will create a complete pre-test to evaluate what knowledge, if any, their students have on this topic.	2.00
Using the information gathered from the pre-test, students will create a tiered lesson for their chosen topic. They will create a below level version, an at-level version and an above level version. Students will submit a plan for all three levels.	3.00
As a conclusion for their tiered unit, students will create a tiered assessment for their chosen topic. They will create a below level version, an at-level version and an above level version. Students will submit a detailed assessment for all three levels.	3.00
Students will evaluate 3 versions of a test provided by the instructor. One version is for students functioning below level, another is for students on-level and the third is for above level students. In a forum setting, students will discuss the validity of using tiered assessments. They will also discuss the politics of tiering tests in this age of test scores and teacher evaluations.	1.00
In summary of the theories learned throughout the course, students will participate in online survey that evaluates whether or not they intend to differentiate in their future classes as well what differentiation methods they would choose to use.	0.50
Students will synthesize the material learned in this course by completing two of the three following activities: create a project with 3 choices that speaks to three different intelligences, create a 3 tiered project, or review 2 tiered lessons currently used by other teachers in the same field.	5.00
Total Time	45.00