

**George Mason University  
Graduate School of Education  
EDCI 622 :  
Curriculum Differentiation for Diverse Learners  
Spring 2010  
Mondays, 4:30, online**

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**Class Dates:** January 25, 2010 through May 10, 2010

**Class Time:** 4:30- 7:10 p.m. initial meeting start time online.

**All students will be expected to be online in Blackboard on the first meeting night. Instructor will run a real time discussion area. Subsequent weeks will run Mondays through Sunday evenings. All assignments due during the week should be posted on due date. All weekly discussion participation should occur by initial posting due date and Sunday evenings.**

**Course Description:**

Participants will develop a personal and professional rationale for differentiating instruction in mixed-ability classrooms and acquire skills and knowledge of strategies designed to help a teacher utilize pre-assessment data, plan for, and implement differentiated instruction.

**Standards for EDCI 622 : Curriculum Differentiation for Diverse Learners**

**Standards:** This course is designed around the program standards endorsed by the National Association for Gifted Children (2006) as well as the Virginia Licensure Regulations for School Personnel (1998) and specifically addresses 8VAC 20-21-270: Gifted Education (add-on endorsement) standards.

**Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences**

Educators of the gifted understand the effects that gifts and talents can have on an individual's learning in school and throughout life. Moreover, educators of the gifted are active and resourceful in seeking to understand how language, culture, and family background interact with an individual's predispositions to impact academic and social behavior, attitudes, values, and interests. The understanding of these learning differences and their interactions provides the foundation upon which educators of the gifted plan instruction to provide meaningful and challenging learning.

K1	Influences of diversity factors on individuals with exceptional learning needs.
K2	Academic and affective characteristics and learning needs of individuals with gifts, talents, and disabilities.

K3	Idiosyncratic learning patterns of individuals with gifts and talents, including those from diverse backgrounds.
K4	Influences of different beliefs, traditions, and values across and within diverse groups on relationships among individuals with gifts and talents, their families, schools, and communities.

#### **Standard 4: Instructional Strategies**

Educators of the gifted possess a repertoire of evidence-based curriculum and instructional strategies to differentiate for individuals with gifts and talents. They select, adapt, and use these strategies to promote challenging learning opportunities in general and special curricula and to modify learning environments to enhance self-awareness and self-efficacy for individuals with gifts and talents. They enhance the learning of critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and performance skills in specific domains. Moreover, educators of the gifted emphasize the development, practice, and transfer of advanced knowledge and skills across environments throughout the lifespan leading to creative, productive careers in society for individuals with gifts and talents.

K1	School and community resources, including content specialists, which support differentiation.
K2	Curricular, instructional, and management strategies effective for individuals with exceptional learning needs.
S1	Apply pedagogical content knowledge to instructing learners with gifts and talents.
S2	Apply higher-level thinking and metacognitive models to content areas to meet the needs of individuals with gifts and talents.
S3	Provide opportunities for individuals with gifts and talents to explore, develop, or research their areas of interest or talent.
S4	Preassess the learning needs of individuals with gifts and talents in various domains and adjust instruction based on continual assessment.
S5	Pace delivery of curriculum and instruction consistent with needs of individuals with gifts and childhood through adolescence.

#### **Standard 7: Instructional Planning**

Curriculum and instructional planning is at the center of gifted and talented education. Educators of the gifted develop long-range plans anchored in both general and special curricula. They systematically translate shorter-range goals and objectives that take into consideration an individual's abilities and needs, the learning environment, and cultural and linguistic factors. Understanding of these factors, as well as the implications of being gifted and talented, guides the educator's selection, adaptation, and creation of materials, and use of differentiated instructional strategies. Learning plans are modified based on ongoing assessment of the individual's progress. Moreover, educators of the gifted facilitate these actions in a collaborative context that includes individuals with gifts and talents, families, professional colleagues, and personnel from other agencies as appropriate. Educators of the gifted are comfortable using technologies to support instructional planning and individualized instruction.

K1	Theories and research models that form the basis of curriculum development and instructional practice for individuals with gifts and talents.
K2	Features that distinguish differentiated curriculum from general curricula for individuals with exceptional learning needs.
K3	Curriculum emphases for individuals with gifts and talents within cognitive, affective, aesthetic, social, and linguistic domains.
S1	Align differentiated instructional plans with local, state/provincial, and national curricular standards.
S2	Design differentiated learning plans for individuals with gifts and talents, including individuals from diverse backgrounds.
S3	Develop scope and sequence plans for individuals with gifts and talents.
S4	Select curriculum resources, strategies, and product options that respond to cultural,

	linguistic, and intellectual differences among individuals with gifts and talents.
S5	Select and adapt a variety of differentiated curricula that incorporate advanced, conceptually challenging, in-depth, distinctive, and complex content.
S6	Integrate academic and career guidance experiences into the learning plan for individuals with gifts and talents.

### Standard 8: Assessment

Assessment is integral to the decision-making and teaching of educators of the gifted as multiple types of assessment information are required for both identification and learning progress decisions. Educators of the gifted use the results of such assessments to adjust instruction and to enhance ongoing learning progress

S3	Develop differentiated curriculum-based assessments for use in instructional planning and delivery for individuals with gifts and talents.
S4	Use alternative assessments and technologies to evaluate learning of individuals with gifts and talents.

**National Association for Gifted Children** (Landrum, Callahan and Shaklee, 2001).

#### Standard 1: Curriculum and Instruction:

2.1m. Teachers must differentiate, replace, supplement, or modify curricula to facilitate higher level learning goals.

2.2m. Means for demonstrating proficiency in essential regular curriculum concepts and processes must be established to facilitate appropriate academic acceleration.

2.3m. Gifted learners must be assessed for proficiency in basic skills and knowledge and provided with alternative challenging educational opportunities when proficiency is demonstrated.

2.1e. Teachers should be responsible for developing plans to differentiate the curriculum in every discipline for gifted learners.

5.0m. Diverse and appropriate learning experiences must consist of a variety of curricular options, instructional strategies, and materials.

#### Standard 3: Program Design:

4.0m. Gifted education programming should be articulated with the general education program.

5.0m. The use of flexible grouping of gifted learners must be an integral part of gifted educational programming.

### Virginia Department of Education: Gifted Education

Standard 5: Practitioners will acquire and display understandings of theory and principles of differentiating curriculum designed to match the distinct characteristics of gifted learners including:

- a. integration of multiple disciplines into an area of study
- b. emphasis on in-depth learning , independent and self-directed study skills
- c. the development of analytical organization, critical, and creative thinking
- d. the development of sophisticated products using varied modes of expression
- e. the evaluation of student learning through appropriate and specific criteria
- f. the development of advanced teaching skills to enhance student performance

Standard 6. Understanding of contemporary issues and research in gifted education

## **Course Goals and Student Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, participants should be able to articulate and apply basic vocabulary, principles, and strategies related to:

1. What differentiated instruction is and is not
2. Ways to think about pre-assessing readiness, interest, and learning profile in order to strategically plan appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction
3. Ways to think about differentiating content (what we teach and what students learn)
4. Ways to think about differentiating process (how students make sense of what they learn)
5. Ways to think about differentiating products (how students demonstrate what they have learned)
6. Establishing administrative and parental support for a differentiated classroom
7. Implementing and managing differentiation in the heterogeneous classroom
8. Appropriate use of a range of instructional strategies to facilitate differentiation
9. Stating a personal and professional rationale for why differentiation is an important way to meet the needs of students in heterogeneous classrooms

## **Class Assignments:**

**1) Active and Informed Participation (30%):** Class participation and attendance constitutes a major element in the learning experience provided in this online class. There will be weekly online-class discussions which student is expected to consistently participate in. The first class meeting all students will be expected to be present online during class meeting hours. All remaining weeks the student will be expected to be prepared for discussion by having read and reflected on assigned readings prior to that week's online meeting date. Students will be expected to work in a collegial manner to assist one another in developing responses. Students will be expected to substantively participate in online classroom on a consistent basis. Each week a discussion focus will be established and student will be expected to post an initial personal response to each of the Db (discussion board) question(s) by the due date posted. In addition, the student will be expected to respond to at least two other students' responses as well on each discussion question.

Online graduate students are expected to show consistent weekly presence in courses for which they have registered. Online participation is important not only to the individual student, but to the class as a whole. Class participation is a factor in grading. Instructors may use evidence of student's absence from online weekly discussions to support the lowering of a student's grade as stated in the course syllabus (GMU 2006).

**2) Critical Response Journal (30%):** Each participant will be expected to complete critical response journals to be written in APA format. The topics to be read about should pertain to the course goals as outlined in the course syllabus and should comprise the bulk of the articles read (e.g. types of differentiation, mixed ability groupings, compacting)

1. Currency of literature reviewed;
2. Accuracy of **annotated** bibliography; (If you do not know what an Annotated bibliography is please ask this question during our first online Class meeting.)
3. Summary of article that accurately reflects the author's intent;
4. Reflection on reading that identifies key understandings, connections to other readings and experiences, application of the research and influence on the reader.
5. All entries will be of the caliber expected at the graduate level.
6. There will be intermediate due dates established and agreed upon by students at the end of the first online class.

A = 12/15 journal entries    B = 8/12 journal entries    C = fewer than 8 entries

**3) Draft and Final Product/ Learning Synthesis (40%):** Create and apply an annotated lesson for a heterogeneous classroom setting choosing from differentiation strategies learned during the course.

This lesson must include the following components:

1. Personal and professional rationale for differentiation
2. A description of the class to be taught (demographics, learning levels, styles and interests and how this information was gathered)
3. A lesson that includes:
  - (a) a defined concept with
  - (b) a set of principles and generalizations, and that
  - (c) articulates student learning goals and outcomes utilizing Backwards Design, state and national standards, or other relevant templates
  - (d) articulates the cultural "lens" or templates that require differentiation
4. Pre-assessment and diagnostic evaluation to aid in planning the lesson
5. The lesson must be annotated in places where the designer chose a strategy or made a decision about grouping or other lesson mechanics that is defensible according to current knowledge and theory about best practice in gifted education.
6. Final packet containing any handouts, graphic organizers, additional materials that would be used with the students during the course of the lesson being taught will be provided at the time of final presentation posting.

**The draft will be due on a set date to allow for peer editing and input done electronically within our Blackboard classroom. Meeting this due date will represent 10% of the final grade. Draft deadline will be determined by students within the first two online class periods by class consensus.**

**Grading Scale:**

**94-100 = A, 90-93 = A-, 86-89 = B+, 80-85 = B, 70-79 = C, Below 70 = F**

NOTE: This is an advanced graduate level course; therefore the quality of your work; attendance and informed participation are expected to be of the highest caliber. Unless it is an emergency situation, weekly online attendance is mandatory; no absences are excused. Should you need to miss a class it is your responsibility to inform the instructor ahead of time, turn in your assignments, collect any notes/assignments from a colleague and do your utmost to remain current in the class. Should you need special assistance because of identified learning needs please contact the instructor immediately.

**Mode of Course Delivery:**

Course delivery will be through weekly independent readings, weekly online discussions, small group discussion based on professional interests and projects and research based questions that can be examined through action research projects, whole class discussions or student presentations. Course discussions will take place via Bb discussion boards and email. Instructor will also be available via phone as well as Db “questions for instructor” discussion strand in online classroom.

**Texts:**

Tomlinson, C. (2000). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*. 2nd Edition. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

**OPTIONAL** Tomlinson, C., Kaplan, S., Renzulli, J., Purcell, J. Leppien, J., & Burns, D. (2002). *The parallel curriculum*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

**Articles:**

Van Tassel-Baska, J. (1986). Appropriate Curriculum for Gifted Learners. *Educational Leadership*, 46, 13-15.

Tomlinson, C. (1995). Differentiating Instruction for Advanced Learners in the Mixed-Ability Middle School Classroom, ERIC Digest, EDO-EC-94-7.

Reis, S., Kaplan, S., Tomlinson, C., Westberg, K., Callahan, C., Cooper, C. (1998). Equal Does Not Mean Identical. *Educational Leadership*, November, 74-76.

Tomlinson, C., Kalbfleisch, M.L. (1998). Teach Me, Teach My Brain: A Call for Differentiated Classrooms. *Educational Leadership*, 56 (3), 52-55.

Harpaz, T., Lefstein, A. (2000). Communities of Thinking. *Educational Leadership*, 58 (3), 54-57.

Tomlinson, C. (2000). Reconcilable Differences? Standards-Based Teaching and Differentiation. *Educational Leadership*, September, 6-11.

Tomlinson, C. (2001). Grading For Success. *Educational Leadership*, March, 12-15.

Callahan, C. (2001). Beyond the Gifted Stereotype. *Educational Leadership*, November, 42-46.

Voke, Heather. (2002). Motivating Students to Learn. ASCD Infobrief 28, 1-13.  
<http://www.ascd.org/frameinfobrief.html>

**Resources:**

Search the ERIC database  
<http://www.eduref.org/>

ASCD  
<http://www.ascd.org/>

NAGC  
<http://www.nagc.org/>

**Honor Code:** To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust and fairness among all member of the George Mason University and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the members of George Mason University have set forth the following code of honor. Any individual who is caught in the act of cheating, attempting to cheat, plagiarizing or stealing will be brought forth before a council of their peers. In the even that the individual is found guilty, he or she will be punished accordingly. For further information, please refer to the University Catalog or website at [www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu) The Honor Code may be found outline at <http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>.

**Americans with Disabilities:** This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class as identified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This act prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the series, programs or activities of all Stat and local governments. Under ADA a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity such as: learning, working, walking, speaking, hearing, breathing, and/or taking care of oneself. If a student has a disability and needs course adaptations or accommodations because of that disability, it must be established with the faculty, in writing, at the beginning of the semester so that arrangements can be made. Please call the Disabilities Resource Center for required documentation (703-993-2474). The Disability Resource Center website is at <http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/>

## Week 1/25

Course Overview/ Course “Scavenger Hunt”

Bb site review

Pre-assessment of Curriculum Differentiation  
For Diverse Learners

Overview of Syllabus, assignment requirements,  
project due dates

**“Real Time” Online**

Read Preface in  
Systems and Models

## Week 2/1                    **Absorbing the architecture of differentiation** **ONLINE**

Creating a personal and professional rationale for differentiation

**(Read: Tomlinson, Begin Chapters 1-5)**

Answer Db questions that will be posted on a weekly basis  
whether we meet onsite or online.

*What is a concept and why is it important to differentiation?*

## Week of 2/8                    **Being a good diagnostician** **ONLINE**

Pre-assessing student readiness, interest, and learning profile  
(strategies: compacting, acceleration, learning contracts, MI,  
Sternberg’s Triarchic Intelligences)

### **ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 2/8**

**READ:**                    **Tomlinson - Chapters 1-5**  
**Bb--Course Documents- Week of 2/8**  
**Bb--External Links – Week of 2/8**  
**Bb discussion:**        **Question to respond to and interact with peers**

## Week of 2/15                    **Facilitating process**

(strategies: graphic organizers and higher-level critical thinking skills, cubing,  
learning centers, independent study)

**ONLINE**

### **ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 2/15**

**READ:**                    **Tomlinson – Chapters 6, 7**  
**Bb—Course Documents Week of 2/15**  
**External Links Week of 2/15**  
**Bb discussion: Question to respond to and interact with peers**  
**CRJ’s: # 1-4 Due by this date** To be posted  
**On the correct assignment areas.**



**WEEK of 2/22**

**Complex Instruction**

Promoting true heterogeneous collaborations

**ONLINE**

**ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 2/22**

**READ:** Gay—Chapters 1-4  
Bb— Course Documents Week of 2/22  
External Links Week of 2/22

**Bb discussion:** Question to respond to and interact with peers

**WEEK of 3/1**

**Group investigations**

**Assessment and the transfer of knowledge**

(methods: performance assessment, portfolio assessment, rubrics  
the role of standardized assessment)

**ONLINE**

**ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 3/1**

**READ:** Gay—Chapters 5,6  
Bb— Course Documents Week of 3/1  
External Links Week of 3/1

**Bb discussion:** Question to respond to and interact with peers

**WEEK of 3/8**

**Individual Work Week**

**ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 3/8**

**CRJ's: Posting of # 5-8 Due by 3/8**

**Work on Draft individual final presentation**  
**NO ONLINE Discussion this week**

**WEEK of 3/15**

**Parallel Curriculum Model**

Investigating differentiation using PCM for high-ability learners

**ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 3/15**

**READ:** Tomlinson,etal – Begin to explore chapters related to  
10 components of Curriculum Design  
ALID  
Curriculum of Core  
Curriculum of Practice  
(Don't stress about becoming an expert  
Skim read taking notes on things of interest  
To you. You are working to build a general

**Understanding of PCM at this point)**

**Bb discussion: Questions to respond to and interact with peers**

**Week of 3/22**

**Management and Motivation Issues**

(strategies: anchor activities, contracted assignments)

**ONLINE**

**Making informed and defensible decisions about grouping**

(strategies: tiering, cooperative learning, ability grouping, cluster grouping,  
Role of choice)

**ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 3/22**

**READ: Tomlinson – Chapters 6, 7**

**Gay – Chapters 1, 2**

**Bb—Course Documents Week of 3/22**

**External Links Week of 3/22**

**Bb discussion: Questions to respond to and  
Interact with peers**

**WEEK of 3/29**

**Spring Break (Based On FCPS/PWCS/Loudoun)**

**WEEK of 4/5**

**Parallel Curriculum Model (con't)**

Investigating differentiation using PCM for high-ability learners

**ONLINE**

**ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 4/5**

**READ: Tomlinson,etal – Chapters related to**

**Curriculum of Connections**

**Curriculum of Identity**

**Combining Parallels in the classroom**

**Bb—Course Documents Week of 4/5**

**External Links Week of 4/5**

**Bb discussion: Questions to respond to and interact with peers**

**WEEK of 4/12**

**Individual Work Week**

**ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 4/12**

**READ: If you want to start 4/19 Tomlinson**

**CRJ's: Working on 9 -12**

**Work on individual final presentation**

**NO ONLINE Discussion this week**

**WEEK of 4/19**

**Metastrategies**

Blending Content, Process, and Product:  
*Problem Based Learning*

**ONLINE**

**ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 4/19**

**READ: Tomlinson – Chapters 8 – 12**

**Work on Draft of Final Presentation**

**Bb—there will be Db strand setup for you to post**

**Your presentation draft for others to begin**

**Review. This is the “official due date” for**

**The draft.**

**Bb discussion: Question to respond to and interact with peers**

**Weeks of 4/26**

**Metastrategies (con't)**

Blending Content, Process, and Product:  
*Problem Based Learning*

**ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 4/26**

**READ: Gay—Chapt. 7**

**Bb—Course Documents Week of 4/26**

**External Links Week of 4/26**

**Bb discussion: Question to respond to and interact on**

**Bb discussion: continued discussion on your final drafts**

**Week of 5/3**

**Administrative/parental support**

Building and maintaining administrative support and communicating with  
parents of gifted learners

**ONLINE**

**ASSIGNMENTS during Week of 5/3**

**Bb—Course Documents Week of 5/3**

**External Links Week of 5/3**

**Bb discussion: Question to respond to and interact with peers**

**CRJ's: Posting of # 9 – 12(15)**

**WEEK of 5/10**

**Final Presentations of Individual Product Lessons**

**Bb discussion strand for posting of Final  
Products for discussion and comments**

**All assignments must be posted by 5/10/10**

**Grades will be done and viewable by 5/15/10**

