

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
ADVANCED STUDIES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

**Differentiated Instruction in Elementary Advanced/Gifted Academic Classes**  
**Blended Course**  
**Spring 2014 at Stenwood Elementary School**

**Instructor:**

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**Class Dates:** February 5 - May 14, 2014

**Face-to-Face Classes:** 2/5, 2/12, 3/26, 4/2, 4/30, 5/07 from (4:30-8:10).

Online Classes: 2/19, 2/26, 3/5, 3/12, 3/19, 4/9, 4/23 (allow at least 2.5 hours of time per week). The online week runs Wednesday until the following Tuesday for Db postings and responses.

**Textbook:**

[Differentiation and the Brain: How Neuroscience Supports the Learner-Friendly Classroom](#) Authors: David Sousa & Carol Ann Tomlinson. 2010.

Additional materials will be made available through Blackboard. If possible, please bring your laptop to class so that you can access the materials.

Additional text materials will be posted through the Blackboard site or accessible through the Fairfax County Public School Virtual Library.

**Course Description:**

This course focuses on advanced understanding, design, and implementation of differentiated curriculum across content areas for elementary school. It will provide professionals in the field of advanced academic education, regular education, and related fields with the knowledge and skills needed to design and assess effective, high quality differentiated curriculum for elementary school students.

**Course Goals and Outcomes:**

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

1. Support for in-depth, advanced differentiation of curriculum;
2. Ways to strategically plan appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction;
3. Models of advanced differentiation of content (what we teach and what students learn);
4. Models of advanced differentiation of process (how students make sense of what they learn);
5. Establishing administrative and parental support for a differentiated classroom;
6. Implementing and managing differentiation in the heterogeneous classroom;
7. Appropriate use of environments to employ a range of instructional strategies to facilitate differentiation;
8. Models of integrated, interdisciplinary advanced differentiation in the secondary school; and,
9. Models of advanced differentiation of products (how students demonstrate what they have learned).

**Model of Course Delivery:**

Course delivery will be a mixture of **face-to-face** and **online** meetings. Participants will be expected to share curriculum development projects. In addition, students are expected to actively participate in **online discussions** and **small group discussions** regarding advanced differentiation projects and scholarly articles related to differentiation in practice. The instructor will be available outside of class meetings via phone and e-mail.

**Grading Scale:**

100 = A+, 94-99 = A, 90-93 = A-, 86-89 = B+, 80-85 = B-, 70-79 = C, Below 70 = F

A grade of B- or below is not acceptable for endorsement or graduate coursework.

**Class Participation and Attendance Policy:**

Class participation and attendance constitutes a major element of the learning experience provided in this class. There will be online class discussions, group assignments, and strategy workshops. Expectations include the following:

- Students will be expected to be prepared for discussion by having read and reflected on assigned readings as identified in the course assignments.
- 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 discussions on a consistent basis as identified by the instructor.

In blended courses, face-to-face presence and 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 also to the class as a whole. Class participation is a factor in grading. Instructors may use evidence of student's absence from face-to-face sessions and online weekly discussions to support the lowering of a student's grade as stated in the course syllabus (GMU 2006).

If online learning is new to you, think of online sessions as if you were physically attending class at MASON.

***You would be here a minimum of 2.5 hours during the week having completed your reading and posting on the Discussion Board (Db). Expect a minimum of an additional 2-4 hours of work (readings, writing, research, group work, reviewing) per week.*** Set aside specific times during your week to focus on [EDCI 623](#), including posting on Db. Waiting until the day before an online session ends to respond is unacceptable at the graduate level.

Comment [A1]: Is this still the course #?

During online discussions, first answer the question posted in a short and concise manner (2 paragraphs), return to the Db as directed in the syllabus, and respond to at least two other classmates' postings. Responses such as "I agree" or "Good idea" are insufficient to count as in-depth responses; you should elaborate and include further questions to continue the discussion.

Students are responsible for the content of course communications sent through their Fairfax County Public School Blackboard. *All communication will be done using the email found for each student in the FCPS Blackboard Platform.*

**GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>]
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/> ]
- c. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason

University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. ***All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.***

- d. The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experiences and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/> ]
- e. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/> ]
- f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during the class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- g. The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/> ]

#### **PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

#### **CORE VALUES COMMITMENT**

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to *Social justice, Innovation, Research-based practice, Ethical leadership, and Collaboration*. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. [See <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values> ]

## Schedule of Course Content and Assignments

Date	Class Topics	Assignment
2/05- class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom Introduction and Syllabus Overview</li> <li>• Defining the Need for Differentiation</li> <li>• Pre-assessment Survey</li> <li>• Review of Online Activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase textbook</li> <li>• Read Chapter 1 &amp; 2: <i>The Nonnegotiables of Effective Differentiation &amp; Mindset, Learning Environment and Differentiation</i></li> <li>• Complete exercise 2.1: Questions for Teachers about Mindset and Differentiation (pg. 36-37)</li> <li>• Post your thoughts about Mindset to the Db before 10/10</li> </ul>
2/12 - class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating the Need for Change in Teaching Practice Discussion</li> <li>• Teaching and Mindset</li> <li>• Differentiation in Action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Chapter 8: <i>Managing a Differentiated Classroom</i> and participate in the Db:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the chapter and write a brief, reflective response on the interest group discussion board</li> <li>2. Then write a thoughtful response to at least two other group members</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Start thinking about mid term presentation (see attached directions)</li> </ul>
2/19 - online 2/26 - online 3/05 - online 3/12 - online 3/19 - online	Online Strategy Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-assessment</li> <li>• Flexible Grouping</li> <li>• Questioning Strategies</li> <li>• Differentiated Products</li> <li>• Formative and Summative Assessment</li> <li>• Anchor Activities with Curriculum Compacting</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Online Strategy Workshops</u></b> (see attached directions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in 5 out of 6 weekly online strategy workshops</li> <li>• Read textbook pages and /or articles that are assigned to accompany the strategy workshops</li> <li>• Respond to the strategy workshops as directed on the discussion board</li> <li>• Try the strategies out in your classroom &amp; reflect on how it's going!</li> </ul> <p><b><u>For the Mid-Term Project:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement two of the differentiation strategies as described in the strategy workshops</li> <li>• Submit lessons for the strategies</li> <li>• Prepare to share at midterm class</li> </ul>

Date	Class Topics	Assignment
3/26 - class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiation and Special Populations</li> <li>• Discuss Final Project</li> <li>• Discuss Interest Articles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on midterm projects</li> </ul>
4/02 - class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-Term Presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in Interest Articles Db</li> <li>• Write a one paragraph description of your plan for the final project and e-mail it to me</li> <li>• Work on final project</li> </ul>
4/09 – online 4/23-online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest Articles</li> </ul>	<p>Read the articles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required: Chapter 4: <i>Classroom Assessment and Differentiation</i> &amp; take a look at the questions in Exercise 4.1, pp. 82-83</li> <li>• Required: Choose an article of your choice from those listed on Blackboard</li> </ul> <p>Participate in the Db:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the article and write a reflective response on the interest group discussion board</li> <li>• Then write a thoughtful response to at least two other group members</li> </ul>
4/30 - class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing Our Interests ☺</li> <li>• Classroom Assessment and Differentiation</li> <li>• Expanding the Vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on final project</li> <li>• Final self-reflections</li> </ul>
5/07 - class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final project presentation</li> <li>• Course Evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If needed, turn in project with all revisions by exam date (05/13)</li> </ul>

<b>Grading: Assignments and Points</b>
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"Differentiation Mindset" Personal Reflection	5 points
"Managing a Differentiated Classroom" Db	5 points
Online Strategy Workshop Db (5 points each)	25 points
Midterm Lesson Plan(s)	5 points
Midterm Presentation	15 points
Final Project Overview	5 points
"Classroom Assessment & Differentiation" Db	5 points
Interest Article Db	10 points
Final Presentation & Reflection	25 points

<b>Online Strategy Workshops</b>
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On Blackboard, there are six strategy workshops related to differentiation strategies. These workshops involve the following topics:

- Preassessment
- Flexible Grouping
- Questioning Strategies
- Differentiated Products
- Formative and Summative Assessment
- Anchor Activities with Curriculum Compacting

Each workshop includes a PowerPoint presentation and an article or text reference. During the online portion of the course, students should choose to **participate in at least five of the six strategy workshops** by reviewing the PowerPoint and completing the assignment. After completion of each workshop, students must post on the discussion board a well-constructed response that answers the following questions:

1. How might you use this differentiation strategy in your classroom?
2. What might be some benefits of this differentiation strategy?
3. What might be some challenges of the strategy?
4. What are some ways that you might manage these challenges?

*Students should also respond with a short paragraph to at least **two** other students' postings.*

## Midterm Project

Course participants are required to implement two of the online workshop strategies in their classrooms prior to the midterm classes.

Be prepared to share the **two strategies** you implemented and bring the **lessons**, as well as **examples of student work or student participation**. You will present your implementation of the strategy to a group of your peers; if needed, please supply enough copies for classmates or post them on the Db wiki for Midterm projects.



You may choose to work on the mid-term project with one other person in your school cohort.

### Midterm Presentation Rubric

Points	Expectations	Comments
15-14	<b>Excellent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation is engaging and clearly demonstrates the thoughtful implementation of two differentiation strategies.</li> <li>• Examples of student work or student participation were shared with the class.</li> </ul>	
13-12	<b>Competent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation is clear and demonstrates the implementation of two differentiation strategies.</li> <li>• Examples of student work or student participation were shared with the class.</li> </ul>	
11	<b>Minimal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation demonstrates the implementation of two differentiation strategies, but clarity is lacking.</li> <li>• There were no examples of student work or student participation were shared with the class.</li> </ul>	
10-0	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation is confusing and does not clearly reveal the implementation of two differentiation strategies.</li> <li>• There were no examples of student work or student participation were shared with the class.</li> </ul>	

## Final Project

A final project will be required. Class participants may choose from one of the following:

- Create a portfolio of strategies you have implemented within your classroom. This portfolio should be a collection of at least 10 different examples (i.e. a new example of a differentiated pre-assessment). Include clear directions for implementing the strategy and a classroom sample related to your subject area.
- Research and implement a new category of differentiation strategies (i.e. differentiated reading strategies or differentiated games) and create a PowerPoint strategy workshop about that category with two clear examples.
- Create a 10 minute narrated video of differentiation in action within your classroom. Include the lesson plan being demonstrated and a reflection on how it worked in the classroom.
- Create a differentiated unit you plan on teaching in your classroom. Include unit plan, individual lessons, and product guidelines.
- Create a product portfolio to include 5 differentiated product assignments, including rubrics. For one of those assignments, bring in examples of student work at each level of differentiation.
- Create a project related to differentiation of your choice. You must receive approval for this project idea **by November 7** to choose this option.



On **May 07** be prepared to present your final project with peers. *In addition, you will submit a brief written reflection outlining the strategies you used, your rationale for using those strategies, and your thoughts on what went well and the modifications you'd make in the future.*

If your presentation is enhanced with handouts, please make **enough copies for everyone** or **post them in the final presentations wiki on Blackboard prior to class.**



## Final Project Rubric

Points	Expectations	Comments
25-23	<p>Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final project clearly represents application and understanding of differentiation strategies within a classroom.</li> <li>• A rationale for why certain strategies were used is presented.</li> <li>• The presentation includes thoughtful reflection on what went well and modifications / adaptations to be made in the future.</li> <li>• If applicable, examples of student work or student participation is shared.</li> </ul>	
22-20	<p>Competent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final project represents application and understanding of differentiation strategies within a classroom.</li> <li>• The presentation includes thoughtful reflection on what went well and differentiation modifications / adaptations to be made in the future.</li> </ul>	
19-18	<p>Minimal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final project represents application of differentiation strategies within a classroom.</li> <li>• The presentation and project are lacking in clarity and understanding of differentiation practices.</li> </ul>	
17-0	<p>Unsatisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final project does not represent application or understanding of differentiation strategies.</li> <li>• The final project seems incomplete.</li> </ul>	