

THE DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOM:
A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

By

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Project Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to provide a professional development plan for teachers who are interested in creating differentiated classrooms. The central research question for this project was, *How can teachers more effectively differentiate instruction in detracked high school classrooms to close the opportunity gap?* This project began by identifying a current equity issue in many secondary schools, the opportunity gap, that is primarily the result of academic tracking and ability grouping. Not only do these practices restrict students in “lower” tracks from access to challenging curriculum and experienced teachers, they have established a defacto resegregation system in our schools that disproportionately impacts students of color and students from families with lower socio-economic status. The solution to this problem is to detrack schools dispel myths about ability grouping. Schools that have successfully detracked have found that providing quality professional development for teachers in differentiation was key to positive outcomes for students in newly detracked schools. This project is a six-session workshop for teachers, whether undergoing detracking or not, that are interested in differentiating their practices and classrooms to increase equity.

Audience

The audience for this project was educators interested in developing their differentiation practice, regardless of department, grade level, or the degree to which tracking occurs within that department. A willing and interested group of learners is ideal for the workshop as it involves a significant time commitment and asks participants to be open to a transformation of their classrooms and teaching practices.

Ideally, this plan would be used to support teachers beginning the detracking process, but could also benefit teachers still teaching tracked courses who are interested in capitalizing on the range of student intelligences that exist in their classrooms as well. The professional development plan was designed to model the very differentiation practices it sought to teach and well as the adult learning theories of transformative learning and andragogy. Carol Ann Tomlinson's *How to Differentiate Instruction in Academically Diverse Classrooms* is used as the central text to guide the workshop. The professional development plan is designed to be voluntary, flexible and occur in five hour-long sessions over the course of a school year.

Workshop Design

The workshop was designed in six 1-hour sessions that occurred over the course of the school year to allow for teacher-learners to process and apply their learning within the classroom. Sessions were designed to alternate between analysis sessions and reflection sessions focused on the three major areas that instruction can be differentiated: content, process and product. This allowed teacher-learners to see and discuss examples and case studies in each of these three areas, analyze the current state of their own practice in preparation to apply their learning. The following session, then, was a discussion, sharing and continued problem solving of that application. In this way, the structures of the workshop repeat in an alternating fashion, building knowledge sequentially by tackling a different aspect of differentiation, but remaining open enough to respond the needs of teacher learners. The design of this series of workshops was influenced by the transformative adult learning theory according to Mezirow, Knowles' theory of Andragogy as well as the Tomlinson's Differentiation Framework that the workshop itself intends to teach.

The final project is contained in a google slides presentation that includes speaker notes, a facilitator guide and links to supplemental materials. Supplemental materials include case studies, videos, differentiation planning guides for teachers and toolkits for each aspect of differentiation that was explored in the workshop.

The Differentiated Classroom Workshop

Facilitator Guide

“The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.”
-Mark Van Doren

How to use this guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide resources, notes and information that will help you to facilitate “The Differentiated Classroom Workshop” successfully. The workshop is designed to take place over six “sessions” or meetings that should be scheduled throughout the academic year. Sessions are designed in learning, application and reflection cycles intended to allow teachers to analyze current practices and apply new learning in real time with the support of a cohort. Due to the cyclical nature of sessions, it is recommended that significant time is allowed between learning and reflection sessions to provide time for authentic implementation. Speaker notes can be found within session presentation notes. While it is not necessary as the facilitator to be an expert in the area of differentiation, a basic understanding and commitment to learning with enrolled teachers is important. Above all, the facilitator should be committed to “assisting discovery” as teachers explore, examine and question their practices through the lens of differentiation and willing to meet teachers where they are at in the process of transforming their practice and classrooms.

Recommended texts

It is recommended that Carol Ann Tomlinson’s *How to Differentiate Instruction in an Academically Diverse Classroom* be used in conjunction with this workshop.

A note on environment and context

This workshop is intended for secondary schools and classrooms that are academically, linguistically and culturally diverse who are interested in equitable practices to reach their students and are open to looking critically at their own practices. For this reason, as well as the significant time commitment the workshop requires, it is important that teachers voluntarily participate in the workshop. This workshop may be particularly useful for schools undergoing the process of detracking courses wishing to provide teachers with support in the curricular and pedagogical changes that will need to take place in order to detrack successfully. Like all good teaching, it is recommended that materials and sessions be adapted in response to the particular needs of the context or students (in this case) teachers enrolled.

Session One: Introduction and differentiating through content

Agenda	Resources	Notes
I. Welcome and introductions	Session one presentation slides and notes	All materials can be provided either digitally or on paper depending on preference. Teacher-learner self inventories should be saved in order to assess growth at the end of the workshop.
II. Learner outcomes		
III. What is Differentiation?	Teacher-Learner Self Inventory	
IV. Teacher-Learner Self-Inventory	Case Study Analysis	
V. Why differentiate?		
VI. What does it mean to differentiate content?	Rethinking content: A differentiation planning guide	
VII. Case study analysis		
VIII. Cohort content analysis		
IX. Between sessions		

Session Two: Sharing and problem solving (content)

Agenda	Resources	Notes
I. Learner Outcomes	Session two presentation slides and notes	The basis of sharing sessions is to access and value the prior knowledge and experience of teachers as a resource for other teachers. The role of facilitator in these sessions is to step in as needed to correct misunderstandings or ask probing questions. The conversation should be directed and led primarily by teachers.
II. Group Reflection		
III. Sharing and Problem solving		
IV. Notes for next time		

Session Three: Differentiating through process

Agenda	Resources	Notes
I. Learner outcomes	Session three presentation	All materials can be

II. What does it mean to differentiate through process?	slides and notes	provided either digitally or on paper depending on preference.
III. Case study analysis	Case Study Analysis	
IV. Cohort process analysis	Rethinking process: A differentiation planning guide	
V. Between Sessions		

Session Four: *Sharing and problem solving (process)*

Agenda	Resources	Notes
I. Learner Outcomes II. Group Reflection III. Sharing and Problem solving IV. Notes for next time	Session four presentation slides and notes	<p>The basis of sharing sessions is to access and value the prior knowledge and experience of teachers as a resource for other teachers.</p> <p>The role of facilitator in these sessions is to step in as needed to correct misunderstandings or ask probing questions. The conversation should be directed and led primarily by teachers.</p>

Session Five: *Differentiating and Planning Product Assessments*

Agenda	Resources	Notes
I. Learner outcomes II. What does it mean to differentiate through process? III. Case study analysis IV. Cohort product planning V. Between sessions	Session five presentation slides and notes Case study analysis Rethinking products: A differentiation planning guide	<p>Timing considerations: plan additional time for session 5 as it involves planning a product assessment and not just adapting existing material.</p> <p>Consider allowing for a longer gap of time between</p>

		<p>sessions 5 and 6 to allow for implementation of product assessments. Confer with individual cohorts' curriculum timelines to ensure authentic implementation.</p>
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Session Six: Sharing and problem solving (product) and final reflections

Agenda	Resources	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Learner Outcomes II. Group Reflection III. Sharing and Problem solving IV. Notes for next time V. Teacher-Learner Self Inventory VI. Course Evaluation 	<p>Session six presentation slides and notes</p> <p>Course Evaluation</p>	<p>In this final session, group reflections may focus either on the implementation of their product assessments OR the process of planning itself. Questions for this final session also allow teachers to reflect on the workshop as a whole.</p>

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