

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course: Differentiation and Assessment for Middle School

Presenters: Rick Wormeli

Hours: 30

Course Overview

In this energetic course, Rick Wormeli brings his extensive expertise and boundless energy to the vital discussion of creating 21st century classrooms that allow for the success of each individual student. He makes a strong argument for the necessity of creating differentiated instruction and assessment in our middle schools and indeed, throughout the educational process.

Wormeli begins with a critical question to educators; how can we change the culture of our schools? He asserts that the traditional lecture and assessment methods that assume all kids learn the same way are not correct. He presents evidence of the value of knowing the students well and learning how to differentiate instruction to accommodate their needs. He stresses that in the classroom “fair is not necessarily equal.” When we differentiate instruction and assessment— we are taking this into account.

In subsequent units Mr. Wormeli presents his case for the differentiated classroom and assessment techniques. Using current research by noted experts in the field, such as Rick Stiggins, Steven Covey, Carol Ann Tomlinson and Howard Gardner, he introduces educators to the essential techniques in creating differentiated learning environments and the rationale for implementing them.

Through citing of the essential literature and his own expertise and anecdotal experiences as a teacher, Mr. Wormeli challenges educators to have the courage to change their mindsets in order to make the changes necessary for their students’ success.

Presenters’ Bios

Rick Wormeli is a Nationally Board Certified Teacher and a columnist for NMSA's magazine, Middle Ground. He is also the author of Meet Me in the Middle: Becoming an Accomplished Middle Level Teacher and Day One and Beyond: Practical Matters for New Middle Level Teachers. Rick won the outstanding English Teacher of the Nation Award at Disney's American Teacher Awards in 1996. He has been a consultant to both the White House and the Smithsonian Institution.

After completing this course, educators will know:

- The importance of knowing each student's learning style and readiness
- The particular nature of the adolescent brain and how it implements memory and learning
- The value of creating a classroom which uses differentiated instruction and assessment techniques
- Strategies for evaluating grading systems and instructional design
- The authentic reasons for grading and assessment and the value of consistent feedback



Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, educators will apply the following skills:

- Write a grading system philosophy that accommodates all students fairly
- Implement differentiated instructional models such as scaffolding, tiering, and flexible grouping
- Begin an ongoing dialogue with colleagues about assessments and grade book commonalities, revisions of standards, and flexibility in assessment techniques
- Be willing to courageously evaluate mindset to accommodate new techniques in teaching and grading practice in order to put each student's learning first

Text: "Movin' Up to the Middle"

Participants read "Movin' Up to the Middle," by Rick Wormeli (ASCD: April 2011), and respond to a reflection prompt.

Unit 1: Preparing Educators for Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction requires courage and commitment from educators. In this unit, Rick Wormeli introduces the elements necessary to create differentiated classrooms. And he asks important questions of his audience. Do they have the willingness, for example, to learn about and teach to students' individual learning profiles, to meet all students' needs, and to organize classrooms for students' learning rather than for teachers' teaching?

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- A working definition of differentiated instruction
- How to engage in the essential stages of differentiated instruction
- The level of commitment necessary to teach in a differentiated classroom

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will be able to:

- Reframe their mindset and teaching practice to accommodate individual learners
- Implement strategies to move their classrooms toward differentiation

Unit 2: Accommodating Learning Profiles through Assessment and Strategies in DI

Rick Wormeli challenges participants to view assessment through new eyes. Fair is not equal in terms



of assessment, he argues. Participants learn what steps to take before, during, and after learning experiences to assure that their students are getting a fair education. They analyze the roles of pre-, formative, and summative assessments in differentiated instruction and study practical tips for planning, developing, and administering assessments most effectively in the DI classroom.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- The roles of pre-, formative, and summative assessments in differentiated instruction
- How to plan, develop, and implement appropriate assessments in a differentiated classroom

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will be able to:

- Make changes to the classroom culture that allows for acceptance of differences
- Create assessment tools that accommodate differentiated instruction
- Utilize new formats in grading that accommodate different assessment tools
- Develop differentiated instruction plans within their core curriculum

Unit 3: Implementing Essential Principles and Strategies of Differentiated Instruction

Educators who differentiate instruction must recognize that no two students are exactly alike. In this unit, participants learn strategies which will allow them to know each of their students well, so they can differentiate content, process, product, affect, and learning environment for students. Rick Wormeli introduces participants to essential principles of differentiated instruction so that they can use assessment to inform instruction. They learn how to design and use instructional models such as flexible grouping, scaffolding, and tiered lessons that accommodate students' unique needs.

Unit Objectives:

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- Essential principles of differentiated instruction
- The importance of assessment tools in creating student profiles
- Where to find the essential research and tools for creating a DI classroom

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will be able to:

- Differentiate instruction (content, process, product, affect, and learning environment) according to students' learning profiles, readiness, and interest
- Select and use assessment tools to inform instruction



Text: “Differentiating for Tweens”

Participants read “Differentiating for Tweens,” by Rick Wormeli (*Educational Leadership*: April 2006), and respond to a reflection prompt.

Unit 4: Creating a Fair and Relevant Grading System in the Differentiated Classroom

Most grading systems are arbitrary, nonsensical, and even destructive, Rick Wormeli argues. He challenges participants to assess whether their grading systems are norm-referenced or criteria-referenced, as they should be. In this unit, educators learn to reconsider their systems and redesign them to avoid subjectivity. Participants will focus on distinguishing the roles of formative and summative assessment in helping students strive for and attain authentic mastery.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- Why most grading systems—as distinct from ungraded feedback—are in conflict with differentiated instruction
- How to authentically assess mastery of content

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will be able to:

- Design a new grade book system that takes into account task analysis as well as objective assessments
- Focus on feedback as a critical road to mastery
- Develop benchmarks and standards of learning with subject colleagues using nationally recognized experts in the field
- Implement a criteria-referenced grading system with colleagues

Unit 5: Exactly What, When, and How to Grade in a Differentiated Classroom

In this unit, Rick Wormeli asks educators to reconsider the role of grades and how grades can work when they provide feedback, document progress, and guide instructional decisions, but generally don’t work when their goal is to motivate, punish, or sort students. He demonstrates how to teach, reserving grades for only summative rather than formative experiences. Participants study a list of grading practices to avoid in a differentiated classroom. This unit gives educators a sound understanding of how to use assessment as communication rather than compensation.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:



- When and how to test students in a differentiated classroom
- How assessments impact student success and motivation
- The importance of formative feedback in the learning process

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will be able to:

- Create a school-wide standard of “mastery” within subject curricula
- Implement a fair grading structure for the classroom that takes into account differentiated instruction and assessment
- Develop a revised grade book that includes all aspects of student performance, including effort, attendance, attitude, and participation and a separate area for assessed mastery of the subject area

Unit 6: Designing Grades as Instructive Instruments in a Differentiated Classroom

Grades should be neither punishment nor reward. Rick Wormeli challenges participants to fully embrace that grades—not just feedback—should always be instructive instead of punitive. He further challenges participants to critique their own use of the A-F, or 100 point grading system, percentages, and averages. Mr. Wormeli discusses such practicalities as how to deal with students’ late work and whether and when to allow re-do as well as how to give grades to struggling and exceptional students. Participants learn the importance of writing grading philosophy statements that will help them clarify their policies to themselves, their students, to parents, and administrators. This unit dramatically reinforces the notion that in a differentiated classroom, fair is not equal.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- The current research about fair grading and where to access additional resources
- The problems inherent in the 100 point, averaging and curve systems of grading
- The true purposes of grading and how to achieve those goals

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will be able to:

- Use grades instructively instead of punitively
- Write a grading philosophy statement
- Create “tiering” within differentiated instruction



Text: “Busting Myths about Differentiated Instruction”

Participants read “Busting Myths about Differentiated Instruction,” by Rick Wormeli (*Principal Leadership*: March 2005), and respond to a reflection prompt.

Text: “Barriers to Implementing Differentiation: Lack of Confidence, Efficacy, and Perseverance”

Participants read “Barriers to Implementing Differentiation: Lack of Confidence, Efficacy, and Perseverance,” by VJ Hawkins (*New England Reading Association Journal*: 2009), and respond to a reflection prompt.

Methods of Instruction

- Videos (presentations consisting of lecture, interviews, and classroom footage)
- Text (units based on required reading)
- Reflection questions (open-ended questions at the end of the video presentations where participants are asked to reflect on the course content, their own practice, and their intentions for their practice)
- Quizzes (selected-response quizzes to assess understanding of the video presentations)

Plagiarism Policy

KDS recognizes plagiarism as a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else’s work as one’s own and includes failing to cite sources for others’ ideas, copying material from books or the Internet (including lesson plans and rubrics), and handing in work written by someone other than the participant. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade and may have additional consequences. For more information about plagiarism and guidelines for appropriate citation, consult plagiarism.org.

Passing Requirements:

In order to complete the requirements of the course, the participant must complete all course work. We do not award partial credit.

- Quizzes 40% of total grade
- Reflection Questions 60% of total grade



KDS Self-Assessment Rubric:

	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory
Quizzes	100% Correct	80% Correct	60% Correct	0-40% Correct

	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory
Reflection Questions	Participant provides rich detail from the content of the course in his or her responses Participant makes his or her responses to the questions personally meaningful	Participant includes appropriate content from the course in his or her responses Participant makes thoughtful comments in direct response to the questions	Participant includes some content from the course, usually appropriate, in his or her responses Participant answers the questions directly, not always fully	Participant includes no content from the course in his or her responses Participant does not address the questions posed