

# COURSE SYLLABUS

**Course:** Differentiation and Assessment for Middle School

**Presenters:** Rick Wormeli

**Credits:** 3 Graduate Credits

## Course Overview

In this energetic course, Rick Wormeli brings his extensive expertise and boundless energy to the vital discussion of creating 21<sup>st</sup> 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)
- Readings
- Reflection questions (open-ended questions at intervals throughout 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)
- Discussion forum (prompts after each unit that engage participants in online dialogue with their cohorts)
- Midterm (a project intended to get teachers to begin to develop their practice by putting to work in the classroom what they have learned)
- Final (a project that enables educators to reflect on their practice and assess their students’ work through the lens of what they have learned)

**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](http://plagiarism.org).

**Percentage of Course Credit**

- Reflection questions 25%
- Quizzes 15%
- Midterm 25%
- Final 35%

In order to complete the requirements of the course, the participant must complete all course work (e.g., reflections, quizzes, and any midterm and/or final), including watching all videos and participating in all discussion forums. We do not award partial credit.



## Grading Policy

A: 3.4 – 4.0  
 B: 2.7 – 3.3  
 C: 2.0 – 2.6  
 F: >2.0

## Reflection/Quiz Rubric

Activity	Distinguished (4)	Proficient (3)	Basic (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
<b>Quizzes</b>	90-100%	80-89%	70-79%	69% or below
<b>Reflection Question</b>	<p>Participant has provided rich detail and supporting examples from the course content.</p> <p>Participant has made responses to prompts personally meaningful and relevant to his or her teaching practice.</p>	<p>Participant has included appropriate content from the course content.</p> <p>Participant has made thoughtful comments in direct response to the prompts.</p>	<p>Participant has included little that indicates consideration and comprehension of course content.</p> <p>Participant has answered most questions directly but some too briefly.</p>	<p>Participant has included little to no content indicating consideration and comprehension of course content.</p> <p>Participant has not addressed the specific questions posed.</p> <p>Participant has not responded to all reflection questions.</p> <p>Participant has copied from the course transcript without synthesis or analysis.</p>



## Midterm

Develop an **original** lesson plan with 3 embedded activities that will enable you to differentiate for students' different skills, learning styles, and/ or readiness levels. Your lesson plan should include clear objective(s), align to an identified standard (e.g., from the Common Core State Standards or elsewhere), and provide opportunities for both independent and small-group work.

Please do the following:

1. Identify the standard your lesson aligns to.
2. Identify the learning objective(s) that are aligned to the chosen standard.
3. Incorporate 3 different learning activities. Each activity must be differentiated for **one** of the following:
  - a. Students' different skills.
  - b. Students' different learning styles.
  - c. Students' different readiness levels.
4. The three learning activities should include opportunities for both independent and collaborative work.

### Midterm Rubric

Step	Distinguished (4)	Proficient (3)	Basic (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
<b>Identify the standard your lesson aligns to.</b>  <b>Identify learning objective(s) that aligned to the chosen standard.</b>	Participant has identified a clearly relevant and highly appropriate standard, well aligned to the lesson.  Participant has developed clear and relevant learning objectives closely tied to the chosen standard.	Participant has identified an appropriate standard sufficiently aligned to the lesson.  Participant has identified appropriate learning objectives tied to the chosen standard.	Participant has identified a standard to target, though it is not sufficiently aligned to the lesson.  Participant has identified learning objectives, but they are either not entirely appropriate to the chosen standard or not clearly described.	Participant has not identified a standard.  The standard, if identified, is not aligned to the lesson.  Participant has not developed learning objective(s).  <b>Or:</b>  The learning objectives do not align with the chosen standard



<p><b>Incorporate 3 different learning activities. Each activity must be differentiated for one of the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' different skills.</li> <li>• Students' different learning styles.</li> <li>• Students' different readiness levels.</li> </ul> <p><b>The three learning activities should include opportunities for both independent and collaborative work.</b></p>	<p>Participant has incorporated 3 challenging and engaging activities that are carefully detailed. Each activity is differentiated for <i>one</i> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' different skills</li> <li>• Students' different learning styles</li> <li>• Students' different readiness levels</li> </ul> <p>Participant has elaborated on what those student differences are with rich examples.</p> <p>Participant has developed and embedded into the lesson plan productive opportunities for both independent and authentic collaborative work. Both opportunities would clearly help students achieve learning objective(s).</p>	<p>Participant has incorporated 3 activities appropriately differentiated and sufficiently detailed for <i>one</i> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' different skills</li> <li>• Students' different learning styles</li> <li>• Students' different readiness levels</li> </ul> <p>Participant has indicated what those student differences are with some examples.</p> <p>Participant has included opportunities for both independent and collaborative work, though their relation to the learning goal may be unclear.</p>	<p>Participant has incorporated 1-2 activities appropriately differentiated and sufficiently detailed OR participant has incorporated 3 activities somewhat differentiated but not sufficiently detailed for <i>one</i> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' different skills</li> <li>• Students' different learning styles</li> <li>• Students' different readiness levels</li> </ul> <p>Participant listed what those differences are, but provided no support.</p> <p>Participant has included either an opportunity for independent work or for collaborative work.</p> <p>That opportunity's relation to the learning goal is in question.</p>	<p>Participant has not incorporated an activity differentiated, or appropriately differentiated, for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' different skills</li> <li>• Students' different learning styles</li> <li>• Students' different readiness levels</li> </ul> <p>Participant did not identify what those differences are.</p> <p>Participant has not included opportunities for independent and collaborative work.</p>
<p><b>Formal issues</b></p>	<p>Participant has made no grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas.</p>	<p>Participant has made a few grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized most paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas.</p>	<p>Participant has made some distracting grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized some paragraphs around main ideas but not</p>	<p>Participant has made multiple grammatical errors.</p> <p>Paragraphs are not organized around main ideas.</p> <p>Participant has</p>



	Participant has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure and made careful word choice.	Participant has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure though not always found the right word.	others. Participant has written in a style that communicates his or her thoughts but with no marked eloquence and insufficient attention to word choice.	written in a style that does not effectively communicate his or her thoughts.
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## Final

Using the lesson plan you developed for your midterm create 2 **original** assessment tools: a tool for pre-assessment and a rubric that will be used to formatively assess students while they are working towards learning goals and summatively assess students' final products (e.g., written work, performances, presentations, etc.). The rubric must include appropriate categories and descriptors.

Please do the following:

1. Reiterate the learning objective(s) from your midterm. If you feel that the learning objective(s) could be improved, please include the revised learning objective(s). If you do not believe the objectives need revision, please explain.
2. Develop and submit a pre-assessment tool you will use to discern student need in relation to readiness, learning style, or skills.
3. Describe the final product(s) students were expected to produce from the midterm lesson plan. (If you were able to implement the lesson plan, upload a sample of student work).
4. Develop a formative and summative assessment rubric you will use to inform student progress towards learning goals and evaluate their final products.
5. Explain how you will move from your formative/summative assessment tool to determining grades for the unit.



### Final Rubric

Step	Distinguished (4)	Proficient (3)	Basic (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
<b>Reiterate the learning objective(s) from your midterm. If you feel that the learning objective(s) could be improved, please include the revised learning objective(s). If you do not believe the objectives need revision, please explain.</b>	<p>Participant has reiterated the learning objective(s) developed for the midterm and has revised and/or improved them in a way that demonstrates thorough understanding of a clear, concise, and challenging learning objective.</p> <p>Participant has included a rich and enlightening explanation for why his or her learning objectives do not need revision.</p>	<p>Participant has reiterated the learning objective(s) developed for the midterm and has revised and/or improved them as necessary.</p> <p>Participant has included an explanation for why his or her learning objectives do not need revision.</p>	Participant has reiterated the learning objective (s) developed for the midterm with no modification and/or no clear explanation for why no revision is necessary.	Participant has not reiterated the learning objective(s) developed for the midterm.
<b>Develop a pre-assessment tool you could use to discern student need in relation to readiness, learning style, or skills.</b>	Participant has developed a purposeful pre-assessment tool to clearly discern student need in relation to readiness, learning style, or skills. The tool will provide enough rich and varied information to effectively inform the participant's instructional design.	Participant has developed an appropriate pre-assessment tool to discern student need in relation to readiness, learning style, or skills. The tool will provide enough information to sufficiently inform the participant's instructional design.	Participant has developed a pre-assessment tool, but its functionality as a tool to discern student need is in question.	Participant has not developed a pre-assessment tool.
<b>Describe the final product(s) students were supposed to produce from the midterm lesson plan.</b>	Participant has fully described a final product(s) that is challenging, engaging, and will clearly enable the	Participant has described in some detail a final product(s) that will enable the student to indicate what he	Participant has indicated the final product(s), but whether they will indicate what a student now knows	Participant has not indicated a final product OR the description of the final product is so vague that it is not



<p><b>Develop a formative and summative assessment rubric you will use to inform student progress towards learning goals and evaluate their final products.</b></p>	<p>student to indicate what he or she now knows or is able to do as a result of the lesson.</p> <p>Participant has developed and presented a precise and purposeful original rubric that would clearly provide information to students that would inform (and improve) their progress <b>and</b> work as an effective evaluative tool for final products.</p>	<p>or she now knows or is able to do as a result of the lesson.</p> <p>Participant has developed and presented an assessment tool that would likely provide information to students that would inform (and improve) their progress <b>and</b> work as an evaluative tool for final products, though how it would effectively serve both functions isn't entirely clear.</p>	<p>or is able to do as a result of the lesson is in question.</p> <p>Participant has developed and presented an original rubric that would serve <b>either</b> to inform students' progress <b>or</b> as an evaluative tool for final products.</p> <p>The rubric lacks sufficient detail <b>and/or</b> is flawed in its design.</p>	<p>possible to determine what a student now knows or is able to do as a result of the lesson.</p> <p>Participant has not developed and presented an original rubric to serve as both formative and summative assessment <b>or</b> the rubric presented is so significantly flawed that it cannot be used formatively or summatively.</p>
<p><b>Explain how you would move from your formative/summative assessment tool to determining grades for the unit.</b></p>	<p>Participant has convincingly explained, with rich detail, how he or she would move from the formative/summative assessment tool to determining fair and evidence-based grades.</p>	<p>Participant has explained with some detail how he or she would move from the formative/summative assessment tool to determining grades.</p>	<p>Participant has explained with insufficient detail how he or she would move from the formative/summative assessment tool to determining grades, but the system he or she is describing may not result in fair and evidence-based grades.</p>	<p>Participant has not explained how he or she would move from the formative/summative assessment tool to determining grades <b>or</b> has presented so vague an explanation that it is not possible to determine if the system will result in fair and evidence-based grades.</p>
<p><b>Formal issues</b></p>	<p>Participant has made no grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas.</p>	<p>Participant has made a few grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized most paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas.</p>	<p>Participant has made some distracting grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized some paragraphs around main ideas but not others.</p>	<p>Participant has made multiple grammatical errors.</p> <p>Paragraphs are not organized around main ideas.</p> <p>Participant has written in a style that</p>



	<p>Participant has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure and made careful word choice.</p>	<p>Participant has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure though not always found the right word.</p>	<p>Participant has written in a style that communicates his or her thoughts but with no marked eloquence and insufficient attention to word choice.</p>	<p>does not effectively communicate his or her thoughts.</p>
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