

PLC/Book Study Guide for *Advancing Differentiation*

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This guide is designed as a professional development resource and can be used to facilitate a book study or as a learning experience for a professional learning community (PLC). Facilitator notes are provided for additional support and explanation in planning and facilitating your school or group's sessions. I recommend that the principal and/or facilitator read the entire guide and the book before beginning the study.

For each session, participants will be asked to read chapters of the book. They may also be asked to bring particular materials or create or implement something *prior* to attending a session. Each chapter description includes guiding questions and suggested tasks that can be used as group activities during the group session.

Please note that the preparation work is noted at the beginning for each session. Before you dismiss participants from each session, look ahead to the next chapter and review and clarify what must be done before the next meeting. Reach agreements if suggested tasks are going to be adjusted or modified.

Introduction

To be completed before the introduction book study session:

- Read the book's foreword and introduction.
- Consider the challenges you have faced in meeting the needs of gifted students in your inclusion classroom or secondary course.

1. What are the challenges you face in implementing differentiation and 21st Century Skills in your classroom?

2. As a group:

- List the major concerns about how to implement differentiation and 21st Century Skills in your classroom.
- List some questions you hope to have answered by the end of this book study.

Facilitator Note: *Keep both lists handy as you conduct the book study. Keep referring participants back to their concerns and questions as a way to guide group conversation and also to encourage individual professional growth.*

3. In reviewing the descriptions of each chapter, which are the most appealing to you? Which do you believe may address a challenge you face in your classroom?

4. Does your group wish to prioritize particular chapters and possibly reorder the sequence of the book study?

Chapter 1: Defining How Differentiation Looks in Today's Classroom

To be completed before the Chapter 1 book study session:

- Take the “10 Elements of a Differentiated Classroom Survey” (see page 14 of this guide) as a preassessment. Keep the survey handy as you work through the different chapters. Find out where you have strengths and where you might want to pay more attention.
- Read Chapter 1.

1. Review the myths and realities in this chapter. In what ways are your own beliefs supported or challenged by what you read?

Facilitator Note: *Fleshing out belief systems prior to new learning is helpful in getting participants to realize their own barriers to learning. Make sure the conversation remains open and accepting. Differentiation is a philosophy that some may disagree with. Make room during the conversations for opposing ideas to be heard and investigated. No one is totally right nor totally wrong.*

2. What other comments/beliefs or myths have you encountered that were not cited in this chapter? What would you suggest are the realities?
3. What are the reasons why you need to differentiate in your classroom? From your list of reasons, what will you differentiate and how will you do it?
4. In what ways might you consider environmental differentiation techniques in your classroom? Be ready to share *why* you would differentiate your environment this way.

Chapter 2:

Defining the Essentials of a Differentiated Curriculum

To be completed before the Chapter 2 book study session:

- Select a unit of study you would like to define the essentials for.
- Read Chapter 2. While reading, keep your selected unit in mind and try to identify the components identified in the chapter. Ensure that your unit has at least one standard aligned within it.

1. Define the three levels of knowledge within your selected unit (factual, procedural, and conceptual).

Facilitator Note: Assist participants in clarifying all levels of the curriculum. Pay special attention to the conceptual level, as many teachers confuse lower-level knowing and doing as higher-level understanding.

2. Look over Figure 2.3 and identify four to six concepts that you feel are most important to your students' understanding. You are welcome to write connecting essential questions.

3. Look through your curriculum to identify unit generalizations. How might these generalizations assist your students in building greater understanding?

4. Choose one:

- Using the “Concept Development Lesson Sample” (pages 34–35) and the “Concept Development Worksheet” (page 49, example on page 36), guide your students through a lesson toward creating essential questions for your unit of study.
- Using the “Breaking Down the Essentials” form (page 50), break down a standard and unit that can be given to students or parents before a unit of study begins. This should also be used to guide your instruction.

Facilitator Note: Participants should meet after the construction of the plans and implementation to discuss what went well and what needs to be addressed for further clarification.

Chapter 3:

Advancing Differentiation to New Levels Through a Rigorous Curriculum

To be completed before the Chapter 3 book study session:

- Choose one:
 - Option 1: Using the “Walkthrough Checklist of Differentiation for Advancing Learning” (page 63), do a self-assessment of your own practice. Bring this when meeting with your group.
 - Option 2: Ask a colleague to visit your classroom a few times and fill in the “Walkthrough Checklist of Differentiation for Advancing Learning” (page 63) with his or her observations.
- Read Chapter 3.

1. Choose one:

- Using the “Principles of Curriculum and Instruction for Advancing Learning” (page 61) list, look for areas where you might need additional support or refinement.
- Using the “Classroom Practices for Advancing Learning” (page 62), look for areas where you might need additional support or refinement.

Facilitator Note: *After group members have studied the lists, discuss where there are strengths and areas that need additional support. Participants should share ideas where they are strong and seek assistance from others where they may have limitations.*

- ### 2. Participants should set a plan to accomplish the goal they set from the list they chose above. They should create a small report on what they accomplished by the next group meeting.

Facilitator Note: *Remind participants that their goal will not be accomplished within a short period of time. The goal setting idea here is to help them become more conscious of their practices and where they may need refinement. Encourage participants to find a partner they can share ideas with and seek support or guidance from.*

Chapter 4:

Motivating and

Engaging Learners

To be completed before the Chapter 4 book study session:

- List issues you encounter in your classroom that appear to be based on student motivation and engagement.
- Read Chapter 4, paying special attention to your list of issues.

1. Based on “Pathway to a Motivating and Engaging Classroom” (pages 73–74), cite explicit examples of what you do well, and look for areas you want to work on. Revisit the original list the group developed of issues encountered in the classroom. Can any of them be attributed to levels of motivation and engagement?
2. Look over the list of “25 Strategies for Developing a Boy-Friendly Classroom” (pages 81–82), “Strategies for Creating a Brain-Compatible Learning Environment” (page 83), and “Brain Breaks” (page 84). In what ways can these strategies be implemented in your classroom? What benefits will these strategies have on all of your students?
3. Numerous ideas and strategies are listed for how to increase and utilize student interest (pages 74–76); learning preferences (pages 76–77); and assessment techniques (pages 77–80) in the classroom. Select one of the ideas and make a plan to implement the strategy before the next book study session. Keep a journal of what you did, how the students felt about the strategy, and what you will do next time.

Facilitator Note: *You may want to divide the larger group into three smaller groups to accomplish the previous task. So you will have an “interest” group, a “learning preference” group, and an “assessment” group. Each group will report at the next book study session.*

Chapter 5: Developing Student Self-Regulation

To be completed before the Chapter 5 book study session:

- For groups working through the book *sequentially*: Based on task #3 from Chapter 4, group members should prepare to present what action they infused into their classroom and the outcome of that action.
- For groups working through the book *non-sequentially*: List essential learning tools that you think every child needs to be successful. This does not include skills and strategies learned in your classroom. Keep this list handy while reading the chapter.
- Read Chapter 5.

1. Using the “Four Stages of Self-Regulation” (page 101), at what stage do you feel a majority of your students are?
2. What ideas can you think of to move your students to the next levels of the model? Take special note of the “Five Keys for Creating a Student-Centered Classroom” (pages 103–107).
3. Using the “Teacher Checklist for a Student-Centered Classroom” (page 112), honestly rate yourself. Look for areas needing support or improvement. You may also want to give your students the “Student Checklist for a Student-Centered Classroom” (page 111) to assist them in developing more commitment to learning.

Chapter 6:

The Teaching and Learning Continuum: Building Success Through Autonomy

To be completed before the Chapter 6 book study session:

- For groups working through the book *sequentially*: Using the “Teacher Checklist for a Student-Centered Classroom” (page 112), focus your reading of this chapter on where you might need improvements or support.
- For groups working through the book *non-sequentially*: Think about a typical day in your classroom. Consider the amount of time you spend talking and the amount of time students do the talking.
- Read Chapter 6.

1. Review the four frames of the “Teaching and Learning Continuum (TLC)” (pages 122–123). Where do you spend a majority of your class time?
2. Based on your answer in #1, what steps can you take to move up the TLC?
3. What issues need to be considered as you move up the levels of the TLC? Considering those issues, what can you do to ensure your success at the higher levels?

Facilitator Note: *The TLC is not meant to be specifically sequential (moving only in the upward direction). Remember that student learning is cyclical and will require movement around the TLC, based on where learners are within the learning process. In some cases, only the gifted or advanced learners may reach the consultative level.*

Chapter 7:

The Thinking Classroom

To be completed before the Chapter 7 book study session:

- Choose one:
 - Complete a self-assessment of your classroom environment using the “Checklist of Characteristics of a Thinking Classroom” (page 138).
 - Complete a self-assessment of your curriculum using the “Checklist of Characteristics of a Thinking Curriculum” (page 139).
 - Have your students complete a self-assessment using the “Checklist of Characteristics of a Thinking Student” (page 137), and average their scores to find the overall student thinking level in your classroom.
- Read Chapter 7, keeping in mind the data you collected in the assessment you completed.

1. Using the data you collected in the assessment, discuss the general strengths and limitations of the group. Choose one of the following “Methods for Developing Intellectually Disciplined Thinkers” (pages 130–135):

- Method #1: As a group, plan to implement a thinking skills lesson. Use the example from page 131 and the lesson plan format on pages 140–141.
- Method #2–Method #5: Using any of the other four methods to increase the levels of thinking in your classroom, make a plan to implement one of the strategies.

Facilitator Note: Ask participants to be ready to share the outcome of their choice at the next book study session. Have them look for what worked, what didn’t work, and what they will do next time.

Chapter 8:

A Framework for Thinking: Digging Deeper into Bloom's Taxonomy

To be completed before the Chapter 8 book study session:

- Select a unit of study you would like to use to practice enhancing thinking.
- Read Chapter 8.

1. Discuss the chapter and how the Digging Deeper Matrix (DDM) is constructed (page 158). Pay close attention to the descriptors found on page 149. Note how complexity levels are listed across the top of the matrix (the *cognitive process dimension*) and how sophistication/depth levels are listed down the left-hand side of the matrix (the *knowledge dimension*). Also discuss the varied levels of assessment and how they change from the Recall to the Create levels of complexity.
2. Using the unit of study you have chosen, plug activities into the appropriate boxes of the DDM. As a group, brainstorm student activities for any boxes left open.

Facilitator Note: Remind participants to use the examples in the book as well as the descriptors on page 149. Keep in mind that the activities in the boxes of the DDM are meant to be student actions, not necessarily assessments. The best way to assess the effectiveness of the DDM is through the accumulation of activities as a summative assessment. Also, the DDM is not meant to be used with skill development lessons or units, as skill development is only one dimension of the matrix.

Chapter 9: Critical Thinking: Developing Reasoned Thought

Facilitator Note: *The remaining three chapters are highly interactive and will require teachers to practice the strategies and activities. This is why participants need to read the chapters first and use one of the strategies in their classroom before the chapter study session. During the study session, you may want to try one of the activities with the participants to show how it might look in the classroom. Or, prepare the participants for the next study session by using an activity from an upcoming chapter to get them excited about what's to come. Keep the focus on what you expect students to learn from the activities and how they can enrich the classroom experience.*

To be completed before the Chapter 9 book study session:

- Read Chapter 9.
- Choose one of the strategies or graphic organizers from the chapter, and implement it in your classroom. Pay special attention to how students used the material and what the outcomes were.

1. Along with the other participants, share what strategy you used in your classroom and what the outcomes were. Discuss how your students felt about and reacted to the activities. What worked, what didn't work, and how can you improve practice the next time?
2. Choose another strategy from the chapter and make a plan to implement it in your classroom. Be prepared to share the outcome at the next book study session.

Chapter 10: Creative Thinking: Stepping Outside the Box

To be completed before the Chapter 10 book study session:

- Read Chapter 10.
- Select one of the strategies on pages 184–187 to implement in your classroom. Be ready to share what you did and the outcome.

1. Discuss the activity you implemented in your classroom. Share how it went, what worked, what didn't work, and what may need to be changed next time. Be sure to collect the ideas from the other participants.
2. From the list of "Creative Thinking Activities" (pages 187–192), select an activity to try in your classroom. Once you have implemented the activity, inform your group about the outcome: what worked, what didn't work, and what you may do differently next time.

Chapter 11: Problem Finding, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

To be completed before the Chapter 11 book study session:

- Read Chapter 11.
- Select one of the problem-solving techniques in the chapter and implement it before the next book study session. Document how it went. What will you change or keep the same next time?

1. Share your experience with the technique you implemented in your classroom. How might the technique be used in a different grade-level or content area?
2. Using the “What? So What? Now What?” chart (page 209), discuss why critical reasoning, creative thinking, and problem solving are essential for our students’ success in the twenty-first century. Example:

What?	So What?	Now What?
Critical reasoning	Necessary for decision making	I will have all students start a thinking journal using the seven critical questioning strategies (pages 167–169)

Final Book Study Session

To be completed before the final book study session:

- Read a Final Note: Putting It All Together.
- Read the conclusion.

1. Discuss the highlights of the book study. What were the most critical elements you took away from the sessions, and how might they improve your classroom environment and student learning?
2. Looking back at the chart you created in the first session, what ideas did you come away with that address the issues of implementing differentiation and 21st Century Skills in your classroom?

10 Elements of a Differentiated Classroom Survey

Element	Example	1=Seldom 5=Always
Content goals are defined at the beginning of each lesson and reviewed at the end of each lesson.	Students will <i>know</i> the facts; students will be able to <i>do</i> strategies/skills; students will <i>understand</i> the concepts/principles/theories.	1 2 3 4 5
Learning differences are acknowledged throughout instruction.	Instruction, activities, and assessments are designed to integrate student interests, learning preferences, and readiness levels.	1 2 3 4 5
The three types of assessments are employed.	Teachers regularly use preassessment, ongoing formative assessment, and summative assessment.	1 2 3 4 5
Curriculum and instruction fosters brain-compatible learning .	Teachers create a safe and welcoming learning environment; provide stimulation of all five senses; offer opportunities for physical action; connect learners' prior experiences; and provide accurate, efficient, relevant, and timely feedback.	1 2 3 4 5
The classroom environment respects active learning .	Students are routinely involved in active meaningful learning experiences that require them to collaborate and communicate with others.	1 2 3 4 5
Learners develop 21st Century Skills .	Teachers infuse higher-order thinking, creative thinking, critical reasoning, and self-regulation strategies, and students are required to employ these strategies during every lesson.	1 2 3 4 5
Flexible grouping is used to achieve optimal learning.	Students are regularly grouped and regrouped based on interests, learning preferences, and/or readiness, and curriculum and instruction are differentiated to meet the needs of the grouping type.	1 2 3 4 5
Tiered assignments and activities respond to learning needs and differences.	Teacher uses the strategy of varied lesson activities and assignments that are respectful, meaningful, and relevant to each learner.	1 2 3 4 5
The learning environment is interesting, enjoyable, challenging, and choice-filled for all students.	Students are genuinely interested in the learning activities, enjoy the classroom, feel sufficiently challenged by the content, and have choices in how/what/where/when they learn.	1 2 3 4 5
Students develop learning autonomy .	Teachers guide students toward being independent and intrinsically motivated to learn.	1 2 3 4 5



About the Author

Dr. Richard M. Cash is an award-winning author and educator who has worked in the field of education for over 25 years. His range of experience includes teaching, curriculum coordination, and program administration. Currently, he is an internationally recognized education consultant, and his work has taken him throughout the United States, Canada, the Czech Republic, China, England, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Poland, Qatar, Spain, South Korea, and Turkey.

Richard received his doctorate in educational leadership and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He has a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Minnesota and a bachelor's degree in theater from the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire. For over 10 years, he codirected a children's theater company in Minnesota and coauthored four award-winning children's plays. In 2011, Richard was the recipient of the National Association for Gifted Children's Early Leader Award, recognizing his leadership in programming for gifted children. In 2016, he was named a "Friend of the Gifted" by the Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented.

Richard's areas of expertise are educational programming, rigorous and challenging curriculum design, differentiated instruction, 21st Century Skills, brain-compatible classrooms, gifted and talented education, and self-regulated learning. His book *Differentiation for Gifted Learners: Going Beyond the Basics* (coauthored with Diane Heacox) won the Legacy Book Award for Educators. His book *Self-Regulation in the Classroom: Helping Students Learn How to Learn* was published in 2016. Richard lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His website can be found at www.nrichconsulting.com.

Richard offers on-site professional development on differentiated instruction, thinking skills, brain-compatible learning, creativity, and gifted education, among other topics. He provides one-on-one consulting as well as group workshops. To learn more, visit www.nrichconsulting.com or email speakers@freespirit.com.

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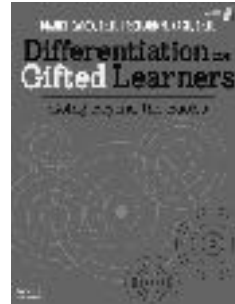


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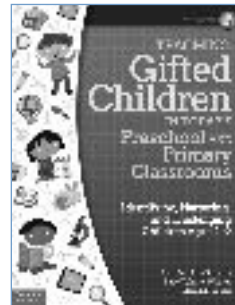


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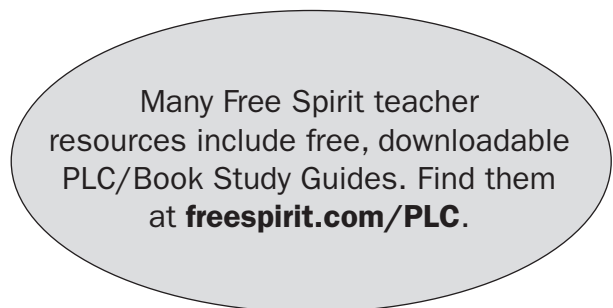
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