

Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe



Connecting Content and Kids

# **Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids**

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Connecting content and kids in meaningful ways is what teachers strive to do every day. In tandem, UbD and DI help educators meet that goal by providing structures, tools, and guidance for developing curriculum and instruction that bring to students the best of what we know about effective teaching and learning.

## **Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids Details**

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# **From Reader Review Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids for online ebook**

## **Ashley Adams says**

An absolutely invaluable reference for teachers. Using the DI and UbD frameworks, Tomlinson offers lesson plan formats that will ensure lessons are goal-driven and results-based. Ok, that sounds awful. There are LOTS of effective teaching methods. When facing several hundred expectant faces, though, this method will streamline the lesson plan process and help keep you from losing your mind.

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## **TJW says**

This text is effective in its emphasis on essential questions in teaching, using classroom elements flexibly as tools for instruction, providing scenarios for deeper understanding of the application of principles, and common sense strategies with research support.

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## **Sarah Clark says**

Good ideas but such a drag to read. Felt like work more than inspiring.

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## **Cynthia says**

This book clearly describes backwards planning in teaching, planning with the end in mind. It links that to differentiated instruction. If you are not familiar with these concepts in teaching, this is a must-read. If you have been working with this already then it is a nice review. I didn't find a lot of brand-new insights in the book, rather the book gives some practical ways for actually implementing these important concepts. Not an easy task. You'll get as much out of the book as you're willing to actually put into practice.

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## **Biogeek says**

The concepts and ideas here are fairly clear...although if you are looking for writing based on recent evidence, you may need to find another book (in fact, any references to peer reviewed evidence is slim here). Some specifics, but not the kind that would help secondary school teachers beyond making general changes. As always, middle school examples are common...and it is presumed that any reasonably good teacher will be able to generalize these to their classroom. Some of the scenarios are helpful in imagining how the ideas would play out in class, but these are generally short and under-developed. For example, in lines like "Mr. Connelly formalizes the procedures, reviews them with students prior to implementing them, and asks students to reflect with him on how the procedures worked to help them work effectively and efficiently", the

authors remind teachers to have students reflect on the procedures, but WHAT does THAT actually look like in different classes? What do teachers ask when having students reflect (surely not "Hey class...reflect on these procedures") and what are the students actually DOING ...are they speaking in pairs, writing quietly? I guess I am always looking for more specifics than these books offer, and of course that does not take away from all the great things this book does provide.

Tomlinson and Co do better than most writers in not pointing fingers or making the average teacher feel like they are massive failures on a daily scale. However, I think using words like "indefensible" is one of the reasons so many of my younger colleagues seem so anxious every day.

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### **Meg Winston says**

I read this for a class on literacy in special education over the summer. I've read other books on differentiation by Tomlinson as well as Understanding by Design. This book was a quick read and very practical. I find that often when reading about differentiation, I walk away still trying to figure out how to implement it. This is clear in terms of implementation and includes tools you can photocopy.

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### **Heather says**

An accessible text for educators that provides a good overview of the tenets of backwards design and differentiated instruction. Read it as a textbook for a differentiated instruction class and appreciated the included scenarios of the theories in practice.

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### **M S says**

A good book for teachers looking for research that proves that differentiated instruction actually does work. I was very much a skeptic regarding differentiated instruction until I used this book in a graduate class; like most teachers, I had attended at least a dozen workshops and in-service sessions on differentiated instruction. Each workshop and in-service seemed less like my students the longer I attended them. This book allowed me to choose the pieces that I thought we could do in my classroom and to move at a good pace for making changes and restructuring to allow the differentiation to happen.

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### **Isaac Craft says**

I found this book to be helpful, but about 100 pages longer than it needed to be. Much of what was said was repeated or rephrased from another part of the book, and the examples they gave of classroom implementation assumed adequate time and resources to prepare for a highly diverse classroom, which is often just flat not the case. To that end I found the authors to be too idealistic at times. However, I have been able to use some of the ideas they outlined in my classes.

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## **Veronica says**

Although the ideas in this book are great, and the overall lesson/idea of the book is smart and important, the actual writing of the text failed to entice. The writing is to the point and mostly composed of lists. I suppose this could be a nice "intro" text to many disciplines, but if you have read many books on writing lessons and kinds of instructions, then this book is dry. In truth, the entire text seems to repeat itself every three chapters. It is already a short text, but it could have been 40 pages long and would have received 4 stars from me. Lastly, the book tries to be so generic for all disciplines that it seems to lack personality. I prefer reading discipline specific texts for teaching.

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## **Alex Templeton says**

This book gives a framework for how to create lessons that ensure quality, differentiated learning in the classroom, using two educational frameworks: differentiated instruction and understanding by design. It is dry as hell, and has a ton of information to sort through, but I'm not sorry I was assigned to read it.

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## **Barbara says**

This instructional book was very helpful and provided in depth information.

Understanding by Design focuses on: what we teach; and what assessment evidence do we need to collect. Differentiated instruction focuses on: who we teach, where we teach, and how we teach. Both provide structure, tools, and guidance for developing curriculum and instruction.

To teach responsively and attending to: teacher-student relationships, learning environment builds a context for learning, student backgrounds and needs connect learners to content, student readiness allows for academic growth, student interest enlists student motivation, and student learning profiles enables efficiency of learning.

As a teacher, there are several approaches to responsive teaching:

1. Find ways to get to know students regularly
2. Incorporate small-group teachings into daily/weekly teaching
3. Teach to high end to challenge students
4. Offer more ways to explore and express learning
5. Regularly use informal assessments to monitor student understanding
6. Teach in a multiple of ways: part to whole; whole to part; model; demonstrate; use varied approaches
7. Use basic reading strategies: read-aloud; close reads)
8. Allow for working alone or with peers
9. use rubric that coach for quality
10. Cultivate a taste for diversity

LEARNING HAPPENS WITHIN THE STUDENT NOT TO THE STUDENT.

Grading:

1. Grades should be based on clearly specific learning goals and performance standards

2. Evidence should be valid, clear and measure of what a student can do.
3. Based on established criteria
4. Not everything should be included in grades like pre-assessments (should never be added); formative assessment (rarely should be factored into the final grade for the unit/quarter). Formative assessments must provide opportunities to practice, learn from mistakes, and revise their work to show their understanding. Grades should be largely from summarize results.
5. Avoid grading based on averages
6. Focus on achievement and report other factors separately.

STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THEIR WORK is a form of assessment.

This instructional book was very informative and affirming of what I currently do within the classroom. A good reference for any teacher's library.

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### **Jamie says**

There is nothing revolutionary in this book. It is a basic outline of two common pieces of good instructional planning; planning backward (which the authors call Understanding by Design) and differentiated instruction.

And while these are great strategies for planning instruction, and the research behind them is solid, the direction in which these authors take them is, unfortunately for students, generally incompatible with the current state of public education. I hope that someday our schools will revise grading policies and grant teaching time for units of study that focus on big ideas, and perhaps in some districts that exists. But until then the ideas in this book are only applicable if 1) you are in a position in a school district to affect real change or 2) you are a teacher in a school/district that gives you autonomy to design instruction in your classroom.

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### **Matt says**

An essential resource for preparing for instruction in your classroom or school. McTighe and Tomlinson meld these two frameworks with clarity and brevity. Differentiation is a challenging concept to embed in one's instruction. Using the UbD materials allows the educator to work smartly and plan for all learners in a classroom, must just the middle of the road. I would recommend purchasing the Understanding by Design Professional Handbook in addition to this text, as it references materials in the handbook frequently.

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### **Ellen Deckinga says**

So many things in here I am finding to be accurate and applicable in the classroom.

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