

Learning Differences I: Understanding Learning Differences

Course Description

In this course you will build and deepen your understanding of learning differences. In the process, you will consider how to take a problem-solving approach with your students and reflect on how to best support the diverse learning needs of all of your students. You'll learn about the "myth of average" and get a sense of your own learning strengths and challenges. You will then get a chance to experience a learning differences simulation, and then use your insights from these activities to explore resources that are most relevant to your learning needs and interests. You will then have an opportunity to explore some technology tools that support different learning needs, as well as learn how you might use content from this course in your own professional learning communities. Finally, you will have a chance to demonstrate your knowledge by earning a micro-credential for graduate credit.

Course Objectives:

- Understand how learning differences will be approached in this course and that it is distinct from "learning disabilities"
- Understand the importance of a problem-solving approach when designing and implementing instruction based your learners' profiles.
- Develop skills, strategies, and resources as they relate to supporting the learning differences you encounter in all of your students.
- Cultivate mindsets and beliefs related to understanding your students' learning differences and leveraging a strengths-based approach.
- Apply a student-centered, data-driven approach for identifying learning differences in all students.
- Develop a student-centered, data-driven plan to support one of your students and submit the Build a Plan micro-credential.

Intended Audience:

This course is written for K-12 teachers, librarians, edtech coaches and curriculum developers who wish to integrate learning differences into their classrooms. Participants both with and without prerequisite knowledge or skill in learning differences will be able to achieve success in this course.

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of completing this course, you will achieve the following outcomes:

- Understand the concept of learning differences, how they are different from “learning disabilities,” how they appear in your learners, and the ways in which pedagogical strategies support or hinder specific learning differences.
- Implement strategies that support specific learning differences for each of your learners, moving toward more personalized learning for all students
- Foster student agency in your classroom
- Build and enact a plan to leverage strengths to support individual students

ISTE Standards Alignment

The following ISTE Standards for Educators will be addressed in this course:

- *Primary:*
 - **1c.** Stay current with research that supports improved student learning outcomes, including findings from the learning sciences.
 - **5a.** Use technology to create, adapt and personalize learning experiences that foster independent learning and accommodate learner differences and needs.
 - **6a.** Foster a culture where students take ownership of their learning goals and outcomes in both independent and group settings.
- *Secondary:*
 - **1b.** Pursue professional interests by creating and actively participating in local and global learning networks.
 - **5c.** Explore and apply instructional design principles to create innovative digital learning environments that engage and support learning.

Course Completion Criteria

During this course you will have the opportunity to do the following activities:

- ✓ Watch “The Myth of Average” and reflect upon how learning differences will be approached in this course and in your setting.

- ✓ Complete a Learner Profile and experience learning challenges for yourself.
- ✓ Review key resources related to the science and best practices of addressing learning differences.
- ✓ Participate in discussions to share your thoughts and practices related to what you have learned about learning differences.
- ✓ Build up your toolbox by checking out some technology tools that can support your students
- ✓ Take a PLC guide or two back to your local professional learning communities
- ✓ Demonstrate your understanding of learning differences by earning a micro-credential for graduate credit

Assignments and Assessments

Successful completion of this course will require approximately 15 hours of coursework including (*Note: You must complete and successfully earn a micro-credential to receive graduate credit*):

- Engage in all discussion forums in a substantive manner
- Respond to polls
- Complete and successfully earn a micro-credential

Course Outline

Module Topics & Descriptions
<p>What are Learning Differences? This section provides an overview of Learning Differences and an opportunity to dig into some foundational resources.</p>
<p>Experience for Yourself This section provides an opportunity to build your own learner profile and see how your students experience learning challenges.</p>
<p>Supporting Your Students' Learning Differences This section provides actionable strategies to leverage your students' strengths to support their learning challenges.</p>
<p>Technology Tools to Support All Learners This section provides a curated list of technology tools to help support your students</p>

Professional Learning Community Guides

This section provides activities from the course that you can use locally in your PLCs.

Demonstrate What You've Learned

This section provides an opportunity to earn a micro-credential for graduate credit by demonstrating what you've learned from the course.

