Annotated Bibliography

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Annotated Bibliography—6050—Assignment 3


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The researchers of this article looked at whether using learning styles to determine differentiation is a better option than using academic ability. The participants in the study were 33 A-level psychology students at Further Education College in northwest England. Students consented to participate, though five students were ultimately dropped from the study due to excessive absences from class. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 19, with 12 males and 21 females. A “2x2 mixed design” (71) was used to measure the effects on test scores. Pretests, lesson activities, and questionnaires were given to the participants in order to gather data. The researchers concluded “that as long as teachers plan good quality, varied lessons with ways for all students to access the information, students can achieve without one method being superior to another” (75). The researchers noted that learning styles are only one part of effective teaching and that teachers need to employ a varying means of teaching strategies.

This article was helpful in the fact that it pointed out that using just one strategy may not be the best route to take when teaching. This is applicable because it reminds me, as a teacher, that having one teaching strategy may not be the best way to be an effective teacher. However, it was incredibly relevant because it reminded me that every student comes to the classroom with a learning style. Tapping into these learning styles through various projects may be another effective way to make sure learning occurs.

The author of this article states that differentiation is not a new concept and that teachers who differentiate believe that “every child is unique, with differing learning styles and preferences” (50). According to the author, there are several important things to consider when incorporating differentiation into the classroom. The first thing to consider is the content of a lesson. A teacher may have to adapt what they teach in order to ensure that students learn the content. Next, a teacher differentiates the process of a lesson. This refers to how a student comes to understand and assimilate facts, concepts, and the skills of a lesson. It is noted that this part of the lesson has usually been a constant, with each student completing the same type of practice (50). However, with differentiation, a teacher would fit the practice to each student’s individual skill. Lastly, differentiation occurs during the assessment phase of a lesson. A teacher doesn’t just have to assess their students’ learning with a test. Student learning can be assessed by projects. These projects can be teacher-directed, or student suggested. Giving students a choice in their assessments may lead to motivation and enthusiasm for the topic being taught. The author uses a fictional teacher, Mr. Wright, to show how differentiation can take place. This was an easy to follow narrative on a teacher struggling to differentiate. The author closes the article by stating that “in a classroom with differentiation, all students assume responsibility for their learning, through the decisions they make in their selections of activities and products, in their abilities to self-assess their work, and by the manner in which their teachers are flexible and creative in responding to their unique and individual learner characteristics” (52).
This article is relevant in that it goes over the steps of differentiation. It also shows how a teacher can differentiate, even if he or she is not confident in the strategy yet. It is applicable in that it shows how one can effectively differentiate.

The authors of this article begin the article by mentioning that the No Child Left Behind Act has created this high stakes game for school systems to make sure their students succeed on state achievement tests. The authors set out to summarize a unique approach to narrowing the achievement gap through a blended method using differentiated curriculum and mixing it with enrichment teaching and learning. This process took eight years of work within Central Elementary School. Central Elementary School is described as a “high performing suburban district bordering a large city” (505). It is important to note, though, that CES was considered a failing school, with student performance being in the 30th percentile in reading, writing, and math on the state and district tests. The staff was committed to improving these scores and were ready for a school improvement plan. After a year-long review of the school and determining its strengths and weaknesses, four essential questions were established. Once these questions were in place, a group of “teachers, school staff, parents, and members of the community worked together to create a multiyear plan for school improvement” (507). This team created objectives to guide the school during its improvement journey. Four of these objectives that used enrichment and differentiation strategies are “1) the creation of a Schoolwide Enrichment Team that includes both parents and teachers to provide experiences that enrich and enhance student learning, 2) the training of all staff members in the differentiation of daily lessons using the Differentiated Lesson Planning Matrix, 3) the development of differentiated, interdisciplinary units of study for the Global Studies curriculum, and 4) the writing of process lessons linked to standards, district objectives, and the specific learning needs of students” (508-509). This process also included the development of after-school classes as well. The classes were based not
only on academic need, but also on student interests. These classes were offered three times a year, each being eight-weeks long. On top of it all, a multiyear staff development program was set-up so that teachers would continually have support throughout the improvement process. Ultimately, this school made improvements during this eight-year journey. Many gaps were narrowed and the students had a more positive attitude about school, increased their learning, and improved their achievement on the state and district tests.

This article was unique in the fact that it followed a school on an eight year odyssey for improvement. I feel that it is very applicable to my research because the school showed marked improvement by the end of this article’s study. I think it is very important to note that it took this particular school eight-years to implement, and therefore it is another reminder that differentiation is not something that can be done overnight and be a complete success. Differentiation is something to look into and implement over a span of years in order for it to be effective.

The author of this article sits down with Carol Tomlinson, one of the leading researchers (if not the leading researcher) on differentiation instruction. Tomlinson says that differentiation really means “trying to make sure that teaching and learning work for the full range of students” (1). Tomlinson says that through the years she has stolen from many different discipline areas and then has tried to synthesize those finds down from many specialties into one specialty. She mentions that she has looked at special education and gifted education, as well as the fields of literacy and the regular classroom in order to create an effective way to teach all students. Tomlinson states that the strongest argument for differentiation is the everyday classroom where the diversity of the students is clearly evident. Tomlinson notes that though “differentiation is multifaceted, it can be boiled down to three student needs: student readiness, student interest, and student learning profile” (2). It is important to point out that Tomlinson thinks that differentiation is important due to the standardization of testing. Teachers can help their students all learn the same thing by differentiating. The major road block for differentiation to become more mainstreamed is the fact that it is not implemented properly. Educators must first wholly change how they approach education. By simply adding a few differentiation approaches, it won’t be as effective as it would if it was fully and wholly embraced. Teachers must get used to giving their students some freedom in their learning; not be “frontal teachers” all the time (4).

While this article isn’t a research article per se, I chose it because throughout my research, Carol Tomlinson has been cited as the guru of differentiation. When I stumbled upon this interview, I thought it would be very fitting to hear from the woman who all of the other authors found in this annotated bibliography cite and reference. I appreciated a more up-to-date
article on differentiated instruction involving Carol Tomlinson because the ones I was finding were 10 or more years older. I did find that this article was relevant to my research because it gave me deeper understanding into the approach—mainly through Tomlinson’s eyes.

The author of this article compared direct instruction with differentiation instruction. Using the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) in Ohio as her participant, the author set out to discover what method of teaching the teachers in the CMSD district preferred when using internet-based technology in the classroom; direct instruction or differentiated instruction. The teachers used Compass Learning as their teaching tool to help improve reading in the district. This computer software uses “differentiated instruction with computer-assisted instruction and cooperative learning” (37). Because Compass Learning is differentiated based, the author chose to focus on this as her study. However, this article doesn’t read like a true study. The author uses past research and builds on that to create a teacher questionnaire that she had teachers who attended a professional development on using Compass Learning complete. The author concluded that the teachers who use Compass Learning as a differentiation tool in their classroom are pleased and do see positive results.

While this article and its contents may not be applicable to me in my classroom (as the program is more for middle school students), it did reiterate that differentiating is indeed a positive and effective method of teaching. I feel confidence in my research that differentiation and all its different models and strategies are effective and can bring a positive approach to classroom learning.

This article focuses in on looking at making sure that teachers don’t just differentiate, but they differentiate with a purpose. Instructional clarity should be the first step in creating differentiated lessons. In order to have instructional clarity, the teacher needs to make sure his or her lessons are aligned to his or her state standards. These learning targets are essential and all lessons should be centered around its learning target (67). One way of making sure that a teacher is teaching to his or her state standards is to create a learning chart with the learning targets clearly listed. This not only helps the teacher stay on track, but the teacher can also copy the charts for students so they know what is expected of them as well. If a student is tested on a specific learning target and they master that topic, they can check off that target. This can give the student a sense of responsibility for their learning and it can also turn in to a motivational tool. By having these essential learning targets, the teacher can then create differentiated lessons for the students in the classroom. As the author states, “Differentiating instruction based on learning targets enables teachers to maintain rigorous learning for all students” (70).

This article is applicable because it looks at how one can make differentiated instruction not only obtainable, but it also explains how to go about making differentiated lessons more effective. By making sure that each lesson is aligned with the state standards, a teacher can be confident that his or her students are learning what they need to be learning. This is, after all, one of the most important parts of being an educator.

The author of this article takes a look at differentiation and how the self-advocacy of a student can help him or her take responsibility for their learning. The author states that “Although it is important for teachers to believe in student choice and to create varied learning opportunities, it is just as important for students to understand their specific personal educational needs, and to develop the skill to advocate for themselves” (223). There are four key elements when it comes to self-advocacy. Making sure that these four key elements are in place is essential in making self-advocacy work for the students. These four elements are: “1) understanding one’s rights and responsibilities, 2) developing one’s learner profile by assessing abilities and interests, strengths and weaknesses, learning styles, and habits, 3) becoming aware of available options and opportunities, and 4) connecting with advocates who can help accomplish what needs to be done” (224). The author surveyed 23 seventh grade accelerated students at the beginning of the school year. The students were surveyed on their knowledge, understanding, and comfort level with the four key elements of self-advocacy. Throughout the school year, the participants took part in five seminar classes to familiarize them with self-advocacy. The seminars last for one class period and were taught by the gifted education coordinator. At the end of the year, it was found that the 23 participants were more knowledgeable, as well as more comfortable with the concept of self-advocacy. It is important to note, however, that the author felt that this study was limited due to the fact that all 23 participants were from the same school.

This article is applicable in that it combines the importance of self-advocacy and differentiation in the classroom. However, as this article focused mainly on self-advocacy, it is
not as relevant to my research as some of the other articles are. I am intrigued by the idea of self-advocacy, though, and it may be something that I look into in the future.

The authors of this article state that “preparing teachers to effectively teach an increased number of students with challenging and diverse educational needs requires that teacher preparation programs refine coursework and field experiences” (191). They set out to discover if using differentiation models would indeed improve teacher efficacy in a beginning special education teacher. The participant was a beginning special education teacher completing an online initial certification MAT degree program. She had been hired on to teach fulltime as a classroom teacher in an inclusion class while she was completing her special education certification. Over a five-week period, the participant implemented a three step phase. She began the data collection phase by completing a self-assessment on her current practice method. The second phase of the study occurred when the teacher used collected data to reflect on her strengths and weaknesses as she implemented new teaching strategies. Phase three occurred when the teacher had pinpointed a specific strategy that she felt comfortable with. She then used that strategy for a week. At the close of the five-weeks, the participant collected data on her students and then reflected on what worked and what didn’t work. The authors concluded by stating that while the initial research is very promising, they would need to do a larger study (with a larger teacher population) to fully explore this topic.

It was noted that Tomlinson “recognized that for teachers to want to continue to use differentiated instruction practices, it was necessary for them to experience success quickly” (196). I agree with that statement whole-heartedly. I feel that this article was applicable
because it reinforces that differentiated instruction can be very successful and effective when done properly and with purpose.

The authors of this article cited the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act as the basis for looking into the model of RTI (Response to Intervention) as a method of differentiated instruction. They state that “it is expected that differentiated instruction will reduce the overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education placements or students experiencing difficulties because of inadequate instruction instead of a learning disability” (84). The authors examined the current RTI practices of urban and suburban teachers in Wisconsin and Tennessee. Their study suggests that using tried and true methods of RTI can mediate reading problems. The authors suggested that a key to successful RTI is found in high-quality professional development.

This article reinforced what I thought about differentiated instruction. It can be done effectively and have positive impacts when used properly, but staff development is needed in order to ensure the quality of the differentiated instruction. Having this research in my back pocket, I feel more confident in the knowledge that differentiated instruction is a positive and effective teaching strategy when teachers are armed with the proper training.

The researchers of this article wanted to see how the strategy of differentiation could be applied to high-achieving first graders within the writing setting. The participants of this study were five African American first graders, one of which was male. They were chosen for this study because they were the only students in their first grade class who scored at the second grade level on their schools benchmark test. Usually, students who perform one grade level ahead of their peers were placed in a classroom appropriate to their benchmark grade level, however a scheduling conflict prevented these students from being able to attend the appropriate class. Therefore, the principal had the teacher-researcher provide 20 minutes of daily language arts enrichment. The researchers listed each one of the participants and their demographics. The study was conducted in an urban elementary school in a Midwestern metropolitan school district which housed grades K-5. The students started out with a mini-lesson to introduce the concept. Activities were differentiated based on student abilities and levels. The researchers note that the students responded positively when strategies were differentiated. They noted that “this study demonstrated that students can more actively participate in their own education by self-monitoring their writing using curriculum-based measures” (242). The authors do mention that though further research on this subject matter is needed, it does have a promising beginning.

This article is relevant in that the researchers incorporated differentiation in their study. It applied because the students who were involved in the study improved by using differentiation. It was a useful and relevant article.

This brief chapter gives the readers an introduction to differentiated instruction, as well as several strategies that one can immediately put into use in their classroom. The authors make sure to point out that students are not the same, therefore we shouldn’t expect students to learn in the same manners. They state that learning needs to be adjusted to the learner. This would include “what they know already, can do, like, are like, need, or prefer” (2). By seeing differentiation as a philosophy to teach by, educators will better be able to reach all their students, not just a certain segment. The authors point out that differentiation is a conscious effort on the part of the educator to analyze his or her classroom and students daily in order to gauge the appropriate differentiated strategies to put into use. The authors give teachers a manageable way to go about looking at differentiation as an effective tool to use in the classroom. It is mentioned that content, assessment tools, performance tasks, and instructional strategies all need to be differentiated in order to be successful while using this strategy. The authors also point out that differentiation is a strategy that can still be effective in the constantly changing classroom; that differentiation, in essence, is not just a fad, but a usable and reusable model of teaching.

At the end of the chapter, the authors give a step-by-step planning guide for creating a differentiated instruction. This is helpful if one is a novice and needs some guidance at first. The authors also provide a basic outline of a lesson plan with many examples and ideas for how to teach a lesson, as well as ideas on how to assess. This is extremely applicable to my topic, as it provides examples and strategies to use in differentiated instruction.

The author of the article introduces differentiated instruction by stating that “Differentiated instruction does not change WHAT is taught; it changes HOW it is taught” (1). Three areas that the author points out that a teacher should focus in on is the pace of the learners, the depth and understanding of the learners, and the interests of the learners. The author makes it clear that the teacher still must have a firm grasp on his or her standards, making sure that he or she has very firm teaching objectives to use. It is also pointed out that differentiation is not a single strategy, but a “methodology that blends a variety of strategies” (1). Once a teacher identifies the student needs, he or she can then look at differentiating the content, the process, and/or the product. It is important to note that the teacher should have working knowledge on his or her students’ prior knowledge in order to effectively differentiate. Lastly, the author gives some strategies for differentiated instruction. These include tiered reading assignments, compacting, centers or group work, learning contracts, and independent study projects, just to name a few. The author concludes her article by stating that differentiated instruction is an effective model that provides a way to meet all student needs.

This article was helpful because it gave several strategies and examples of that strategy. These examples were strategies that could be immediately applied to the classroom. In order to become a better teacher of differentiated instruction, having strategies already tried out is extremely helpful. These strategies help create a model for effective differentiated instruction.

The author of this article looks at how differentiated instruction recognizes that students have different backgrounds of knowledge, readiness, language, interests, and responses to education (2). The basis behind differentiated instruction is to maximize classroom success by meeting each student where he or she is cognitively at that moment. The author states that there are several key elements that guide and direct differentiated instruction. These are content, process, products, and guidelines (3-4). If an educator looks at these key elements as steps, than he or she will be able to effectively implement differentiated instruction in his or her classroom. The author ends her article by briefly outlining evidence for effectiveness as well as the background of differentiation. The author also provides some links for the reader to use to continue on with his or her study of differentiation instruction.

This article is a good starting off basis for anyone who is thinking about beginning to add differentiation to their classroom. The key elements are outlined and easy to read. If an educator feels overwhelmed by differentiation, then this article should help him or her feel better. By starting slowing and following the key elements (or steps), then slowly adding differentiation to the classroom doesn’t have to be a daunting task. This article is relevant because it gave me some good starting off points when it comes to adding more differentiation to my classroom.

Although the author of this article did not do a research study herself, she did compile the conclusions of other studies on differentiated instruction to share. The author states that there is enough solid research that more than validates the use of differentiated instruction. The author points out that differentiated instruction practices include: 1) effective classroom management; 2) promoting student engagement and motivation; 3) assessing student readiness; 4) responding to learning styles; 5) grouping students for instructions; and 6) teaching to the students zone of proximal development (79). Citing a three-year study conducted in Alberta, Canada, the author states that the researchers found that the use of differentiated instruction consistently had effective results. The author continues on by citing a 2004 Lawrence-Brown study that concluded that differentiated instruction can enable students with differing ranges of abilities to learn more effectively. Adding manipulatives, visual aids, charts, videos, audio, and explicit expectations can increase learning (80). In order to effectively differentiate, a teacher must alter one or more of the following: the content, the process, and/or the product. However, the researcher notes that a teacher should not just jump into differentiation. The teacher should get a solid understanding of differentiated instruction and then gradually introduce the model into his or her classroom.

This article was helpful in that it continues to carry on the overall theme that differentiation is indeed an effective strategy to use in the classroom. The author based her findings on solid research and then relayed that information in a very well-thought out and prepared manner. This is relevant to me because it reinforces the fact that when used properly, differentiation is very effective.

The authors of this article hope to give insight on how to achieve success in the classroom through the use of differentiated instruction. This article goes along with several others in this annotated bibliography. The authors feel that following the guidelines of content, process, and products, an educator can be very successful with differentiated instruction (108). However, these authors go a step further by pointing out several critical elements of differentiated instruction. The authors feel that elements of choice, flexibility, on-going assessment, and creativity can result in whether differentiated instruction is completely successful, or just marginally successful (109). By varying the learning and the assessments, an educator can meet the needs of all his or her students. This may increase student motivation, in turn increasing their success as learners. The authors list several steps in getting started and even provide a sample lesson plan to help educators make planning easier. The authors make it clear that the success of differentiation in the classroom lies with the teacher (112). If implemented properly, differentiated instruction should be a successful strategy to employ in the classroom.

This article was relevant because it not only concurs with other articles in this annotated bibliography, but it also gives pretty simple steps and plans for an educator to follow. The lesson plan was very helpful because it provided a concrete layout for how to plan and implement differentiated instruction within the classroom. This lesson plan also gives ideas on how to assess these skills, which I found to be very applicable to my classroom.

The researcher of this article looked at how deferential differentiation affected the classroom. The researcher looked at a total of 646 students, ranging from grades three to eight. Two schools were used; one suburban American school and the other a suburban Canadian school. Out of the 646 students, 332 were male and 416 of the participants were already recognized as being gifted and were involved in programs for the gifted (SIG). The researcher had the students complete the Possibilities for Learning survey, and from this survey a basis was formed in which to garner information from this study (284). The Possibilities for Learning survey was given by the participants’ teachers, taking approximately 40-90 minutes of class time to complete. The researcher of this article discovered there things: “a) students preferred some forms of differentiation over others, b) a larger number of the practices recommended for SIG were enormously popular with participants in both groups, and c) no single item or form of differentiation was unanimously adored, although self-pacing, choice of topic and choice of group workmates came very close” (286). Both groups did not like feeling pressure to catch up, working with groups mates who had different abilities than they did (worked faster or slower), sitting alone, being assigned their group mates, or sharing their work with older students (286). Ultimately, the study showed that whether a student is in a gifted program or in the regular classroom, students appreciate differentiated instruction.

I chose this article because I was interested in seeing if there were possible differences between using differentiated instruction with the gifted versus using it in the regular classroom setting. I was pleasantly surprised to find that this study proved just that—it doesn’t matter what a student’s ability is; he or she appreciates differentiated instruction in similar ways. This is very
relevant to my classroom and to my research because it proves that differentiation is effective and it is an important model to learn more about.

The authors of this article look at how the teacher librarian can play a role in aiding in differentiation by putting a digital spin on it. The authors present the book *Jewel Fish of Karnack* by Graeme Baseas as an example for how to use the digital age to introduce concepts in not only English, but history as well (61). The authors immediately suggest using a webquest to introduce the topics. The authors give a plethora of examples of websites to begin a webquest, or at least a good place for teachers to start. The authors then introduce six types of graphics a teacher could use in differentiation because “visual elements can provide a critical context for understanding” (62). It is suggested that as students use graphics in learning, a teacher can take it a step further and involve students in analyzing and evaluating the graphic. The six graphics that the authors introduce are data sets, illustrations, infographics, maps, organizers, and photos (64). The authors close the article by stating that the classroom teacher and the librarian can form a great partnership in providing graphics for very text-heavy lessons.

This article excited me because I firmly believe in using graphics in each and every lesson. I feel that students often learn better when there is a visual connection, not just a verbal one. This article is so very applicable and relevant for me. Even though I already utilize graphics in my lessons, the plethora of websites and new ideas was just amazing. Though it wasn’t a long article, it was a great find.

The author of this article gives some realistic examples of how to differentiate for students. Stating that every teacher has differentiated their instruction at some point in their teaching career (162), the author feels that differentiation doesn’t have to be some hard to follow model. She starts out by stating that the core of differentiation falls on three things: content, process, and product. Explaining that content is what we teach, an educator can still use the same state standard(s), but through the activities we assign students, we can differentiate for each level we encounter, which leads us to the next step, the process. (162). The process is defined as how we teach and how students learn. Teachers may also need to adjust teaching style when it comes to students, not just what they assign. Lastly, teachers can differentiate with the product. The product is how students show what they learn. The product doesn’t always have to be a test. A product can also come in projects which give way to student choice (162).

The author goes into greater detail over assessment, saying it is “a tool more than a test” (162). A teacher can find out a great deal about his or her students by giving a pre-assessment. This will give the teacher a better understanding what the students come to the classroom knowing. From this pre-assessment, the teacher can build the lessons—reviewing some items and going into detail over others. Throughout the unit, formative assessments can be given to check for understanding. These assessments can be quizzes, worksheets, and class participation (163). Lastly, the summative assessment should be given at the end of the year (or semester). These usually fall under the category of state tests.

The author then talks about student groups, and tiered lessons. Stating that students can be grouped by their needs, by their learning styles, by their interests, or heterogeneously, the
author makes sure to point out that the teacher should decide which type of grouping is best for that specific learning objective (163). Tiering lessons can be done easily. Using the same state standards, a teacher can give each student different levels of worksheets with varying difficulty. The same could be done for reading assignments (164).

The author does a very good job at making sure the reader feels that differentiation doesn’t have to be a monumental task. She can some very easy to follow ideas on differentiating lessons. These can easily be used in my classroom—making this article applicable and relevant.
The authors of this article state that one of their purposes was to “determine whether differentiated curriculum enhancements relevant to the study of scientific methods could be developed for eighth grade inclusive science classes” (132). They selected 13 eighth-grade science classes and then randomly assigned them to either the experimental group or the control group. The lead teacher taught at least one experimental group and one control group. In total, there were 213 students in this study. Forty-four students were classified with a disability and 35 students were English language learners. Both groups used the same materials (textbook and other materials). This is where the similarities ended. The control group learning consisted of “teacher lecture, class notes, laboratory-like class activities, and supplementary textbook materials” (133). The experimental group had experimental materials created for them. These materials were “curriculum enhancements that taught the Scientific Investigation units of instruction, covering charts and graphs, measurement, independent and dependent variables, and qualitative and quantitative research methods” (133). This experiment was conducted over a 12-week period of time. The authors state that their investigation showed that using differentiated learning activities is effective. Their study showed that the students in the experimented group not only did extremely well on post-tests, but also the state test given at the end of the year.

This article was applicable for my research because it showed how differentiated instruction is indeed very effective. The outcome of this study was promising and shows that when differentiation occurs, even just a little improvement can be made. I feel that this shows just how effective differentiation is when used properly in the classroom.

This article is unique in that it is not a research study. It takes a look at how teachers need to reflect while using differentiation in their teaching. The author is a reflective practitioner who teaches differentiation instruction at the University College of the Cayman Islands. The author states that the aim of his review on literature is threefold: “1) to contribute to filling this literary gap, 2) to clearly display the role of reflection in the differentiated instructional process (DIP), and 3) inspire teacher-educators to use this essay in their teaching” (2). The author conducted his search for literature on this topic on such databases as the Educational Resources Information Center, British Education Index, and the Elton Bryson Stephens Company database. He was able to find 18 articles that pertained to the role of reflection in the differentiated instructional process. The author states that “after careful review of the articles, seven concepts about the role of reflection in the DIP emerged” (2). The author uses these seven concepts as the framework for his literature review. The author notes that the role of reflection with DIP is something that has to be done, or DIP will not be as effective as it otherwise could be.

This article was not very applicable to my research. While the author did provide some great reviews on the literature he found, he did not offer any studies or strategies in the use of differentiation. While I will keep in mind the role that reflection plays in the differentiated instruction process, this article may be one I can file away and not pull out again.

The authors of this study feel that using an authentic assessment approach is more relevant in testing what students know. These assessments engage students in real-world tasks and scenario-based problem solving, as opposed to traditional testing which usually only tests rote recall. The authors contend that authentic differentiated assessments should “create small communities for learning, teach a core academic program, ensure success for all students, and connect schools with communities” (120). The authors studied classrooms that were located in states that had a state-testing program, therefore using traditional testing methods. The classrooms were heterogeneously grouped, having students from the upper-performing all the way to the lower-performing. Teachers volunteered to administer the authentic assessments that had already been created for the purpose of this study. Choosing from five already created units, the teachers taught their chosen unit and then assessed their classes using authentic assessment. It is important to note that the units were differentiated instruction units. The authors found that teachers and students generally gave positive responses to this approach. Many teachers felt that their students not only got something out of the unit, but many went above and beyond what was asked of them. The authors conclude their article by stating, “The results of this study begin to provide evidence that differentiated authentic assessments for the classroom purposes can be developed to provide consistent information about student learning” (129).

This study was applicable to my research because it shows that differentiated instruction is useful and has positive effects on the classroom. Paired with authentic assessments (which is a type of differentiated instruction), the study showed that the students succeeded in what they learned. Using this approach appears to be an effective way to differentiate instruction.

The author of this article looked at how one can incorporate differentiated instruction through the use of projects, namely a multigenre one. The author focused in on two elementary teachers in Virginia who were interested in Romano’s idea of a multigenre project after reading his book, *Blending Genre, Altering Style: Writing Multigenre Papers* (288). The teachers wanted to incorporate a multilayered and multivoiced literary assignment, not just another writing assignment. The idea of a multigenre paper is that it allows students to use their creativeness and blend it with facts through the use of poetry, short stories, or personal narratives. The students worked on the project during the last five weeks of school during their regular language arts class. The steps for creating the project were as follows (1) identifying the purpose and procedures, (2) developing a curriculum map, (3) establishing guidelines with students, (4) developing a guide sheet, and (5) creating an assessment tool (289-290). During the time this project was implemented, the two teachers met once a week to share what they had observed during the previous week and to reflect on the project—what was going well and what would need to be tweaked for the following year. At the end of the project, the teachers felt that “every student, regardless of ability, produced quality work” (292). The teachers felt that using a multigenre project engaged all students because students had a say in their project.

This article caught my eye because I teach writing to my 11th graders. I thought that this article could be applicable because it may give me a new spin on getting students excited to write. While some of the ideas I can incorporate into my classroom, I cannot incorporate everything due to my testing constraints. However, I do think that this is a project to consider AFTER testing is over.

The author begins this article by stating some very sobering facts. He tells the reader that by grade four, those public school students who are in the top 10% of their class read at least six grade levels above the bottom 10% of their class. This figure is very sobering, considering that all these learning abilities are being found in one classroom. What is interesting about this article is that author reintroduces the idea of tracking and ability grouping. He cited studies that showed the pros and cons for tracking. What the author found was that in some cases, grouping may be beneficial, as long as it is done in the interest of the student, not due to anything else (such as race, economics, etc…). The author bases this statement on a 2006 study done by Caroline Hoxby and Gretchen Weingarth in Wake County, North Carolina. They found compelling evidence that students tend to do best when “the environment made to cater to their type.” What this means is that it appeared that when students were in a class with students around their same achievement level, their particular needs were focused on, therefore allowing for improvement. However, Hoxby and Weingarth were quick to point out that complete segregation is not always the best. If there is a slight disparity between learning levels, that appears to be okay. It was when the learning levels have large gaps that a student may benefit from the grouping. This is where differentiation comes into play. If ability grouping is not possible by classes, then a teacher may be able to employ some differentiation models and strategies to group students without actually grouping them. Differentiation is indeed a model to look further into, as long as the teacher is willing to put in the time to make it effective.
Once again, this article is relevant and applicable to my classroom because it reinforces the importance of differentiation. Finding ways to “close the gap” between students is critical. Using differentiation strategies and models is a clear way to achieve this.

The author of this article looks at how differentiated instruction meets the needs of the gifted in diverse classrooms of today. The author feels strongly that one model of differentiated instruction is the use of independent study. The purpose of the author’s study was to “analyze the connection between student choice, the use of independent study, and the connection of social studies skills with real-world experiences as motivating factors for student achievement” (59). The participants were middle schools students from Arlington, VA. They come from a multicultural and diverse population of approximately 800 students. The author’s methodology used a three-phrase plan (research, invention, and presentation). The author’s findings discovered that out of the 20 students in the study, 16 of them liked the independent study and would like to be involved in another independent study in the future. The author used a questionnaire to further gather information on how the students felt about the independent study. The author felt that this study gave a means of an alternative assessment for identifying those students who may not be reached by regular classroom learning strategies.

While giving a student some control of his or her education is very daunting these days, when it is done using the proper differentiated strategy, it can be successful for all those involved. I appreciated how the author laid out the entire study, therefore giving anyone who would like to try out an independent study the basic framework from which to work. This could be applied to different subjects and different grade levels as well. This is relevant to my research question because it gives another model in which to effectively teach from.

The author of this article feels that differentiation is just a spring board for turning students into independent, life-long learners. The next step from differentiation is, in the author’s opinion, personalization. The important thing that the author made sure to state was that personalization “means connecting our expectations to students’ passions and interests as learners” (22). The author cites a school that has begun to move in this direction. Hunterdon Central Regional High School in New Jersey has been using this inquiry-based, more personalized learning method for the last three years. Students chart their own course, as long as it meets school and state expectations. This encourages students to take ownership of their own learning. The teachers at Hunterdon warn others to be prepared to be uncomfortable with this method at first, but the risks are definitely worth the rewards. By helping students connect their course goals to their own passions, you are creating one of the ingredients needed for success (24). This is incredibly important because passion often times equates to motivation which will definitely lead to success.

While this article may not provide me with immediate relevance to my classroom, it does give me a lot of food for thought. As a teacher of high schoolers, my ultimate goal would be to create independent, life-long learners. I want my students, whether they are college bound or career bound, to continue to learn; to continue to improve themselves. By giving them some tools to take ownership of their learning, these skills should begin to surface. While I may not be ready for personalization quite yet, I do think it is an interesting concept to be explored later.

The authors of this article take a framework for differentiated instruction called REACH. Terming it “the blueprint for differentiating instruction” (34), the authors state that it isn’t a how-to manual on differentiation, but a general plan that was created from proven, effective research based methods. The authors provide general indicators that will lead the educator on the right path to differentiation. Within each indicator, the authors provide steps that relate to proven practices. By using these indicators, an educator can create a plan for using differentiation effectively in his or her classroom.

There are five indicators in the REACH model. These indicators are 1) the teacher variable, 2) the content variable, 3) the learner variable, 4) the instruction variable, and 5) the assessment variable (34-37). Within each variable, the authors have provided a step for the educator to follow. These steps are 1) reflect on will and skill, 2) evaluate the curriculum, 3) analyze the learners, 4) craft research based lessons, and 5) hone in on the data (34-37). The acronym REACH stems directly from the steps listed above.

I found this article to be incredibly relevant because of how helpful it was. It provided a very easy to follow framework that not only provided indicators with easy to ready explanations, but they also provided a step with each indicator. The REACH framework is not a daunting one or an overwhelming one. It is an easy to follow framework that would be easy to implement over time. This is an article I will probably come back to and consult as I try to add more and more differentiation to my classroom instruction.

The researcher of this article wanted to explore the overall ideas and concepts of differentiated instruction in urban, suburban, and rural language arts classrooms. She used a qualitative design, incorporating emic and etic perspectives. She wanted to grasp teacher and student viewpoints, as well as address her own research questions. The researcher used four middle schools in the northwest, making sure she had a good mix of urban, suburban, and rural schools. The participants in the study were nine teachers. The researcher did a “purposeful sampling” (141), making sure she had male and female teachers with varying degrees of experience and educational backgrounds. The other participants in this study were the students of the nine teachers. The researcher took field notes, completed teacher interviews, as well as student interviews. After data analysis, the researcher took her findings and compared them to existing research on the subject matter. The researcher used a computer program (Ethnograph) for aggregating the coded qualitative data. The researcher determined four things from her study: “1) differentiation is more than a classroom event; 2) the classroom climate contributes to differentiation options and practices; 3) differentiation entails attention to affective and cognitive variations; and 4) activities drive differentiation practices (148).

This article was incredibly interesting in regards to what the research found. I particularly agree with the findings of the classroom climate. This past year, alone, I was able to do differentiation activities in two of my three classes. My third class just couldn’t handle the less-structured activities that some differentiated lessons supply. Again, I found this article helpful because it does reiterate the point that differentiation is effective.

The authors of this article set out to uncover the different phases (or faces) of differentiation. They wanted to answer these four questions: (1) How do scholars and public policymakers define differentiation?, (2) What implications do these various definitions have for teachers’ implementation of differentiation?, (3) What empirical evidence warrants the use of differentiation?, and (4) What unanswered questions about differentiation for achievement might the education community address?” (94).

The authors defined differentiation in its simplest terms, and then discussed how tracking and grouping paved the way for differentiation and individualization. These earlier methods, though not used too much today, did shine the light on the importance of each student. The authors point out that differentiation is a positive learning model, though they do believe that there are four faces of differentiation. The four faces represent the steps of not only putting differentiation to use, but putting it to effective use. “Just doing it” (95) is not going to get educators anywhere, but the “Innovators” (95) are the ones who push differentiation to its most effective usage. The authors feel strongly that professional development needs to take place in order for differentiation to be effective. They feel that the more professional development an educator has, the more empowered he or she will feel when differentiating their instruction.

This article was good in the fact that it spelled out the important phases (faces) of differentiation. It made sense that there were different levels of effectiveness when putting differentiation to use. It is applicable in the fact that it lets teachers know that differentiation is a process that takes time. This is important to note if one wants to differentiate effectively.

The authors of this article looked at how collaboration, co-teaching, and differentiated instruction could be beneficial to a school system looking to ensure fair and equitable access to the common curriculum for all students. The authors looked at one school, which they named Bienvendios Elementary School, and their year-long process of incorporating collaboration, co-teaching, and differentiated instruction into their school. The school came up with an action plan that consisted of six principles. These principles are as follows: 1) empowering citizens for democracy, 2) including all, 3) providing authentic, multilevel instruction, 4) building community, 5) supporting learning, and 6) partnering with parents and community (16). The authors spent time discussing what each of these principles meant and how Bienvendios Elementary School put the principles in place. Once these principles were in place, the next step that Bienvendios did was to smooth out the rough spots and expand what worked. The authors also discussed how the teachers were able to successfully incorporate differentiated instruction. They followed five guidelines to ensure that their use of differentiation was a success. These guidelines are as follows: 1) clarification of key concepts, 2) promoting student choice, 3) process-based student supports, 4) engaging all students through varied learning tasks, and 5) use of assessment as a teaching tool (23). By following these guidelines, the teachers at Bienvendios Elementary School felt that differentiation, coupled with co-teaching (especially with special education teachers), was very effective in increasing student success in the classroom.

I found this article interesting as it discussed two items that I find to fall right into differentiated instruction. I feel that collaboration and co-teaching are all forms of differentiation
when it comes to education. I think that this article was applicable because it did give guidelines for using differentiation and how effective it can be when used properly.

The authors of this article start out by essentially giving the reader a framework to follow when starting out with differentiation. The authors state that one can differentiate by the way he or she presents the content, the process of learning, and the end result, or product, of that learning (83). However, the authors make the idea of differentiating a little less daunting by stating that the “three rings” of differentiated instruction are the learning profiles, abilities, and interests of the students involved. The authors feel that the student learning profile is the most important factor when considering differentiation. Once this is laid out, the educator can then focus in on ability. Tapping into prior knowledge will enable to the educator to uncover the ability of each student. Once the learning profile and the ability level is firmly in place, the educator can then allow students to incorporate their interests. “Providing opportunities to engage in learning that interests the students will motivate them to learn” (85). By providing different activities to complete on the same objective, the teacher is automatically allowing for differentiation. This differentiation would not only reach low achievers, but also high achievers as well.

I was uncertain about this article at first because the authors took a bit of an elementary approach with the title. However, I decided to give it a whirl and I am so glad that I did. Because laying out the framework of differentiation in an unintimidating way, it enable me to look at the strategy in a whole different light. Not only did the authors provide steps to help the reader incorporate differentiation in their classroom, they provide sample strategies and links to what they suggested. Overall, this article turned out to be more relevant and applicable than I first thought it would be.

The author of this article notes that general education teachers and special education teachers may benefit from collaborating together when it comes to creating, designing and implementing effective strategies to reach not just special education students, but all students. The author feels that student choice is a very successful method when a teacher is seeking to increase motivation in the classroom. The author provides a model that incorporates differentiated instruction with student choice in order to motivate students. This model was used in a fifth-grade inclusive classroom. The classroom had six students identified with a learning disability and the school was found in a low income area. The teachers used seven steps to create a differentiated curriculum. These steps are as follows: 1) identify student needs and learning styles, 2) assess current achievement, 3) select research-based strategies for reading, comprehensive, and personal connection, 4) differentiate reading material, 5) provide options for student choice, 6) conduct the evaluation, and 7) evaluate student performance (5-8). The author provided hints and tips for each of these steps. The author feels that by combining differentiated instruction with student choice, engagement and learning for all students can increase. The teacher who used this model in her classroom felt that her students enjoyed reading more. It was found that “an average of 83.4% of the students’ grades improved in reading, 12.5% remained the same, and only 4.1% decreased” (10).

This article is relevant in my research because it further backs up the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in the classroom. The author provides a checklist of guiding questions to help teachers create differentiated instruction lessons—individualized and whole class. This
was an easy to follow article that provided a practical way to incorporate differentiated instruction in the classroom.

The authors of this article focus in on not just differentiating, but some strategies for using differentiation. The authors start out by defining differentiated instruction by stating that “differentiated instruction focuses on best practices, but it acknowledges the many variables that create the diversity in today’s classroom... DI is really just a common sense approach to planning instruction” (3). The authors then discuss why using technology to differentiate is an effective model. Not only do the authors feel that the use of technology can be motivating, but it is a private tool, where students who may not grasp the skills as readily as their classmates will be able to go at their own pace, without others readily realizing it. Using technology allows teachers to “begin to be ‘smarter’ rather than working harder because it often decreases the amount of time required by teachers to create differentiated content” (5). The mention of technology has students on-task and engaged, which leads to the thought that students who are on-task and engaged tend to learn more.

This article was extremely helpful because not only did the authors give real differentiated instruction strategies, they also provided useful and helpful links for more lessons dealing with differentiated instruction and technology. The authors just didn’t say, “do differentiation!” They provided examples and links to finding out how to set up a differentiated classroom and the steps one can take to differentiate. I think the ideas in this article would be and are applicable to my classroom.

The authors of this article introduce the ideas of differentiated instruction, Retrofit Framework, and Universal Design. The authors note that differentiation, at its very heart, has the student placed first. Not all students learn the same way and differentiation takes this into account. The Universal Design for Learning Framework is a teaching strategy that uses the idea that teachers plan instruction for the success of all students. This is a proactive model, where the teacher does not wait for students to fail. The teacher understands that differentiation instruction provides the opportunity for all students to succeed. The Retrofit Framework, on the other hand, occurs when the teacher responds to a lack of student progress by using curriculum that already exists and then adding some slight differentiation to reteach the subject. This style of teaching is reactive, not proactive. Both styles utilize the strategy of differentiation. The Universal Design, however, appears to try to ensure that students learn the concepts so that re-teaching does not have to occur, whereas the Retrofit Framework waits to see if there is failure. The authors provide an example of how Retrofit Framework can be used effectively by following Emily, a fifth-grade student with a learning disability. By following the Retrofit Framework, Emily had a successful fifth-grade school year because her teachers took what they already knew were Emily’s weaknesses and retrofitted lessons to help her learn better. The authors then discuss how different Emily’s fifth-grade school year would have been had she been in a Universal Design classroom. Emily would probably be more challenged in a Universal Design classroom, as she would be both a knowledge producer and receiver (7). Ultimately, teachers should decide what type of teaching is best for their students and then plan accordingly.
This article was helpful because it provided two different teaching styles, both using differentiated instruction. While it seems to be that Universal Design would make the most sense, it may depend on the type of classroom a teacher has. If most students are high-achieving, then the Retrofit Framework may be the best teaching style to use. If the teacher has a mixed-ability classroom, then the Universal Design would make the most sense. Overall, this article was applicable to my research because it gives two strategies to use when incorporating differentiation into the classroom.

The authors of this paper presented the results of a study conducted during the 2008-2009 school year in Cyprus elementary schools. The researchers studied 479 students during this one year period, their goal being to discover the effect that systematic differentiated instruction has when being used in a mixed ability group. The authors stated that the main goal of this paper was to discuss how differentiated instruction, when used properly, can provide equality and quality for all students involved. The article had three aims. These aims were to: 1) either prove or disprove the findings of research found on differentiated instruction; 2) to determine what the characteristics are of effective differentiated instruction; and 3) to evaluate the quality and equity of differentiated instruction in the classroom. Multiple sources of data were collected. Some of these sources were demographics, questionnaires, and past student test results, as well as the current year’s test results. The researchers found that when used properly, differentiated instruction can be quite effective in a mixed ability group.

This article was relevant in the fact that it reinforced the fact that differentiated instruction is an important and effective tool in the classroom when it is used effectively. I appreciated that this study took place all year long and compared previous test data to current test data. I think that it gives any educator a springing-off point when trying to ensure that differentiated instruction is an effective strategy to employ in the classroom.

The authors of this article take a look at how literacy coaches can help with differentiation. Not only do the authors discuss how literacy coaches can help, but how utilizing a literacy coach is differentiation in and of itself. By using a literacy coach, an educator can be involved in differentiation him or herself. The authors suggest implementing three strategies that can foster reflection and differentiation support with teachers. These strategies are as follows: 1) daybooks (reflection via writing), 2) surveys (reflection via individualized professional development, and 3) videotapes (reflection via viewing). By observing and reflecting together, the literacy coach and the educator can consider how teaching decisions influence and effect students (498). The authors note that changes often can occur when educators observe their own teaching practices. Stating that one-size fits all professional development doesn’t always benefit educators, the authors enforce the point that everyone learns differently and that literacy coaches could play a huge role when it comes to improving literacy within school districts. The authors cite three different educators and their stories when it comes to the three types of reflections mentioned above. Each educator tried reflecting on his or her teaching in order to improve their teaching. Throughout the article, the authors stress just how important literacy coaches are within the educational system. They feel that a literacy coach is a catalyst for change and therefore should be incorporated in all districts in some shape or form (507).

While this article does not given specific differentiation strategies for lessons, it is neat to see how the authors feel that differentiating for educators is just as important as it is for students. Educators may need differentiated instruction in order to ensure that they are in their top
performance. I found it very interesting that how teachers learned and improved themselves was the focus of this article.

This article was unique in the fact that the author gathered research materials already completed. She used respected databases such as ERIC, Proquest, CBCA, and EdResearch Online just to name a few (935). The purpose of this article was to synthesize the differentiated instruction research out there, as well as to uncover the rationale of using differentiated instruction. The author states that “Research has proved the argument that individuals do not learn in the same way” (937). This view on education is one of the underlying pushes for differentiated instruction. By addressing the differences of all students, a teacher can be effective in teaching and reaching all learning abilities by applying differentiated instruction strategies and practices in his or her classroom. The author continues to discuss how dangerous it is to teach to the middle, that an educator needs to reach all students. The author cites such things as brain research, learning styles, multiple intelligences as the foundation for differentiated instruction (939). By engaging students through the use of learning profiles to understand student readiness and interest, a teacher can use differentiated instruction effectively. On pages 942 and 943, the author cites several studies ranging from 1995 to 2004 that show the effectiveness of differentiated instruction.

This article was helpful in the fact that it provided more research information on the effectiveness of differentiated instruction, as long as it is done in the proper manner. A teacher must understand differentiated instruction and plan before implementing it into the classroom. Because research indicates that differentiated instruction is effective, this article is applicable because it gives me yet another reason to use it in my classroom.

The authors of this article simply give a very brief, useful and concise introduction on Differentiating Instruction. The authors begin by introducing differentiation and giving a straight-forward definition of the model. They then continue on by explaining four steps to getting started in planning and using effective differentiated instruction. Some of their suggestions are vary materials, vary process, and vary assessment. Using these three tips, one can ease into becoming a master of using differentiated instruction. The authors cited several works by Carol Tomlinson, leading expert on differentiated instruction. These citations can lead the reader to finding more in-depth information on the topic.

Although the simplicity of the article may put some people off, I found it somewhat refreshing. It was nice to read an article that gave the very basics. Although this may not be the most useful in writing a lengthy paper on the topic, it lent itself to a very useful jumping off point. It was relevant in my research because it presented the idea of Differentiated Instruction and gave a few ideas of how to get started using this type of teaching model. It wasn’t overwhelming in giving a great deal of facts and figures. It just laid out some of the major facts and gave a few basic ideas of how to get started. They gave some very good and useful tips on how to get started and I feel that is important when trying to add, or change, one’s teaching style.

The author of this article looks at six conundrums, or challenges, that can commonly occur when an English educator tries to develop his or her differentiation skills. The author cites the two categories the conundrums fall in: foundational and instructional (160). Foundational conundrums include teaching for understanding vs. teaching skills, universal design vs. differentiated instruction, and assessing growth vs. comparative assessment (160-162). Instructional conundrums include robust literacy program vs. activities based program, flexible small group instruction vs. whole class instruction, and validating feedback vs. literal feedback (163-167). The foundational conundrums focus the educator on essential understandings, universal design, and assessing growth in literacy, while the instructional conundrums focus on the importance of offering a strong literacy program, using flexible groupings, and giving validating feedback (167). The author also asserts that professional development on differentiation will help teachers recognize these conundrums and not fall into those traps. If a teacher is prepared and knows what to expect when he or she is incorporating differentiated instruction into his or her classroom, then the process should go more smoothly, as well as make it more effective.

This article is relevant because it shows how teachers fall into traps that keep differentiation from being effective. The author was very good about not only pointing out what each trap is, but also how to avoid the trap by giving applicable examples and ideas of how to incorporate those in the classroom. The author was very easy to understand and made differentiation seem less daunting.

The authors of this article feel very strongly that differentiated instruction is the way to go. They note that “while heterogeneous instruction is attractive because it addresses equity of opportunity for a broad range of learners, mixed-ability classrooms are likely to fall short of their promise unless teachers address the learner variance such contexts imply” (120). Due to the many different demographics that a teacher can see in his or her classroom each day, finding a way to reach all those different learning abilities is paramount. The authors define differentiation as “an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom” (121). The authors give several reasons as to why one should incorporate differentiation into their classroom instruction. These are as a response to student readiness, as a response to student interest, as a response to student learning profiles, and as a response to (126-131). The goal of differentiated instruction should be seen in the teacher’s flexibility in his or her lesson presentation and the ability for a student to choose options for learning.

The authors then go on to list the six hallmarks of effective differentiation. These are as follows: 1) being proactive, rather than reactive, 2) employing flexible use of small teaching-learning groups in the classroom, 3) varying the materials used by individuals and small groups of students in the classroom, 4) using variable pacing as a means of addressing learner needs, 5)
being knowledge centered, and 6) being learner-centered (131-133). Making sure that these hallmarks are followed will ensure that differentiation is effective.

This article was relevant in that Carol Tomlinson, one of the leading gurus of differentiation, was the lead author of this article. Reading what she had to say was very important. It was applicable to my research because it further enforces the idea that differentiated instruction is very beneficial when used correctly.

The researchers of this article looked at two elementary schools in the southeastern United States. Both schools had more than 80% of their student population on free and reduced lunch. One school had received a “C” on their state report card, while the other had received a “D”. This study is unique in that it took students who were in an alternative certification program and were in their apprenticeship year. The researchers followed these questions: “How do apprentice teachers in an urban alternative certification program develop as planners, implementers, and evaluators of differentiated instruction. And what are the key elements that facilitate or inhibit an alternatively certified teacher’s ability to plan for DI?” (144). The researchers selected three apprentices from a pool of 15 to follow through their year-long apprenticeship. The researchers used a constructivist approach in the research (144). The researchers used data collected, observations, and three professional development meetings to gather their data. They found several assertions: 1) Certain learning conditions facilitate or inhibit successful differentiated instruction; 2) New knowledge + application + coaching = greater self-regulation of teaching and; 3) Apprentices with strong self-regulatory capabilities have more success planning and implementing differentiated lessons (148-153). In essence, if a teacher is to use differentiated instruction effectively, he or she must not only have knowledge of differentiated instruction, but also reflect on how he or she uses DI in their classroom.

This article was helpful because it showed several ways the teacher-apprentices used DI in their classrooms. It also gave tips and strategies on how to self-regulate yourself when using DI. I feel that this article is applicable because it gives me reason to use DI in my classroom.

The author of this article discusses how gifted students are spending more and more time in the regular classroom due to budget cuts. The author feels that the regular education teacher can provide differentiated instruction to his or her gifted students in a manner that is both un-intrusive and effective. The author introduces the idea of curriculum compacting as a way to differentiate instruction in a regular education social studies classroom. The first step in compacting would be to identify the objectives and then give a pretest over these objectives. The teacher can then evaluate the pretest and see which areas the student needs to work on. While the rest of the general education classroom is working as a whole-class, the gifted learner can be working independently by reading the necessary chapters, answering questions, and then taking the unit tests. Once all objectives have been mastered, the gifted student could then work on independent projects to further enhance his or her learning. These projects could be items such as creating history journals, meeting and interviewing a history curator at a museum on a specific topic, and organizing and displaying information on a particular time period. The author makes special mention of teacher anxiety when it comes to having to document student learning. Compacting the curriculum is an easy way to do just that. The author closes the article by stating, “Differentiating instruction improves the quality of learning for all learners, but especially for gifted students in regular education classes” (198).

This article is applicable to my research as it provides one effective strategy for differentiation in the classroom. Although this article was focused on social studies, I feel that it could easily be transferred to other subjects. Ultimately, this strategy would be effective in
ensuring that all student learning needs are met, especially ones that need a bit more of a challenge.

The researchers examined how Title I heterogeneous classroom teachers’ instructional behavior changes when they apply a well-designed research-based curriculum while also attending on-going professional development during a three year period (297). The focus was on helping the educators improve their students’ reading and critical thinking skills. The participants were 71 teachers in six Title I school districts. The teachers were randomly assigned into two groups, an experimental group and the conditional group. Due to the high turnover that naturally occurs in Title I schools, 16 experimental teachers and 15 conditional teachers were in the study all three years. The major instrument used was the Classroom Observation Scale-Revised. This scale was developed for “assessing teachers’ instructional practice against expectations derived from best practices in mainstream and gifted education classrooms” (299).

The researchers also used The Student Observation Scale, which was developed as a companion assessment to the Classroom Observation Scale-Revised. Throughout the three-year study, the experimental teachers were given multiple professional developments before, during, and after each school year. Furthermore, experimental teachers were also observed as they incorporated what they learned into their classroom. The findings of this study suggest that professional development should be a consistent and on-going process. An educator shouldn’t just be taught a new strategy, they should be observed and have follow-up professional development in order to fully become a master of that strategy.

This article was relevant in that it once again reinforced the fact that differentiation is an effective strategy to use in the classroom. However, it points out, as have several other articles,
that on-going professional development is key to using the strategy effectively. This makes using differentiation in my classroom applicable, as long as I have the support to help me make it effective.

The authors of this article took a look at how the effectiveness of differentiated instruction was measured. The authors start off by introducing the concept of differentiated instruction. It is noted that differentiation has four domains, these domains being “content, process, product, and learning environment” (A-1). The authors discuss how some studies have relied on survey methods. It is noted that surveys have limitations in the fact that they are relying on participants’ memories. These memories can be skewed, especially if the study is over a long period of time. Another type of study employs teacher checklists. Checklists are more time-consuming for teachers as they are completed several times during the academic year.

The authors conducted their research during the 2009-2010 school year in an Indiana school district. There were 50 K-8 schools chosen at random to be a part of this study. Only the reading and math teachers in second and fifth grade were asked to complete the checklists (A-2). These teachers filled out 16 instructional checklists during the 09-10 school year. The language arts checklists were based on Rowan and Correnti’s checklist and the math checklists were created by experts and based off the language arts checklists (A-2). Due to the complexities of the data, the authors measured the checklist data using an item response theory-based measurement (A-3). The authors of this study feel as though checklists can be used to build reliable measures of differentiated instruction.

This article, while not giving me any differentiated instruction strategies, does give me a basis to use when looking at studies. It is relevant because it helps me decipher what studies
might be more valid than other studies. The only thing I would have liked to have seen was a copy of the checklists that were used during this study.

This special introduction article to an entire journal dedicated to RTI and differentiation looked at how effective these strategies can be. The author defines RTI (Response to Intervention) as a “comprehensive, systemic approach to teaching and learning designed to address learning problems for all students through increasingly differentiated and intensified assessment and instruction” (503). RTI sort of has a reputation for being a strategy for special education, but RTI can be used across the board in every educational situation. Using the RTI approach is a multi-tiered process. Tier I happens when differentiation occurs and is intended to accommodate 80% of the students in the classroom (504). If a student does not make progress in Tier I, then he or she would be a candidate for Tier II. Tier II is the phase where more instructional time, smaller instructional groups, and/or alternative methods of instruction can be set up to help those who needed just a bit more than Tier I was providing (504). If a student still does not make progress in Tier II, then they would move on to Tier III. Tier III would include even more focused and intense interventions, with the possibility of the student being evaluated for learning disabilities (505). The author then goes on to discuss the articles that one would read in this specific journal.

While this article did not give me any specific strategies, it did give me a great jumping off point by introducing all the articles that were in this particular journal. It was also very relevant to my research because it further backed-up the importance and effectiveness of differentiation. Applying the information from this article to what I have learned can only help me in my research. Furthermore, by reading some of the articles in this special issue, I could find the perfect article for my research.

The author of this article starts out by looking at how standardization is negatively impacting our students of today. The author states that personalization is “the key because it shapes virtually every aspect of a school” (18). The author seems to take a step past differentiation to look at personalization. Students would have advisors instead of teachers. These advisors would help students create an individualized learning path. One that is personalized for that student. These personalized schools met the needs of every student in attendance. In essence, this is differentiation in its purest form. The author cites three schools that employ this personalization method of differentiation. The Met in Rhode Island, New Country School in Minnesota, and Urban Academy Laboratory High School in New York City all are examples of successful personalized schools. What is amazing about these schools is their graduation rate. At least three-quarters of the students graduate with at least that many perusing postsecondary educational goals. These schools make learning relevant to each student, thus creating life-long learners.

While this article is applicable in my search for effective differentiation models, this approach may be too extreme to make it relevant for me at the moment. I am intrigued by the idea of helping students choose and create their own learning paths. To me, this does seem to be differentiation in its purest form. However, at this time, this article may not have been the most applicable of the ones that I have read.