

# Florida Center for Reading Research

Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit

## What is Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit?

Professional Development Alternatives for Exceptional Student Educators (PDA-ESE) is a Florida Department of Education online professional development program. It was designed to provide Florida educators working in grades K-12 easily accessible, research-based information with practical application to the classroom. *Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit* is the eighth module to be offered by PDA-ESE, and is the focus of this report. This module focuses on how to identify, prevent, and remediate reading difficulties with differentiated reading instruction that is based in scientific reading research. Following the introduction to this module, the authors clearly outline the learning objectives for each of the eight units. The first three units focus on the specific and individual needs of students with reading difficulties and provide the relevant research and resources to address this population of students. Care is given to define the need for differentiated, systematic, and explicit instruction and to present effective ways to target the needs of students using data to drive instructional decisions. The following five units are each designated for one of the five components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel (2000): phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

*Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit* systematically and explicitly explains the importance of using student data to provide appropriate differentiated reading instruction for students grades K-12 with reading difficulties. Links provided to related websites enhance the breadth of teacher knowledge with research and functional resources participants can utilize in their instruction of students (e.g., links to graphic organizer templates, fluency building activity ideas, and ideas for vocabulary instruction). Module content is frequently updated when new web resources become available. Unit 1: Research, Reading Difficulties, and Resources sets the foundation for this module. It defines the characteristics of target students and discusses research-based best practices to meet their reading needs. Unit 2: How to Create a Differentiated Environment and Make Instruction Explicit is based on Carol Tomlinson's work (Tomlinson, 1999) on differentiated instruction and provides concrete examples of what differentiated instruction would look like with student examples. Unit 3: Targeting Needs and Designing Data-Based Solutions increases participant knowledge about assessment and progress monitoring tools that are appropriate for students with reading difficulties, followed by a discussion of how the results of these tools can be most effectively used to help guide instruction. The remaining units concentrate on each of the five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Each of these reading content units uses clear and concise language to explain how each area is impacted for students with reading difficulties and provides strategies and instructional approaches to differentiate instruction and remediate these areas. Student case study examples, relevant website links, and interactive comprehension checks throughout each unit aid participant understanding and engagement. Participants will want to save these resources to revisit as they work with their students.



Participants move through the program at their own pace. Completion of this module earns the participant 60 inservice points awarded by the local FDLRS Associate Centers. Participants may have the opportunity to engage in online discussions with other participants or the module facilitator as determined by each facilitator. It is during these opportunities that content specific to individual or group needs may be brought up for discussion or studied in greater depth.

Materials for completing this course and information including assessment requirements are provided online at the module website. *Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit* is well designed with clear demarcations to allow for ease of maneuvering within the module and across units. A matrix was provided by the developers of this PDA-ESE module that crosswalks Florida's Reading Competency 4 and 5 indicators with the course activities and assessments.

### What processes are in place in Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit?

Florida educators who are interested in enrolling in *Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit* may do so free of charge. Participants sign up with their local FDLRS Center and are asked to attend an orientation meeting with the facilitator to become familiar with the program, learn to navigate through the module, clarify assessment tasks, and meet the other participants.

In each unit participants are required to complete and submit assessment tasks to their module facilitator that align with the goals and objectives of the program. Specifically, participants complete two self-assessments and brief personal action plans; four detailed classroom-based action research investigations and case studies in the following areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, advanced decoding skills, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and five check your understanding quizzes. Facilitators provide feedback on the assessment tasks and ask participants to revise and resubmit their responses if necessary. Participants also have access to the module facilitator throughout the program. Participants are required to meet as a cohort with the facilitator at least three times to discuss content or ask and answer questions. Decisions regarding, how many face-to-face meetings will take place or if an online discussion group is part of the program, are made individually by the 19 FDLRS Associate Center Managers and their PDA-ESE Coordinators.

Module facilitators must meet the following qualifications to lead this course: a minimum of five years teaching experience, other experience working in a school district in exceptional student education, or a closely related field; a Master's Degree in a content related field; experience in professional development (online PD preferred); and trainer certification or experience in programming related to reading.

### Does Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit address the context in which the program will be implemented?

*Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit* does not require school wide participation. Individuals may enroll in this module with their local FDLRS center and will be assigned to a "virtual class" of their peers from the surrounding community. Although the module was designed for teachers in Exceptional Student Education, any educator who works with students in grades K-12 would benefit from the content presented in this module.

## Research Support for Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit



The National Reading Panel (2000) findings provide the structure for the program. The content of the course is clearly intended to enable educators to reach a better understanding of the population of students who demonstrate difficulties learning to read and then apply this knowledge in effective instruction. This module includes information on reading, students with difficulties learning to read, and effective intervention techniques supported by scientifically-based reading research. It also relies on the work of Carol Tomlinson (Tomlinson, 1999) in the area of differentiated instruction as the most effective tool to meet the needs of all students.

The program design supports the link between student achievement and teacher use of research based teaching strategies in reading and instruction.

### Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit*:

- Explicit and systematic organization of material and information is teacher friendly.
- Links to resources outside of the module are useful and enhance learning.
- Assessment activities are applicable to classroom environment.
- Interactive comprehension checks throughout each unit help insure participant understanding.

Weaknesses of *Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit*:

- None were noted

### Which Florida districts have implemented Differentiating Reading Instruction for Students: Making It Explicit?

This is a new module and has not yet been implemented at the time of this posting. Please contact your local FDLRS center for more information regarding implementation. It is expected that each of the 19 FDLRS centers will have a trained facilitator by Fall 2006.

### For More Information

<http://www.pda-ese.org>

### References

National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. NIH Publication No. 00-4754. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.



Tomlinson, C. (1999). *The differentiated classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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Date Posted: September, 2006

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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR. The programs for which reports are available do not constitute an "approved" or "required" list, since many potentially useful programs have not yet been reviewed.

For more information about FCRR go to [www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)