This section is provided as background on differentiated learning and includes information from experts, useful strategies and important terms and definitions.

Definition and Key Elements
Based on research by Carol Ann Tomlinson & Marcia B. Imbeau, Leading a Differentiated Classroom, 2010.

Definition: Differentiation can best be described as classroom practice with a balanced emphasis on individual students and course content. More specifically, a differentiated classroom includes the following key principles:
- Students differ as learners when they come to the classroom. They come with different background experiences, cultures, languages, gender, interests, readiness to learn, modes of learning, speed of learning, support systems of learning, self-awareness as a learner, confidence as a learner, independence as a learner, and much more. These differences impact how students learn and the nature of scaffolding they will need throughout the learning process.
- Since teachers have a responsibility to ensure that all students master the important content this will require a flexible approach to teaching that makes room for student variance. The key questions that teachers will need to continually ask is, "What does *this* student need at *this* moment in order to be able to progress with *this* key content, and what do I need to do to make that happen?"

The core of differentiation requires the modification of these curriculum-related elements:
- <u>Content</u>: The knowledge, understanding, and skills we want students to learn.
- <u>Process</u>: How students come to understand or make sense of the content.
- <u>Product</u>: How students demonstrate what they have come to know, understand, and are able to do after an extended period of learning.
- <u>Affect</u>: How students' emotions and feelings impact their learning and includes the following:
    - Readiness: A student's current proximity to specified knowledge, understanding, and skills.
    - Interest: That which engages the attention, curiosity, and involvement of a student.
    - Learning Profile: A preference for taking in, exploring, or expressing content.

Examples of how differentiation translates into classroom practice:

Examples of Differentiation Based on Student Need			
	Readiness	Interest	Learning Profile
C O N T E N T	· materials at varied readability levels · spelling assigned by proficiency · alternative presentation methods · targeted small group instruction · front-loading vocabulary · highlighted texts	· range of materials that apply key ideas and skills to a variety of real-world situations · teacher presentations designed to link to student interests	· varied teaching modes (e.g., verbal, visual, rhythmic, practical) · video or audio notes for students who learn better with repeated listening
P R O C E S S	· tiered activities · mini-workshops · flexible use of time · learning contracts · varied homework assignments	· expert groups · interest centers · supplementary materials based on student interests · jigsaw · independent studies · interest-based application options	· choice of working conditions (alone, partner, group) · tasks designed around intelligence preferences · blogs to share ideas
P R O D U C T	· tiered products · personal goal-setting · varied resource options · check-in requirements based on student independence · providing samples of good student work at varied level of complexity	· use of student interests in designing products · ·Design a Day options · ·use of contemporary technologies for student expression	· complex instruction · varied formats for expressing key content · varied working assignments · ·varied modes of expressing learning

C. Tomlinson & M. Imbeau, 2010

Differentiated Instruction: A principle guided method to approach teaching and learning, and is implemented in the context of a classroom system that contains these interdependent elements: learning environment, curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

Learning Environment: The physical and emotional context in which learning occurs. This includes the appearance, organization and structure of a classroom that is inviting to learn with appealing colors, effective displays of student work, spaces for both solitary and collaborative work, easy access to materials and supplies, furniture arrangements that focus attention on peer input rather than solely on the teacher, and visible cues to support quality work. More importantly this includes a learning environment where students feel safe, respected, involved, non-judged, challenged and supported.

Curriculum: An organized plan to engage learners with important knowledge, understanding, and skills. Using standards, curriculum and the art of teaching, teachers delineate the essential knowledge students should have and the skills they should possess as the result of a particular segment of learning. This includes incorporating summative and formative assessment to determine student proficiency, carefully planned sequence of lessons or learning experiences that are designed to engage students in the essential content and to ensure students success with the essential knowledge, understanding and skills. Students will be expected to think and be supported as thinkers and work with respectful tasks that are interesting and engaging and promote the use of the collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

Assessment: A data gathering and analysis process that determines the degree to which students have achieved essential outcomes and informs decisions about and planning for instruction. This includes diagnostic, formative and summative assessments all with the purpose understanding how each student is progress towards understanding the essential content, knowledge and skills of the planned unit of study.

Instruction: The process of teaching, educating, and engaging students with content. Instruction is how the teacher delivers the curriculum and connects content to the learners. this is where the teacher becomes the facilitator of the learning and includes providing various routes to accomplishing the learning outcomes, help students develop proficiency in collaborative learning, provide classroom routines that balance students' needs for guidance and freedom, align with the essential knowledge and skills, and is designed with student differences in mind.