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Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Individualized Differentiated Instruction in Planning, Teaching, and Professional Responsibilities

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Only 4% of the teachers at a southeastern grade school met the differentiated instruction standard in the state's teacher evaluation system. A qualitative case study design was used to examine elementary (K-5) teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning and preparation, and teaching and professional responsibilities at one school in a southeastern state. Individualized differentiated instruction is altering instruction to fit students' needs; teachers who lack individualized differentiated instruction skills do not meet students' specific instructional needs. Danielson's framework for teaching guided this study. The sample consisted of 12 regular education, reading or math teachers in grades K-5 at the study school. Data were collected through review of lesson plan documents and face-to-face interviews. Transcripts were coded and analyzed thematically, and comparative analysis was used to compare the themes to Danielson's conceptual framework. The findings suggested that teachers' use of individualized differentiated instruction was influenced by the amount of planning time, inadequate professional development, and a sense of professional responsibility regarding teaching using the Danielson framework. Participants' planning and preparation for individualized differentiation did not necessarily lead to teaching using differentiated instruction; therefore, a professional development project on the use of differentiated instruction with students was developed. The study impacts social change by providing recommendations for planning effective professional development that improves individualized differentiated instruction and student learning outcomes.

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Dedication

It is with a humble and sincere heart that I dedicate this study to my son, Kyndell James Thompson. He is the force behind my determination. As his mother, I teach him to strive for the best things that life offers. As his mentor, I remind him that anything in life worth having is worth hard work. As his role model, I have completed my doctoral studies.

Acknowledgments

First, I give thanks to God Almighty for His enduring grace. As a doctoral student attending Walden University, I formed a cohort of enthusiastic supporters of my doctoral journey. I would like to thank Dr. Beth Robellia and Dr. John Johnson, my doctoral committee members. The insight that the two provided was instrumental in my success. I would be remiss if I did not thank my mother and father for their encouraging spirits. Without their unwavering support, I would not be where I am today. Their support allowed me to stay focused on my dreams and goals. I look forward to reaping the harvest from this endeavor!

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Section 1: Introduction

The school under study is in rural Georgia and is one of 16 elementary schools serving some 15,000 students in its district. The school system is large in comparison to surrounding districts. Similar to K-12 school districts nationwide, the district has struggled with state and federal budget cuts. Employees have been forced to take furlough days.

The study site is eligible for additional funding under Title One. As a Title One school, at least 30% of students are economically disadvantaged; the school also receives special Title One funding from the federal government. The current enrollment is 511 students, serving grades K-5. Ninety-eight percent of the students are African American, 1% are Caucasian, and 1% are other races (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Special academic programs include: Reading and Math Early Intervention Programs, Exceptional Student Program, and the Whiz Kids (for the gifted and talented).

The school under study became the district's first fine arts magnet school in 2004. A fine arts magnet school provides students with academic instruction that incorporates dance, theater, music, and visual arts into the curriculum. The implementation of the fine arts program was a collaborative effort among school administrators, district leaders, and stakeholders. To facilitate a cultural shift in teachers' instructional delivery, curriculum leaders offered a onetime Arts Integration Staff Development in the summer of 2004. Teachers were required to attend a rigorous 2-week training facilitated by Arts Integration Solutions. According to the organization's director, Arts Integration Solutions is an external nonprofit organization; the mission of the organization is to introduce the

classroom practice of arts integration to every student, helping them succeed in arithmetic, science, reading, and life skills. Arts Integration Solutions equipped teachers with research-based practices that assist in "integrating content and skills from the arts- dance, music, theatre, and visual-with other core subjects" (Dittrich & Pool, 2011, p.1). Teachers acquired skills by modeling lessons that incorporated the core subject standards with each arts discipline. The Arts Integration Solutions' facilitators provided teachers with differentiation strategies that support arts-based instruction.

Although it was an arts integrated training, the instructional strategies helped teachers differentiate the core subjects for students. When teachers differentiate reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, students' learning modalities (visual, auditory, tactile/kinesthetic) are addressed. For example, teachers gained pantomiming strategies, which allow the students to learn by dramatizing the vocabulary terms for a lesson. Differentiating the core subjects includes altering "the content, learning materials, methods of instruction and assessment within certain parameters" (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 16) to meet the instructional needs of each individual student. Differentiating the core subjects is a component of the response to intervention (RTI) model. Differentiation in the arts context is an approach to teaching that allows the use of fine and performing arts to facilitate student learning in different modalities (Carlisle, 2011). Arts-based differentiation caters to the four learning modalities: visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic. Arts-based intervention focuses on whole group differentiation to meet the needs of different kinds of learners. On the contrary, RTI is individualized and

emphasizes the student's ability and learning speed rather than learning style (Figure 1 illustrates similarities and differences of Arts-based and RTI differentiation).

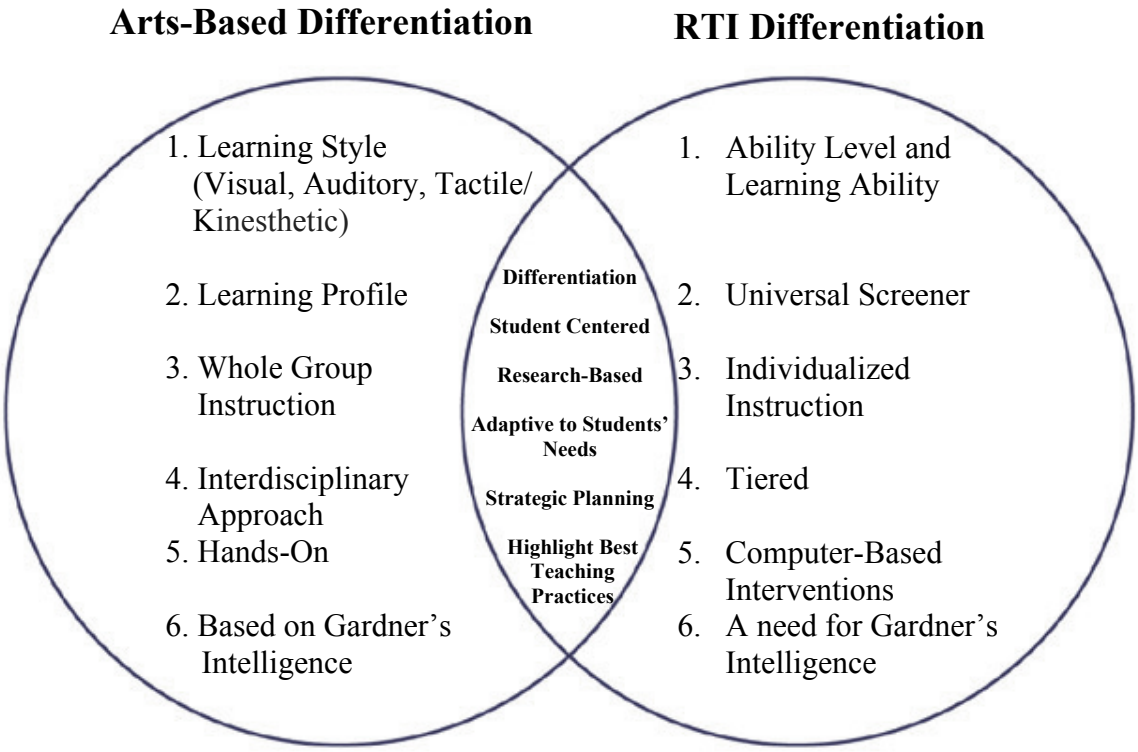

Figure 1. Arts-Based Differentiation and Response to Intervention Differentiation. Based on Tomlinson, 2014; Spear-Swerling & Cheeseman, 2012. This figure illustrates a comparison and contrast of arts-based differentiation and RTI differentiation.

In 2007, teacher leaders in the local context were required to participate in a series of active learning professional development activities on individualized differentiated instruction. The purpose of the workshops was to equip teachers with a more in-depth understanding of how to differentiate the core subjects in whole-group for students with different mastery levels (prerequisite of RTI). The facilitators modeled a variety of teaching methods and activities that allow teachers to meet the students' learning needs.

The on-going professional development meetings took place during a 3-year span (2007-2010). Teacher leaders met twice a year for 3 days each meeting period. Professional learning facilitators introduced the key elements of individualized differentiated instruction (content, process, and product). As part of a train-the-trainer model, teachers participating in the workshop were responsible for sharing their expertise with other teachers in their schools. During the 3-year span, the trainers initiated meaningful collaboration among the teachers from the school under study. As a result, teachers who collaborated around differentiating the core subjects integrated the arts and academics.

Since the professional development on differentiated instruction and implementation of arts integration, the school under study experienced a high teacher turnover rate. From 2005 to 2013, 90% of teachers who taught during the arts implementation phase no longer teach at the school under study (Georgia Department of Education, 2013). Only 10% of the teachers presently employed at the school participated in the differentiated instruction and arts integration professional development. The majority of the school's staff did not attend the arts integration professional development or participate in the district's differentiated instruction training; as a result, teachers may lack the skills to differentiate lessons. A lack of differentiation affects the teachers' ability to meet required performance standards and effectively implement the RTI process.

Definition of the Problem

In 2004, the Federal Government of the United States introduced the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA 2004). IDEIA 2004 was a

result of an overwhelming number of students being identified as having a learning disability; however, the students may not have had learning disabilities, "but because they had not been successful in a general education program" the students were identified without meriting special education services (Prasse, 2010, p. 44). IDEIA reinforced individualized differentiated instruction. The reform ensured that students with learning disabilities had equal access to a fair education; hence, "educators use differentiated instruction strategies to reach this student population" (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 5). Individualized differentiated instruction allows teachers to respond to the diverse needs of all students.

As part of education reform, The No Child Left Behind waiver was offered by the Obama administration in 2011. The shift in the law echoes the accountability facet of The No Child Left Behind Act; however, it gives the states more authority over local education matters. Specifically, the waiver permits the states to hold schools responsible for making progress and reward them for student achievement (Georgia Department of Education, 2013). In 2012, Georgia was granted the waiver in exchange for committing to honor the requirements of the waiver. In 2015, the state was granted a waiver extension. The extension allows Georgia continued flexibility benefits under The No Child Left Behind waiver providing the state continues to adhere to the governments mandate to implement an accountability plan to improve student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Georgia agreed to three requirements: Assure that students are college and career ready, hold schools responsible for improving educational outcomes, and improve the

effectiveness of principals and teachers (Georgia Department of Education, 2013). Preparing students to become college and career ready required states to adopt college and career standards that increase all students' achievement in reading and mathematics (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The states must assist schools and districts with the implementation of the standards as well as standardized testing to measure progress (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Holding schools responsible for making progress allowed the states to develop an accountability plan that acknowledges schools that are performing well and the schools that are making gains in improving student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Strategies must be established to target schools that are under-performing and teach students with the greatest needs (Georgia Department of Education, 2013). Under the guidelines of improving principal and teacher effectiveness, Georgia was responsible for developing a new teacher and principal evaluation system that included a range of measures. Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES), the new system, consists of 10 specific performance standards. Individualized differentiated instruction is embedded in the makeup and elements of the teacher performance standards. Teachers are evaluated on how well they use the teacher performance standards to meet the needs of all students. The TKES includes differentiation as the fourth performance standard. The standard states, "The teacher challenges and supports each student's learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences" (Barge, 2012, p. 1).

According to the school district's curriculum leaders, TKES evaluations were conducted quarterly. The results indicated that the teachers in the school under study

perform significantly lower on differentiated instruction standard than any other performance standard. The district leaders concluded that differentiation should be a regular part of instruction in an arts-integration school; however, the faculty scored in the bottom 10% of schools in the district on the differentiation standard. To receive proficient, teachers must model differentiated instruction and justify the use of the specific instruction (See Appendix B). For example, if a student is using base 10 blocks to add two-digit numbers, data from the universal screener should show that the student is having difficulties with adding two-digit numbers. Data may be presented in a chart anonymously on a data wall inside of the classroom.

Differentiation can include arts-based integration; however, arts-based integration is not required. Proficiency in the differentiation standard is evaluated in the same manner at the arts-integration school as it is at all schools in the district. On the differentiated instruction standard, the fine arts magnet school performs at the level of or slightly below other non-arts-based schools in the district (Georgia Department of Education, 2014).

Tomlinson (2014) indicated that teachers must have a clear understanding of academic content to improve the use of differentiation. Teachers must also determine what students know and do not know. Identifying students' strengths and weaknesses is best achieved by administering a universal screener. Most importantly, teachers should decide the instructional method that best addresses the needs of the individual student. Lastly, teachers need to develop progress monitoring tools to assess mastery of the skills (Roy, Guay, Valois, 2013).

Hughes (2011) demonstrated, through the literature, how individualized differentiated instruction and arts- integration are connected to RTI. Arts-based whole class differentiated instruction (DI) includes instruction that adapts to students' learning styles (visual, auditory, tactile/kinesthetic). Differentiated instruction is done primarily as a class with students involved in activities that encourage movement, listening, singing, and the use of visual aids. In a science class, for example, all students (Tier 1) may be studying the solar system. The teacher may have a small group of students to integrate movement to demonstrate the rotation of the planets around the sun. All students benefit from the lesson; however, the kinesthetic learner associates the movements with the rotations to better understand the concept (Tomlinson, 2014). The auditory learners, in a small group, may listen to a song associated with the planets. Whole-group arts-based DI can be used in Tier I of RTI.

In contrast to arts-based instruction that focuses on whole group instruction, the RTI process calls for small group differentiation in Tier I, and individualized differentiation in Tier II and III. Individualized instruction addresses an identified problem area for an individual student. The problem area is identified by analyzing data from the universal screener. For instance, if a student struggles with math computation, the teacher may use an individualized computer-based program designed to provide remediation for the area of concern.

The requirements from local and state government encourage educators to use varied instructional techniques to reach students with learning differences. According to the district's mathematics curriculum leader, since the district provided the on-going

differentiated instruction professional development (2007-2010) and the school under study offered the arts integration workshop, no other DI professional learning has been provided to teachers at the school under study. The arts integration professional development and DI training gave teachers an opportunity to create repertoires of differentiated instruction strategies (Cawthon, Dawson, Judd-Glossy, & Ihorn, 2012). The district's curriculum leaders concluded that many teachers in the school under study struggle to use differentiated instruction in an arts-integration environment. Only 4% of the teachers met the differentiation standard in the Teacher Keys Evaluation System; therefore, teachers lack individualized differentiated instruction skills.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine elementary (K-5) teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities. Through this study, I aim to provide a framework for planning, implementing, and evaluating effective professional development and provide implications for further studies. The framework will improve individualized differentiated instruction implementation.

Rationale

The school under study experienced instructional deficiencies on both the district and state levels. The data from the TKES and the RTI student placement rate for initial recommendations to special education indicated that the existing problems shared a common factor: a lack of individualized differentiated instruction (Georgia Department of Education, 2013).

RTI relies on the principle that all students can reach a level of success when the RTI process is implemented with fidelity (Roy et al., 2013). Student success lies in the hands of the interventionist. If the interventionist lacks competency in implementing Individualized differentiated instruction, student learning is compromised (Al Otaiba et al., 2014). Therefore, assessing teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities is essential. Students cannot be recommended for special education services because of inadequate instruction.

Teachers' knowledge influence perceptions and instructional delivery. Teachers who have more knowledge of individualized differentiated instruction will implement the process more fully (Tomlinson, 2014). When teachers view individualized differentiated instruction as an unnecessary phenomenon, teachers are less likely to adjust classroom procedures and structure (Megalakaki, Craft, & Cremin, 2010). If teachers perceive the RTI structure as a time-consuming method, their attitudes may compromise the fidelity of implementation. However, positive perceptions about individualized differentiated instruction are more likely to yield the desired outcomes. Perceptions dictate the teachers' willingness to collaborate to form a cohesive plan to help meet the needs of the individual student (Castro-Villarreal, Rodriguez, & Moore, 2014).

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Teachers at the school under study are required to implement the RTI process. Under performing students are identified based on a universal screener. There is no consistent universal screener designated for testing (Crawford, 2014). School districts are

responsible for selecting a valid screener for Reading and Math. Georgia has outlined the following criteria for selecting a universal screener: (a) easily administered (b) research-based (c) standards based (d) prediction generating (e) reliable (f) sensitive to change (g) defined targets (h) accessible analysis and reporting component (Cox, 2008, p. 1). Georgia recommends the use of a universal screener three times a school year (beginning, mid-year, and end). Results from the initial screener are used to set a baseline score. All scores thereafter are used to measure students' progress. Students that are identified as struggling are placed in the RTI process. Searle (2010) noted, "The RTI process coordinates the best of what we know about assessment, research-based instruction, intervention, and collaboration that breeds quality educational programs" (p. 3). Response to intervention includes a problem-solving method through three tiers of instructional intervention. Tier I takes place in a regular education setting and includes all students. During Tier I, students are given a diagnostic assessment (also known as a universal screener) to determine if intervention is needed or what content needs to be differentiated. Students receive small group differentiation. Ideally, 80% of the students remain in Tier I (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). If students do not respond to small group differentiation, students are placed in Tier II. At Tier II, students receive an intervention, smaller group differentiation with a teacher or individualized instruction with software. Four weeks of data are collected from a progress monitoring tool and decisions are made based on the data. If the data indicates that the intervention is not working (student did not meet goal score), the teacher must decide to increase the frequency of the intervention or to change the intervention. The change is implemented for 4 additional weeks. After the last 4

weeks, a meeting takes place with the school administrators, teachers of the student, and parents (Student Support Team) to discuss progress monitoring data. Students that continue to struggle are placed in Tier III. In Tier III, students receive one-to-one individualized differentiated instruction. Eighteen data points are recorded during a 6-week period (three points per week) check time frame for collecting data. The student support team reviews the data every 9 weeks to decide whether to refer the student for a more formal evaluation to determine if special education services are needed (Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009). Students who do not move through the tiers in a timely manner suffer academically as they do not receive the correct intensity of intervention to make academic progress and fall behind their peers (Spear-Swerling et al., 2012).

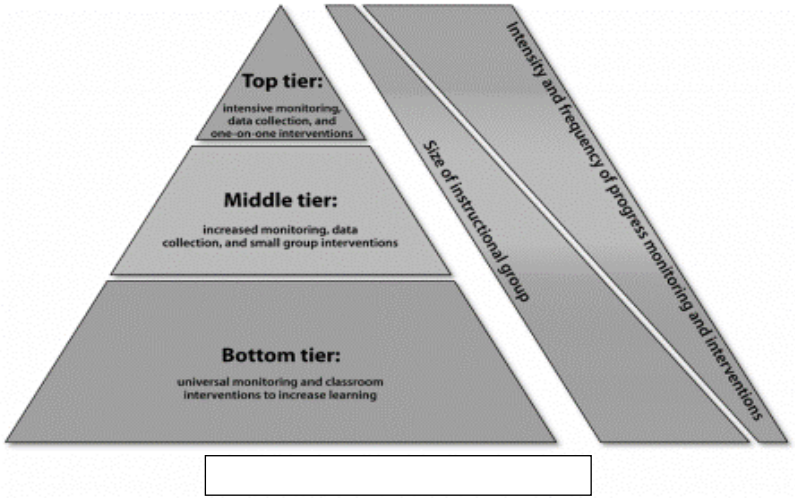

Figure 2. Response to Intervention Three-Tiered Model. Jennifer Job (n.d.). The figure illustrates the conceptual framework for the pyramid of interventions. The bottom tier represents Tier 1, the middle tier represents Tier II, and the top tier represents Tier III. Reprinted under Creative Commons License.

Implementing specific interventions concerns some teachers as they may not understand when and how to use individualized differentiation (Dejar, 2011).

Illustrated in Figure 2, response to intervention's three tired system is designed to increase the intensity of individualized differentiated instruction and decrease the size of the instructional group as struggling students move up the pyramid of interventions. When an intervention does not lead to the desired outcome, data used from progress monitoring can help determine if the student remains in a tier or move to the next tier (Hughes et al., 2011).

It is the teachers' responsibility to move the students through the tiers; however, 95% of the students in the school under study are not moved successfully through the RTI process. Only 5% of identified students reach the proper tier, which means students may not receive the appropriate assistance. The majority of students remain in Tier II because teachers may struggle with determining how to differentiate instruction.

From 2012-2014, the district's special education placement rate was 40% (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). The placement rate determines the success of the RTI process. When students are referred for special education testing in Tier III, at least 80% of the students referred should qualify for special education. A placement rate of 40% suggests that students are being referred for special education who may only require a more intense differentiated instruction plan (Georgia Department, 2014).

The state placed the school district under a RTI corrective action plan in 2015. The corrective action plan is a result of an audit that pinpointed the teachers' inability to implement the RTI process properly. Tier placement was a major concern; for example, students remain in the same tier for several years when the data do not suggest the students are making academic progress. When under a corrective action plan, teachers

must show improvement in the implementation process within two years (Georgia Department of Education, 2013).

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Most general education teachers use the same instructional strategies for all students. Research by Alotaiba et al. (2011) indicated that special education teachers and school psychologist find it, "challenging to help classroom teachers to use assessment data to guide small group instruction or to individualize interventions based on students' strengths and weaknesses" (p. 536). For students to reach a level of success, teachers must understand the individualized differentiation instruction process. If all students with learning variances are required to master state standards, "then the teacher must use different approaches for different students" (Martin, 2013, p. 96). Evidenced-based instruction, data-based decision-making, collaboration, and support for individualized differentiation implementation are important when implementing individualized instruction with fidelity (Tomlinson, 2014). However, meeting the instructional needs of diverse learners has been regarded as a major concern for most teachers. Through a qualitative study, Swicord, Chancey, and Bruce-Davis (2013) confirmed that individualized differentiated instruction is not being implemented consistently in the classrooms. One structural reason noted for the inconsistency was too little planning time. Individualized differentiated instruction requires a substantial amount of planning. However, "the aim is that the inclusion of diverse needs should enable both learners and teachers to see it as enrichment in the learning area and as a challenge rather than as a burden in education" (Dejar, 2011, p. 87).

After conducting a study involving pre-service teachers, Martin (2013) echoed the irregularity of individualized instruction implementation, stating: "The complexities surrounding differentiation have contributed to, and have been compounded by, the inadequacy with which differentiated instruction has generally been addressed in teacher education" (p. 96). Other teachers admit that they lack the knowledge and skills in adjusting the curriculum to fit the diverse learning styles (Chin-Wen, 2015). Teachers' lack of individualized differentiation knowledge and skills may result from inadequate professional development. Taylor (2015) noted that teachers struggle with implementation because there is no common definition of individualized differentiated instruction. Teachers desire a consistent model that guides implementation.

A broader look reveals that individualized differentiation affects RTI implementation (Roy et al., 2013). On the other hand, a lack of research exists about individualized differentiated instruction and RTI. After researching the first year of RTI implementation, Robinson, Bursuck, and Sinclair (2013) concluded that teachers struggled with differentiating the content; lack of differentiation results from a lack of understanding the content. Teachers' understanding of the content fosters effective individualized differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2014). Robinson, et al. (2013) also noted that teachers are not creative when it comes to differentiating the content and a limitation on the resources available to individualize instruction also is a pedagogic dilemma.

Definitions

For clarification of key terms in the study, the following are defined:

Corrective Action Plan: A plan highlighting methods to improve teacher performance, administration or curriculum that a school district classified as "in improvement" undertakes to improve student and teacher performance (Georgia Department of Education, 2013).

Fine Arts Magnet School: A school in which the curriculum focuses on teaching and learning through performing and fine arts (Tomlinson, 2014).

Differentiated Instruction (arts context): Using the performing arts as an instructional approach to meet the academic needs of the individual student (Pool, Dittrich et al., 2011).

Differentiated Instruction (RTI context): Using research-based interventions to meet the instructional needs of each individual student based on the student's ability level (Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009).

Progress Monitoring: Progress monitoring is used to test students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention. Progress monitoring can be implemented during whole group, small group, or individually (Crawford, 2014).

Response to Intervention: A multitiered framework that provides research- based interventions to students that have been identified early as having difficulty learning (Georgia Department of Education, 2008).

Student Support Team (SST): A team of administrators, teachers, and parents that work together to ensure the success of the student. Parents can recommend assistance from the SST team when the student is having difficulty learning (Crawford, 2014).

Tiered Instruction/Lessons: The varied instruction delivered to students on several dimensions based on the severity of student's difficulties (Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009).

Universal Screener: An assessment given to all students to determine which students need to be placed in the RTI process and the specific academic area of weakness. (Searle, 2010).

Significance

Throughout school districts in the United States, individualized differentiated instruction is used as a pedagogical methodology (Jones, Yssel, & Grant, 2012). With no intensive attention given to teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction, research suggested that teachers' implementation of individualized differentiated instruction changes learning outcomes (Heacox, 2012). A gap in research between research and practice continue to exist. The current study can be applied to the local setting from which the problem originates. Only 4% of the teachers at the school under study meet the differentiated instruction standard on the TKES. In addition, the school district struggles with individualized differentiated instruction as evidenced by a 40% special education placement rate.

Through the study, I examined elementary (K-5) teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities. A teacher's belief affects the way in which he or she behaves in the classroom (Greenfield, Rinaldi, Proctor & Cardarelli, 2010). Exceptional teachers hold belief frameworks that improve instruction. Guthrie (2009) asserted, "the most effective instructional practices of the teacher are, therefore, influenced by the

theoretical frameworks" (p. 29). Guthrie (2009) also noted that the teacher's mindset and the student are components that define "the mastery of the art of teaching resulting in improved student achievement" (p. 29).

The findings fostered recommendations that will improve instructional delivery. This study may provide valuable contributions to individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparing, and professional responsibilities. In addition, implications for further studies are noted. My study impacts social change by providing recommendations for planning, implementing, and evaluating effective professional development; as a result, a framework is offered that improves individualized differentiated instruction and student learning outcomes.

Research Questions

Individualized differentiated instruction provides the basics for teachers to follow to meet the needs of each student. The students' needs are met by using individualized instructional strategies in the classroom or in a one-to-one setting. The individualized differentiated instruction process does not specify what instructional strategies meet each student's academic deficiencies. When instruction is individualized, the teacher meets the student where the student is and moves the student forward on the learning continuum. Theoretically, high quality individualized differentiated instruction reduces the number of students progressing into higher tiers of intervention. There are some best instructional practices but implementation is problematic in many areas and little research exists that show positive results on a large scale (Spear-Swerling et al., 2012). To explore elementary (K-5) teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it

relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities, the research questions to be considered are:

RQ 1: What are teachers' perceptions of how awareness of students' knowledge and skills affect planning individualized instruction?

RQ 2: What are teachers' perceptions of the role that planning assessments play in individualized differentiated instruction?

RQ 3: What are teachers' perceptions of how instructional goals based on students' learning needs are developed for each student?

RQ 4: What are teachers' perceptions of how enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skills affect their use of individualized instruction?

The research questions set the basis for this study by stating the problem and determining what kinds of data need to be collected. The methodology section will outline the procedure in which each research question is addressed.

Review of the Literature

In this study, I examined elementary (K-5) teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities. I begin the literature review with an in-depth look at Danielson's framework for teachers as the foundation of my conceptual framework. The extensive literature search strategy included a search by topic at the Walden University library and the use of Google Scholar. I used the following education data-bases: (a) Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), (b) Education from SAGE, and (c) ProQuest Central. The refereed articles are from educational journals; reports and handbooks also

make up the body of literature review. I used the following key terms for my initial search: *individualized differentiated instruction, differentiated instruction, individualized instruction, primary instruction, elementary instruction, Response to Intervention,* and *Danielson's framework.* Authors that I encountered in the literature review suggested other terms to consider for search strategies. Joseph, Thomas, Simonette, and Ramsook (2013) suggested that individualized differentiated instruction not be viewed as only an instructional strategy but relatively as a critical instructional and learning philosophy. To reach saturation, further searches included*: critical teaching, learning philosophy, planning and preparation, instructional strategy, learning differences, learning variance,* and *teacher perceptions.*

Danielson's Framework for Teaching

Differentiated Instruction is a philosophy that first appeared in the literature in the 17th century (Tomlinson, 2014). Since the increase of diversity in groups of learners and the introduction of RTI legislation (mandating use of differentiation) more schools are implementing tiered learning. Teachers struggle with the pedagogical dilemma of meeting the needs of each student. Therefore, Danielson's framework for teaching constitutes the conceptual framework for the current study. The framework for teaching offers the foundational support for implementing individualized differentiated instruction (Bryant, Maarouf, Burcham, & Greer, 2016). In addition, the TKES 10 specific performance standards are aligned with Danielson's framework. The framework measures levels of performance through ratings of unsatisfactory, needs improvement, proficient, and distinguished. Illustrated in Figure 2, Danielson's four domains of teaching

responsibilities include: (1) Planning and Preparation, (2) Classroom Environment, (3) Instruction, and (4) Professional Responsibilities (Danielson, 2011).

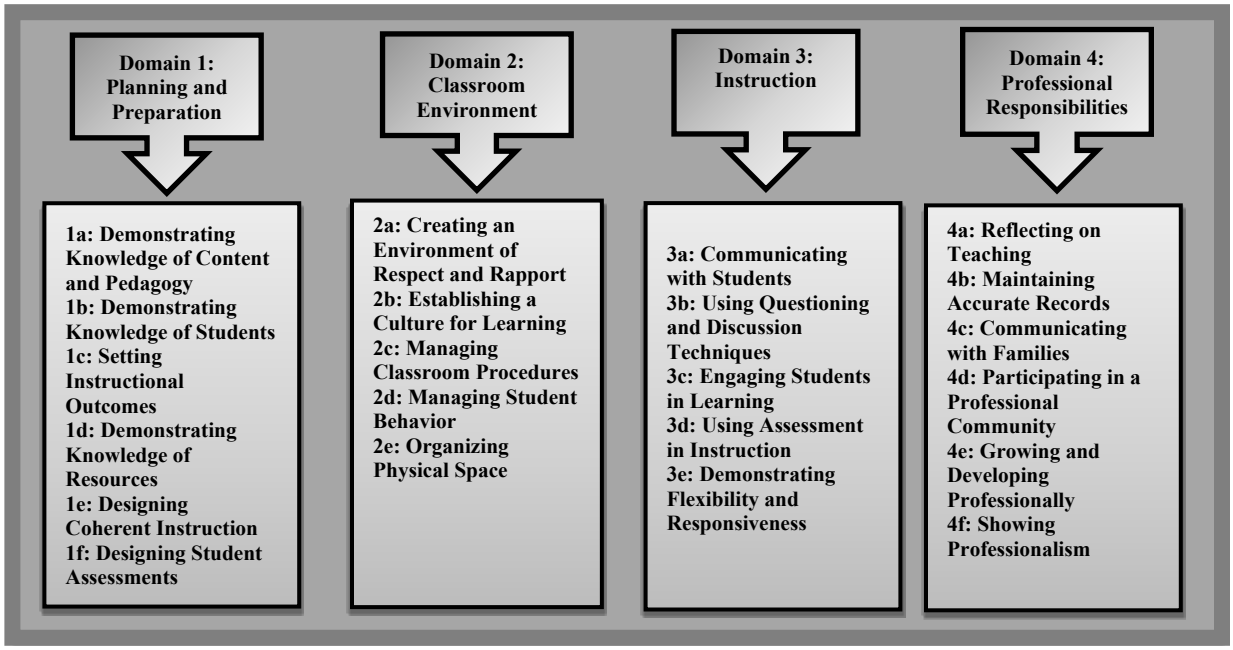

Figure 3. Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching. Based on Viviano (2012, p. 10). This figure illustrates Danielson's four domains of professional practice. Elements describe distinct aspects of each domain.

One of the most important facets of individualized differentiated instruction is the planning and preparation domain (Viviano, 2012). Professional Knowledge, Professional Planning, Differentiated Instruction, and Assessment Strategies (Performance Standard 1, Performance Standard 2, Performance Standard 4, and Performance Standard 5, respectively) of the TKES platform are illustrated within the planning and preparation domain. When planning and preparing, teachers begin with the end in mind; a plan is developed to achieve the desired outcome (Bryant et al., 2016).

During planning, teachers design coherent instruction that supports the instructional goals and engages students in relevant learning. In the planning phase,

teachers demonstrate content knowledge, curricular knowledge, and pedagogy content knowledge. Content knowledge is knowledge of the subject matter. Bryant et al. (2016) defined curricular knowledge as the knowledge associated with the programs created for the instruction of specific subject areas and skills. Danielson (2011) stressed the use of resources; when content knowledge is sharpened, teachers are familiar with identifying resources that are needed for teaching individualized differentiation. Pedagogical content knowledge is representing the subject matter in a way that makes it comprehensible to students, understanding how to teach the content as well as the content itself.

Lee Shulman's extensive work on the subject has been used in educational research (Weidona & Birdsall, 2016). Shulman suggested that exhibiting pedagogical content knowledge requires teachers to acquire knowledge of students' academic backgrounds and design instruction accordingly. Weidona et al. (2016) added that teachers should plan assessments that are aligned with instructional goals. Assessment data is used to plan instruction for whole-group or individual students. When teachers plan assessments accordingly, the classroom environment is conducive to learning for all students (Taylor, 2015).

Students also play an important role in their learning. Alavinia and Farhady (2012) found that leading a student's natural energy to the content of the curriculum is a pedagogical challenge. Teachers' commitment to the subject inspires students to take pride in their work and claim responsibility to initiate improvement to their product. With the establishment of rituals and routines, students take ownership for their smooth functioning (Tomlinson, 2014). Students are then able to work purposefully in groups or

independently with little teacher supervision; as a result, the classroom environment displays a high level of civility (Alavinia et al., 2012). Not only do students interact respectfully, but they value cultural as well as developmental differences among groups of students (Danielson's Framework, n.d). The classroom environment domain is embedded in TKES Positive Learning Environment performance standard (Standard 7).

Tomlinson and Santangelo (2012) concluded that the instruction domain condenses the elements that are at the fundamental core of teaching-the students engaged in learning the content. Teachers understand their accountability for student learning and adjust instruction to improve learning outcomes. The teacher is knowledgeable of the content; therefore, communication is clear and accurate. Students understand what is expected and the teacher conveys the goals for learning in a precise manner. Students can also articulate the expectations and learning goals. Instruction is the implementation phase of the plan developed in domain one. During implementation, teachers relate content to real-life situations making instruction relevant to the larger curriculum. Using vivid language, teachers connect the content to extend student vocabulary (Danielson's Framework, n.d.). To develop conceptual understanding, teachers scaffold, model, and link lessons to each student. Students take pride in their work and make self-corrections when necessary.

In domain three, Danielson (2011) recommends two ways to assess using student involvement: self-reflection conducted by the students and progress monitoring implemented by both the students and teachers. Viviano (2012) supports teachers including students as participants in the learning community. Danielson (2011) also encourages higher-order thinking and oral dialogue. Teachers use questions and

discussion techniques that promote metacognition. The TKES standards Instructional Strategies, Assessment Uses, and Academically Challenging Environment are embedded in the Instruction domain (Performance Standard 3, Performance Standard 6, and Performance Standard 8, respectively).

Danielson's final domain, professional responsibility, is aligned with TKES Performance Standards 9 and 10 (Professionalism and Communication, respectively). Domain four suggests that a teacher's self-evaluation gives an accurate account of the lesson's effectiveness (Danielson's Framework, n.d). After self-reflecting, teachers draw from alternative strategies to improve student learning. These strategies can come from a repertoire of student records that teachers are responsible for maintaining. Danielson's professional responsibilities include teachers' involvement both inside and outside of the classroom. Teachers are also responsible for feeding a culture of inquiry through professional development. Danielson (2011) stated that "teachers seek out opportunities for professional development to enhance content knowledge and pedagogical skill" (p. 2). Growing and developing as a professional is paramount. Another element is that teacher's interaction with parents. The framework proposes that teachers engage parents in students' learning to enhance student achievement. Danielson's framework is the overarching guide for effective teaching throughout the Georgia TKES.

Many TKES performance standards overlap within each domain. Danielson's Domains Planning, Preparation, and Professional Responsibilities address facets outside of the classroom (Danielson's Framework, n.d.). TKES performance standard four, differentiated instruction, is embedded throughout Danielson's guiding principles.

Differentiation requires exhaustive planning and preparation to implement instruction that will yield the same outcomes for all students. Likewise, teachers must engage in professional development to enhance pedagogical strategies and content knowledge. Danielson's planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities domains were used to guide the current study.

Research Literature

Individualized differentiated instruction is a way in which teaching and learning is approached by altering curriculum related elements: content, process, and product (Tomlinson, 2012). Research in the era of individualized differentiated instruction is limited; however, the restricted studies identify the efficacy as well as components of the instructional phenomena. Researchers' exploration of pedagogical methods that target different facets of students' learning contributes to the body of individualized differentiated instruction literature.

Individualized Differentiated Instruction

Greenfield et al., (2010) defined differentiation as the compilation of instructional strategies and learning theories that support student achievement. Individualized differentiated instruction has evolved as researchers illuminate appropriate pedagogical strategies. However, many teachers struggle with implementing individualized differentiated instruction effectively. Martin (2013) contended that the theory and implementation alone are thought of as being highly complex. Alavinia et al. (2012) agreed with Martin (2013) and noted that planning time and finding the materials necessary are barriers to implementing individualized differentiated instruction

effectively. Nonetheless, individualized differentiated instruction is a high quality instructional practice. When students receive high quality instruction, it is evidenced that students meet learning goals and on boarder terms do not move into higher tiers of the RTI process (Crawford, 2014).

Individualized differentiated instruction meets the unique needs of the student. Tomlinson's (2014) studies highlighted a philosophy of learning in which teachers build upon student's prior knowledge and continue to build as knowledge is newly found. One objective behind individualized differentiated instruction is meeting students where they are (pre-assessing) to determine the necessary steps to get the students where they need to be. Emphasized in Danielson's (2011) domain one, teachers need to devise a plan that highlights what students need to know, understand, and do. As part of this plan, teachers must include the instructional strategies that will be employed to meet the learning goals.

Tomlinson (2014) proposed that individualized differentiated instruction involves knowing students and what teaching strategies work best for the individual student. To identify the needs of the students, it is necessary to pre-assess students. Pre-assessments to individualized differentiated instruction provide academic data that are used to guide individualized instruction. Joseph, et al. (2013) supported the use of pre-assessments; pre-assessments are formative assessments given to students to assess prior knowledge before a lesson. As individualized differentiated instruction takes place, student progress is assessed frequently through progress monitoring.

Readiness, interest, and learning profile. Knowing students allows teachers to respond to students' readiness, interest, and learning profile (Martin, 2013). Responding

to readiness involves the student's current understanding of a topic. Readiness differentiation is matching the task to a student's skill level and prior knowledge. When students' readiness levels differ, the teachers' instructional strategies must be differentiated to meet the needs of each student. What the student loves to do and what motivates the student refers to student interest. Interest differentiation, involves taking the curriculum or content and delivering instruction based on what interest the student (Heacox, 2012). Lastly, learning profile differentiation refers to a student's learning strengths. Learning style, intelligence preference, gender, and culture all impact a student's mode of learning. Learning style differentiation is embraced by Gardner's multiple intelligence theory. A student's learning style can include visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Students vary in readiness, interest, and learning preference.

Content, process, and product. Once teachers have a clear picture of who the student is differentiation can take place in three ways: through (a) content, (b) process, and (c) product (Taylor, 2015). Content constitutes the "what" of instruction, process is the "how," and product is the "evidence" of instruction. Content is what the student should be able to know, do, and understand. When teaching a skill, teachers can vary the level of difficulty. In a reading class, a vocabulary skill can be taught by giving students different literature ranging in reading levels to address students' specific needs. According to Tomlinson (2014), process refers to how the teacher will vary the way in which the content is taught according to the students' interest or learning style. For example, in a science class, students may engage in a lab, conduct internet searches, draw cells, or create a model. The content is similar; however, students may choose from dissimilar activities

or processes. Teachers may also differentiate the product. Differentiating the product refers to the way in which students demonstrate their knowledge of mastery; students have a choice in how they display what they have been taught (Tomlinson et al., 2012). In a history class, students may decide to write an essay, present a PowerPoint, or give an oral response on the topic learned. Content, process, and product are essential pieces to the individualized instruction puzzle. Figure 4 illustrates the amalgamated pieces that guide individualized differentiation in the education environment.

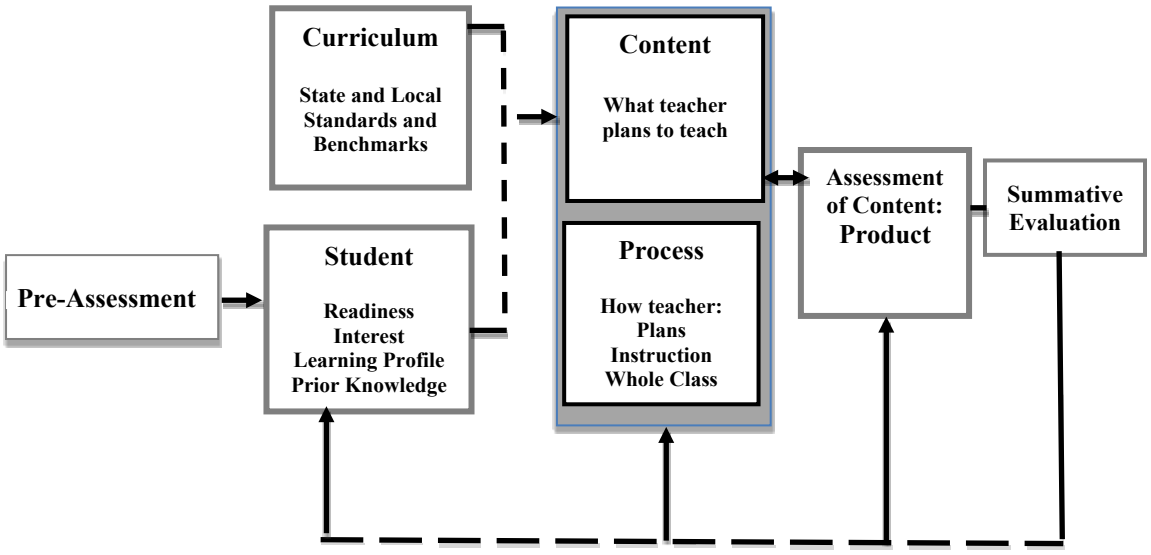

Figure 4. Key Elements to Guiding Individualized Differentiated Instruction. Based on Taylor (2015). This figure illustrates the learning cycle and decision factors used in planning and implementing differentiated instruction.

Planning and Preparation for Individualized Differentiated Instruction

In keeping with the student-centered focus, the individualized differentiated instruction process is defined in the literature not merely as instructional strategies but a way to approach teaching so that ideas are discovered to new strategies and teaching

methods (Martin, 2013). During the planning and preparation phase of individualized differentiated instruction, teachers take what they know about both the curriculum and student, devise a plan that meets appropriate ranges of learning needs, and establish learning goals. A plan outlining individualized differentiated instruction entails collaboration, learning goals, instructional strategies, coherent instruction, curriculum materials, and assessments appropriate for students' individual learning styles (Swicord et al., 2013).

Through a qualitative study, De Jager (2011) evidenced that teachers use individualized differentiated instruction strategies when collaboration is evidenced. Professional Development and resource availability also were discussed as necessities in De Jager' (2011) study. Danielson's (2011) framework supported collaboration among colleagues as well as parents. Effective and structured collaboration helps teachers feel part of a community of learners. Similarly, Al Otaiba et al. (2014) found that collaboration that includes peer training, action research, study cohorts, or in-house workshops builds in turns benefits the students. Intensive dialogue can help teachers develop a repertoire of strategies to meet students' diverse needs. Professional development outside of the school setting also promotes professional growth.

Professional development is essential when implementing any systematic change. Roe (2010) suggested that teachers that engage in problem-solving professional development cultivate students' ability to use problem-solving strategies. Danielson (2011) noted the importance of teacher training in the framework for teachers. Professional development can encourage communication and shared decision making,

which are essential for successful implementation of individualized differentiated instruction. Chin-Wen (2015) conducted a study on the influence of individualized differentiated instruction professional development on thirteen Taiwanese K-5 teachers. Chin-Win concluded that "the content of professional development should include theories and instructional strategies on differentiated instruction" (p. 278). Teachers benefit from seeing a model that includes the demonstration of instructional strategies during professional development. Also, if teachers are responsible for implementing the material learned in professional development, there should be a check and balance procedure after teachers are back in the classrooms. Opfer, Pedder, and Lavicza (2010) agreed that teacher training is essential. The co-authors suggested that a problem-solving approach emphasizing one-to-one professional development is best for introducing teachers to more effective classroom strategies. Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, and Harden (2014), on the other hand, add more rigor.

> Dixon and colleagues (2014) believed that professional development opportunities must not only introduce the topic of differentiation, but teachers must be allowed to practice the strategy in a workshop setting in which the "coach" helps them write and review their own lessons, assuring them of greater success in the classroom (p. 115).

Implementing Instruction for Individualized Differentiation

The purpose of individualized differentiating instruction is to meet the student where he or she is academically and build on the student's prior knowledge (Taylor, 2015). Joseph et al. (2013) suggested that teachers adjust how they present the material

intended for students to learn to individualize instruction. Individualized differentiated instruction is designed to be flexible (Al Otaiba et al, 2011; Danielson, 2011). Teachers use assessments and progress monitoring to guide instructional variations.

Danielson (n.d.) acknowledged the importance of assessments during the instructional phase of the effective teaching framework. To monitor progress, teachers should use an assessment to set a baseline score. Using the baseline score, "teachers add running records to monitor student progress as well as informal observation of students" (Walker-Dalhouse et al., 2009, p. 85). For example, one Wisconsin school district used the *Classroom Assessment Based on Standards* (CABS) as a systematic assessment to inform individualized differentiated instruction. The CABS diagnostic tool is utilized at the start of the school year to determine what content needs differentiating. Students in Wisconsin are progress monitored frequently. However, school districts may choose which test will provide baseline data.

Progress monitoring can aide in making data-based decisions about how to individualize instruction to match a specific learning style. Likewise, Roy et al. (2013) confirmed that progress monitoring aids in the implementation of effective teaching adjustments. A teacher's instructional flexibility relies on progress monitoring data for direction. On the other hand, Al Otaiba et al. (2011) cautioned that many general education teachers use the same teaching strategies for all students and do not use assessment data to drive instruction for students with weaker skills. As noted by Danielson (2011) in domain one, activating prior knowledge is the first step to planning appropriate instructional strategies. Teachers develop learning profiles that outline

students' strengths as well as weaknesses. Tomlinson (2014) supports using a pretest in each subject to assess students' prior knowledge. Alternatively, Jones et al. (2012) recommended that teachers use effective strategies for groups of students that have deficiencies in the same subject area. Jones and colleagues (2012) stated that by focusing on groups as oppose to individuals helps teachers develop more intensive lessons.

Implications

The purpose of this study is to examine elementary (K-5) teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning and preparation and professional responsibilities. The school under study may find this research instrumental to the implementation of individualized differentiated instruction. Findings from the study may contribute to the literature that assist in the eradication of individualized differentiated instruction implementation barriers. In addition, the findings will be used to provide recommendations for relevant staff professional development. Professional development served as the study's project. Teachers that are knowledgeable of the implementation process are more comfortable meeting the needs of learning variances. If students do not receive instruction that meets their needs, academic achievement is hindered (Tomlinson et al., 2012). Implementing individualized differentiated instruction with fidelity is important in ensuring that student achievement increases (Hughes & Dexter, 2011).

The findings will be used to encourage school districts to take a closer look at individualized differentiated instruction professional development. If teachers know which individualized instruction works best in a specific context, they become more

competent in selecting the proper instruction for a specific problem (Pyle, Wade-Woolley, & Hutchinson, 2011). The intended audience of administrators, teachers, and policy makers may find the results of this study useful in creating a comprehensive framework that incorporates planning and evaluation of the professional development.

If teachers do not implement individualized differentiated instruction, there will be lost opportunities for students. There is a lack of research that provides effective implementation of individualized differentiated instruction strategies. However, if implemented with fidelity, individualized differentiated instruction may lead to greater student achievement (Jones et al., 2012). A framework's effectiveness is measured by the way it is implemented. Understanding the teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction will affect student success by guiding schools in the effective use of resources (Sanger, Friedli, Brunken, Snow, & Ritzman, 2012).

Summary

The school in the local context has lacked development in individualized differentiated instruction; therefore, teachers struggle with implementing individualized differentiated instruction. Individualized differentiated instruction is a necessary component of the learning continuum (Robinson et al., 2013). The lack of professional learning in differentiation is evidenced by the results of the districts' curriculum team evaluations of the teachers. In classroom observations, teachers scored poorly in differentiated instruction and the ability to move the students through the proper RTI tiers. The RTI model is necessary on both the local level and national level. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004 (IDEIA 2004) mandates including RTI as a

part of a school's process for qualifying a student for special education. Danielson's framework for teaching guided this study; especially, Domain 1 and Domain 3. The current study used qualitative research methods to examine elementary (K-5) teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities.

Section 2: The Methodology

The methodology section is composed of a description of the research design, selection of participants, data collection, and the data analysis processes. I also discuss my role within the school under study. I also outline my plan to ensure validity and reliability of the data collecting process and analysis.

I used a qualitative case study to examine elementary (K-5) teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities. Case studies involve the collection of data from a variety of sources and the usage of several different methods (i.e., lesson plans and interviews). According to Merriam (2009), the findings in a case study assist in generating new ideas. I selected the case study approach as an appropriate method to address the research questions of this qualitative study because it allows for an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction within the classroom setting. Creswell (2012) noted, "a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection" (p. 465). The case in this study was bounded by the participants' shared experience of implementing individualized differentiated instruction in the school under study.

I gathered data through lesson plans and interviews. Data collected from participants contributed to an understanding of teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities. In this study, the results contributed to providing recommendations for

planning and evaluating effective professional development. A framework that improves individualized differentiated instruction and student learning outcomes is the result.

Justification for Qualitative Case Study Design

In this study, I examined a real-life situation using a case study approach that involved an extensive investigation into a contemporary phenomenon within the setting in which the phenomenon exists. Data that I gathered was reflective of teachers' perceptions of their daily experiences with individualized differentiated instruction. I selected case study research because the extent of exploration involved programs, events, activities, processes, or one or more individuals. The research questions guided the examination of the problem of the study. After considering many research designs, I determined that a case study was most appropriate to ensure that the questions were answered. The case study design allowed me to examine teachers' perceptions so that future changes involving individualized differentiated instruction can be implemented.

I considered several research designs to determine what would be the best approach to adequately address my central research question. Creswell (2013) highlighted the following qualitative designs for consideration: narrative, grounded theory, ethnographic, phenomenological, and case study. Narrative research involves the retelling of an individual's experience of an educational problem. I was more interested in, "exploring the experiences of the individual" (Creswell, 2013, p. 507). Narrative research does not explore a phenomenon. Therefore, narrative research was not the best approach for this study.

I also considered grounded theory. According to Creswell (2012), grounded theory research is a "systematic procedure used to generate a theory that explains, at a broad conceptual level, a process, an action, or an interaction about a substantive topic" (p. 423). The theory is grounded in the data; thus, grounded theory outlines the steps for analyzing data. In this study, I examined a process that lacked consistency. It would be impossible to establish a theory when the process in which the theory is based needs to be amended. Grounded theory was not aligned with the purpose of this study.

Ethnographic research is the study of a cultural group in their real-life environment (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Ethnographic data is collected primarily through field notes where the researcher engages in the culture of the group. In this study, I used interviews and lesson plans to collect data. In an ethnographic study, the group being studied may not be a representation of the population; therefore, the ethnographic approach was not suitable for this research.

Another design that I considered was phenomenological research. Phenomenological researchers examine the meaning of the lived experiences of individuals (Merriam, 2009). The phenomenon is insulated and is shared by individuals. Pereira (2012) noted that "to be judged valid, a phenomenological study must take into consideration methodological congruence (rigorous and appropriate procedures) and experiential concerns that provide insight in terms of plausibility and illumination about a specific phenomenon" (p. 19). Phenomenological methods were not congruent to the purpose and research questions in this study because I examined a phenomenon in addition to multiple components (planning, preparation, and professional responsibility).

Population and Participants

The population for this study consisted of 32 teachers from a fine arts magnet school in Southwest Georgia. I used purposeful sampling to collect the perceptions of the teachers through interviews and lesson plan review. Maxwell (2013) advised that purposeful sampling highlights a selection based on a specific criterion. Purposeful sampling allowed the selection of only those regular education teachers that meet the following criteria: (a) regular education teacher (b) K-5 grade teacher (b) teach reading or math. Fine arts teachers (those who specialize in teaching dance, music, drama, and visual art) were excluded.

Justification for the Number of Participants

Merriam (1998) noted that the size of the sample is not determined by the need to generalize but by a need to investigate the chosen topic and provide relevant data. The sample size for this study included 12 regular education teachers who teach reading, math or both in grades K-5. Teachers in grades 3-5 are departmentalized. Departmentalization means that one teacher teaches math or reading for all the students in that particular grade. The teachers selected are responsible for implementing individualized differentiated instruction. I used purposeful sampling to fully examine teachers' perceptions and provided relevant data. I chose the sample size for data saturation. Saturation is likely to occur with 12 participants (Jones, et al., 2012). When data became redundant, I subjectively determined saturation. A sample size of 12 was a sufficient representation of the teachers' perception in the school under study.

Procedure for Gaining Access to Participants

Before the data collection process began, approval was sought and granted by the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB; Approval Number: 10-11-16-0281542). I met face-to-face with the superintendent of the district under study. The purpose of the meeting was to gain permission to conduct the study. The building principal served as the gatekeeper. A gatekeeper is the liaison between the data collector and the respondents (Creswell, 2014). I presented a brief description of the study to all faculty members during a scheduled collaboration meeting. The principal provided a list of regular education teachers who teach grades K-5 and reading and/or math. The list included the number of years that the teachers have taught at the school. All teachers in grades K-5 that met the criteria were notified by use of my Walden email account (teachers were given a week to reply with interest to participate). The email included the purpose of the study, the participant's role, and benefits of taking part in the study. I selected twelve teacher participants, who volunteered to participate, to continue through the consent process. All participants received a consent form. The purpose of the study, nature of the study, procedures, risks and benefits of being in the study, contact information, consent for participants' permission to participate, and confidentiality assurance were included in the form.

Methods of Establishing a Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

I considered the participants throughout data collection and established a researcher-participant working relationship with each of them. A relationship is important in assuring that participants are comfortable and well informed of the purpose of the study.

When participants are comfortable with the study, the participants' answers are likely to be candid (Yin, 2014).

After I established the eligibility of participants based on the criteria, I sent individual emails to participants who were eligible. The email included information regarding the purpose of the study; the role that the participants would play in the study; each activity required of the participants, along with the time required to complete each activity; and the advantages of taking part in the study. The email also ensured eligible participants of confidentiality (Yin, 2014). I met as a group with 15 eligible participants who agreed to take part in the study. At that time, I thanked the participants, selected 12 participants from those who volunteered, the consent forms were signed privately by each participant, and then returned to me in the conference room. I stored consent forms in a locked file at my home. Data collection did not interfere with the day-to-day instructional responsibilities of the participants. During data collection, I assured participants of confidentiality and reminded participants that responses were voluntarily. I addressed concerns and questions throughout data collections. Members of the sample received a copy of the draft results for member checking. In addition, the participants will have access to the final results of the study.

Ethical Protection of the Participants

By adhering to Walden University's policies and procedures, I ensured ethical protection. A human research protections training was completed and a certificate was received. I obtained consent from the district's superintendent as well as the principal of the school under study. The IRB application included the consent of the superintendent

and principal. Approval from the IRB to conduct the study was granted prior to data collection. Before the informed consent was signed by participants, I reminded participants that they had a right to ask questions and withdraw their decision to participate at any time. I stressed and enforced the participants' confidentiality throughout the study. I also collected the lesson plans. I secured all documents in a locked file cabinet at my home upon completion of each data-collection method. The data will be stored in a locked file at my home for 5 years.

Data Collection

After I completed the consent process, I anonymously assigned participants codes 1-D to 12-D. I used the participants' codes to link each form of data to a participant's individual perception. In addition, I gave participants an individual schedule that outlined the time and date of the interview. During after school hours, I collected lesson plans in the school's conference room.

To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, I used triangulation during data collection. Yin (2014) indicated that "triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources" (p.17). The qualitative data collection included face-to-face interviews and lesson plans. The interviews and collection of lesson plans were designed to gain the participants' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities. For participants' convenience, each form of data was collected sequentially.

During the initial phase of data collection, I conducted interviews. Interviews provide a rich source of data (Creswell, 2014). I created the interview protocol for this study (See Appendix C). I used a semi-structured protocol highlighting perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities. I presented the questions in an open-ended format and allowed participants to explain their answers. After instructional hour, I conducted each face-to-face interview in a small room at the public library (convenient to all participants) after instructional hours. With permission from participants, I audio recorded all interviews. I created a spreadsheet matrix to keep track of all data collected from participants. I analyzed data concurrently throughout the study to determine when data saturation occurred.

Following face to face interviews, I collected lesson plans for the second source of data. I asked participants to provide a copy of a week of reading or math lesson plans. As a part of teacher responsibilities at the local context, school administrators required l teachers to submit lesson plans to the school's instructional coach weekly. Teachers use lesson plans to highlight how individualized differentiated instruction will be used in daily lessons. I created a lesson plan protocol that I used to examine how teachers perceive individualized instruction during planning and preparing (See Appendix D). Reviewing the lesson plans allowed me to gain insight as to the planning and preparation given to individualized instruction.

Alignment of research method

I designed the research questions to examine elementary (K-5) teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, perception, and professional responsibility. To methodically address the purpose of the study, it is paramount that the research questions are aligned with the methodology (Yin, 2014). Table 1 provides the research questions alignment with the data sources, and the designs used for presenting findings.

Table 1

Alignment of Research Questions with Data Analysis Sources

Research Questions (RQ)	Data Source	Data Analysis
RQ 1: What are teachers' perceptions of how awareness of students' knowledge and skills affect planning and individualized instruction?	Lesson plans Interviews	Qualitative narrative form
RQ 2: What are teachers' perceptions of the role that planning assessments play in individualized differentiated instruction?	Lesson plans Interviews	Qualitative narrative form
RQ 3: What are teachers' perceptions of how instructional goals based on students' learning needs are developed for each student?	Interviews	Qualitative narrative form
RQ 4: What are teachers' perceptions of how enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skills affect their use of individualized instruction?	Interviews	Qualitative narrative form

Note: Research questions and data collection methods.

Role of the researcher

A pre-established relationship provided the foundation for building a researcher-participant relationship. I have worked in the school under study for 16 years. I serve as an Early Intervention Teacher in the local context school. An Interventionist provides research-based interventions for identified students in an Early Intervention Program. I neither hold a supervising position in the school under study nor supervise any of the participants in the study. My role in the study was to collect, analyze, interpret, and report findings that are valid and reliable relating to the research problem.

Data Analysis

Organizing qualitative data is critical because of the volume and wealth of information gathered. Yin (2014) suggested that analyzing data is "examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of a study" (p.109). To become familiar with the data, I utilized Max Qualitative Data Analysis 12 (MAXQDA 12) to transcribe the interviews. Creswell (2012) noted, "transcription is the process of converting audiotape recordings or field notes into text data" (p. 239). After interviews were transcribed, I applied an inductive approach to analyze the data. An inductive approach allowed the use of constant comparison analysis. Constant comparison is the process in which newly collected data are compared to previous collected data (Creswell, 2012). Constant comparison analysis suited the present case study because constant comparison permitted me to compare themes to Danielson's conceptual framework by coding (Yin, 2014). I used the MAXQDA 12 software to assist me in analyzing lesson

plans and interview data. MAXQDA 12 also aided in storing, managing, and organizing the data. Results are represented in narrative form.

To validate the findings, I used triangulation (interviews and lesson plans), member checking, and auditing was used (Maxwell, 2013). Member checking allowed participants to review segments of the draft to ensure validity and accuracy of the data they reported. Members of the sample received a copy of the draft and interpretation to check the validity. I allowed participants the opportunity to discuss findings privately with me. Participants verified that the summaries represented their views or that the summaries did not. If the summaries did not represent participants' views, I corrected the summaries. When participants confirmed the interpretations of the researcher, the study became more credible. As an additional check of the validity of the conclusion, an independent researcher conducted an audit. The independent researcher signed a confidentiality agreement before the audit. The purpose of the audit was to ensure that the data supported the conclusion.

Descriptive Data

Twelve teacher participants were interviewed and submitted a week's worth of lesson plans for review. Teacher participants individualized differentiated instruction professional development experience varied. The participants' grade, subject(s) taught, and number of years at the school under study are represented in Table 2. Grades ranged from Kindergarten (K) through Fifth. As described in the table, two participants represented each grade band including kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade. The number of years of teaching varied from 6 to 20 years.

However, for the sake of this study, I considered only the years that the teacher participants taught at the school under study, which ranged from 2 to 17 years. Table 2 offers an outline of the participants' demographics. The background information in the table gives an overview of the participants' representation in the study. All identifying information was eliminated from the table.

Table 2

Participants' Demographics

Grade	Subject(s)	D.I. Professional Development Experience
K	Reading/Math	None
K	Reading/Math	2 District Level Sessions
1	Reading/Math	None
1	Reading/Math	None
2	Reading/Math	None
2	Reading/Math	1 School Level Session
3	Math	1 District Level Sessions
3	Reading	None
4	Math	None
4	Reading	None
5	Math	2 District Level Sessions
5	Reading	None

Note: Participants' Demographics.

Systems for Keeping Track of Data

I used MAXQDA 12 to arrange, store, and analyze data. I analyzed two data sources for this study: interview transcripts and lesson plans. I saved all interview audio as a MP3 file in my computer. Then I uploaded and transcribed the audio into MAXQDA 12. I saved the interview text file as an RTF file in the document system. Before assessing MAXQDA 12, I customized a spreadsheet matrix in excel to allow me to organize and view the lesson plan data collectively. Next, I imported the Excel table into MAXQDA 12 and stored the software for coding. Controls against concerns with reliability and validity were offered through MAXQDA 12. I saved all computer files on my personal computer and I backed up those files on an external hard-drive. After saving the files, I secured the external hard-drive in my home. I am the only one that has access to the computer and hard-drive's secured password.

Interview Data

I used a built-in Voice Memo app on an iPod touch, synced into my computer, to audio record interviews. Once I saved the audio in my computer, I imported it into MAXQDA 12 and started transcribing. During transcription, I intermittently utilized the shortcut F5 to pause the audio to compare the original audio to the transcription. All participants reviewed drafts of findings to ensure the internal validity. At the onset of coding, I color coded each interview in isolation. Using the software, I was able to build hierarchies and adjust the structure that was created as my coding system; hence, serving as the foundation for coding the lesson plans. I created themes according to the research questions, the connections among the codes from the interview data, and lesson plan data.

Through the data analysis, I provided an adequate understanding to show how Danielson's framework compares to teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibility.

Lesson Plan Data

I typed the written documentation for the lesson plans into the protocol templates and saved it as one Word document (See Appendix E). By dragging the files and dropping them into the system window, I intuitively imported the document into MAXQDA 12. The hierarchical structure tool allowed me to reveal several sub-codes. To ensure examination of the relevance of the text, I also used open coding.

Data Analysis Using MAXQDA 12

Using MAXQDA 12 allowed me to manage several data sources using tools. Using the software, allowed me to explore the different ways that codes are created. Codes can be created and copied manually or the auto code function can be utilized. During the interview transcript analysis, I used open coding. In addition, I hierarchically arranged codes from transcripts, thus allowing me to use the auto-coding tool for the lesson plan data. As I coded, new codes also emerged from the lesson plan data. Using the memo system allowed me to attach my ideas and thoughts to the codes. Attaching my ideas and thoughts helped to integrate ideas from all the data sources; therefore, creating themes.

Coding and auto-coding for Themes in MAXQDA 12. Through MAXQDA 12, data can be arranged in a systematic way. I organized the responses by research questions. I arranged all themes that emerged from the responses according to how many times they

appeared. For example, all responses for number 1 were stored under research question number 1. Then I focused on participants' responses that were common by coding words and phrases with corresponding colors. I noted commonalities by the number of times they were mentioned in participants' responses. I moved the responses with the most appearances to the top of the hierarchy in the coding system. I eliminated some codes because of the limited number of times cited by participants. Themes pertinently emerged during the coding process.

I used auto coding to assist in accelerating the inductive coding process. The hierarchical structure allowed me to arrange the foundation for the auto-coding system. Once codes were originated from the interview transcripts, I arranged them in the code system. Pre-existing codes from interview data made my coding of lesson plan data convenient.

Using the memo tool in MAXQDA 12. MAXQDA 12 is a versatile tool that allowed my thoughts to become a part of the analysis process. I used the memo tool to note comments that included interpretations of my data. I used the code memo to analyze the transcript data. I established code definitions by using three of Danielson's domains in the conceptual framework. For example, under Danielson's planning domain, demonstrating knowledge of students and designing coherent instruction is listed; these components were used as code definitions when teachers mentioned aligning instruction with students' needs (Danielson, 2011). I used the memo feature to clarify my code definition and occasionally to note steps in my coding method. The document memo assisted me in analyzing the lesson plan data. Periodically, I summarized the lesson plan

documentation using the memo notepad. Many of my memos were in the form of questions. I attached the memos to specific documents or codes and the memos remained linked to the documents during the coding method. Using the free memo feature, I noted thoughts without attaching them to specific codes or documents. These memos served as annotated notes for the overall analysis process.

Data Analysis Results

Through this study, I examined elementary teachers' (K-5) perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities. The findings were derived from and supported by the analysis of interview data and lesson plans. I used the data to examine and inform the following research questions: "What are teachers' perceptions of how awareness of students' knowledge and skills affect planning individualized instruction? What are teachers' perceptions of the role that planning assessments play in individualized differentiated instruction? What are teachers' perceptions of how instructional goals based on student's learning needs are developed for each student? What are teachers' perceptions of how enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skills affect their use of individualized instruction?"

The interpretations of the findings are based of Danielson's framework for teaching and the literature concerning individualized differentiated instruction. Danielson's framework sheds light on the role that planning, preparation, and professional responsibility play when individualizing differentiated instruction. Danielson organizes the complex action of instruction into these domains of teaching. Therefore, findings are

viewed comprehensively to support Danielson's framework for teaching. To avoid ethical issues, I completed coding in chronological order as participants occurred in the original interview process.

Conceptual Framework: Danielson's Framework for Teaching

Danielson's framework supports teachers' best-practices through the planning, preparation, and professional responsibility domains. The data collection and analysis phase of this study effectively outlined how planning, preparation, and professional responsibility shape instruction within the local setting. In addition, the analysis provided an understanding of how participants' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction are associated with the framework. Through this study, I examined individualized differentiated instruction in three aspects: how teachers plan, what steps do teachers take to prepare, and how the teachers' professional responsibility is met. In due course, the examination of research questions lead to evidenced-based conclusions concerning the problem in the local context and solutions that address the issue.

Research Question 1

Planning individualized instruction based on students' knowledge and skills guided the first research question: What are teachers' perceptions of how awareness of students' knowledge and skills affect planning individualized instruction? Key themes that emerged from the first research question are pre-assessments and new knowledge isolation.

Theme 1: Pre-assessments. *Participants understand the importance of gaining access to student's knowledge and skills. However, participants struggle with taking pre-assessment results and planning individualized instruction.*

Differentiation starts with pre-assessment; pre-assessments are given to determine what students already know before a lesson or unit has been introduced (Tomlinson, 2014). Pre-assessments also provide information about the students' readiness and interests. To gain participants' perceptions of how they use their understanding of students' knowledge and skills to develop individualize instruction, participants explained how they plan instruction based on students' prior knowledge and skills. My analysis of the findings was that pre-assessments have been created by the school district to gain awareness of student knowledge before the start of each reading and math unit. Participants agreed that these written assessments are being utilized. Data from pre-assessments are not used to guide individualized instruction; however, in most cases whole group instruction is planned. Participant 3-D confirmed, "When I give the pretest, I do an item analysis where I go in and see which problems were missed by most students in the class. I put most of my instructional time into those standards." Participant 10-D added another perspective involving awareness of student knowledge,

> I would like to take the data from the pre-assessments and use it to differentiate like it should be, but a lot of times there is a lot of variances in the student levels of understanding. To make it fit, I look at all of the students' problem areas and address them during my instruction with the entire class. Those students that are not struggling can use the instruction as a review. I am able to stop during instruction and access the students. I am not exactly individualizing instruction but I am using the data to plan whole group instruction. I think my main concern would be sitting down and planning effective individualized lessons based on pre-

> assessment data. I think it's more of collaborating with colleagues to get strategies.

My analysis of the data revealed that many of the participants used similar wording to Participant 10-D. Participant unanimity suggested that the school under study has a culture of teachers that use district written tools to gain awareness of student knowledge and skills; on the other hand, individualized differentiated instruction is not planned according to pretest results. Participant 5-D expressed,

> I have had little to no training in using the pretest data to plan individualized lessons. I think the biggest thing for me is knowing how to prepare lessons to individualize. Do I give individualized instruction while I have a class full of students?

It was noted that participants also use forms of informal pre-assessments; cues, questions, and graphic organizers, are utilized to activate their students' prior knowledge. Some participants stated that on-going assessments drive instruction, but there was no mention of on-going assessments driving individualized instruction. Participant 8-D recalled,

> I have used K-W-L charts to assess what my students know, what they want to know, and what they learned. Students are accustomed to me starting new units this way. As I assess the students throughout the unit, I refer back to the chart to see if they are learning what they want to know. Although it's not individualized differentiated instruction, I do plan according to what my students already know.

It is important to pinpoint that one participant, Participant 12-D, uses the data from informal assessments to differentiate small groups,

> Most of my differentiation planning involves small groups. If I am working with a group and I observe that the group is struggling with a skill, I plan by determining what specific areas the students are having difficulty with. Yes, if I determine a group is having trouble regrouping. I observe the student working the problem to determine where the problem occurs. I may discover that the student has trouble with place value. Therefore, I plan by gathering resources that remediate on place value.

When used correctly, pre-assessment results are vital to the individualized instruction planning phase. Not using the data from pre- assessments to address the indicated areas of weakness, may hinder student growth.

Theme 2: New knowledge isolation. *When students' prior knowledge and skills are not connected with new knowledge and skills, new knowledge is taught separate (Heacox, 2012). For students requiring individualized instruction, this could lead to learning delays.*

Knowledge acquired is influenced by what students already know (Swicord et al., 2013). It is essential for teachers to connect students' prior knowledge to what is presently being taught. Since students' learning levels vary, the connection calls for individualizing instruction to avoid a gap or delay in learning. Participants indicated that after awareness of students' knowledge and skills, individualization does not take place; therefore, new knowledge is taught in isolation. Participant 4–D stated,

> When I plan instruction, it's not based on what students already know. I target my instruction so that I can focus on what students need to learn according to that learning objective. Sometimes I realize that the new material does not connect with students' background knowledge."

Participants suggested that teaching standards a grade level below becomes a problem when students' knowledge and skills indicate that students lack prerequisite skills. Participant 7–D stated,

> It is difficult to go back and teach what a pervious teacher in the grade level before should have taught. Once I am aware of the students' gap in learning, I will try to go back and break the material down so that they can understand it better. I realize through my instruction that some students have a difficult timing connecting what I am teaching to what they already know. For example, if estimating numbers to the nearest tens was taught in second grade and third grade says that students need to be able to estimate to the nearest hundreds and thousands, well when I don't go back and reteach the student that didn't get estimating to the nearest ten [in second grade], the learning is not connecting.

Most standards require prerequisites for students to progress through the learning continuum (Tomlinson, 2014). Often these prerequisites were not mastered in the previous grade; therefore, teachers must reteach in order to connect student learning.

Research Question 2

The second research question focused on planning student assessments: What are teachers' perceptions of the role that planning assessments play in individualized

differentiated instruction? Key themes that emerged from research question 2 are running record and unaligned formative assessments.

Theme 3: **Running record.** *All participants within the local context shared a common vision for planning assessments; it is viewed as methods to track students' progression.*

On-going assessments give teachers an idea of which instructional strategies are working and which strategies are not working (Martin, 2013). It is necessary for teachers to plan assessments that measure students' progress. Similar to instruction, assessments should be individualized as well. My analysis of the findings was that participants agreed that planning assessments is critical. On the other hand, when the instruction is not differentiated, it is difficult to individualize assessments. Participant 11-D explained,

> I am assessing students continuously. Most of my formative assessments are the ones that I plan when I realize what exactly the students [whole class] are having trouble with. After I identify the problem and reteach, I go back and create a test that assess the information that I retaught.

Teachers in the local context have flexibility in planning formative assessments. These formative assessments can be given as often as teachers decide is necessary. When teachers cover a lot of standards in one unit, as participants indicated happens often, it is important to make sure students are grasping concepts as instruction continues. Participants viewed long units as a reason to plan on-going assessments that chunk standards frequently. Participant 4-D confirmed, "I chunk assessments because the units are too long. Although I am not individualizing those planned assessments, I feel like

when I shorten the assessment that is a form of differentiation." All the participants agreed that when they plan assessments frequently the assessments allow them to keep a running record of students' progress. One participant planned assessments according to students' needs. Participant 1-D confirmed,

> I can't assess them all the same. Some students know their blends and others students may not. Therefore, as I remediate, my assessment planning will target blends only for the students that are being remediated. It's impossible not to plan individualized assessments in lower grades whether it's informal or formal assessing. The running data from assessments help me to plan lessons for my students. If the data says students are not mastering addition, then I simply reteach addition using more concrete strategies. A retest is given to see if those students mastered the concept. I record that assessment data and plan accordingly.

Running assessment records allow teachers to constantly adjust instruction based on student performance.

Theme 4: Unaligned formative assessments. *Participants acknowledged that in some cases planned formative assessments are not aligned with instruction. The lack of alignment delays individualized differentiated instruction (Heacox, 2012).*

Teachers should rely on assessments to reveal how much of what was intended for students to learn was learned; instruction should confirm that students learn it. Assessments and instructional strategies reinforce each other; therefore, they should be closely aligned (Heacox, 2014). My analysis of the findings was that participants perceived formative assessments as being unaligned with instruction. When instruction is

modified for some groups but the formative assessment is not adapted, the participants are not able to measure student progress. Participants' responses mirrored Participant 2–D response,

> I have learned over my years of teaching that the only way to truly measure what a student gets and does not get is to assess. The assessment has to match what I am measuring or teaching. In most cases it does not because when a student's instruction is individualized, that student receives the same assessment as the whole class. My ultimate goal is to have that student master what is on the assessment that every student takes. In order to prepare for the next grade, I will have to ensure that those objectives have been meet.

My analysis of the findings was that most participants give formative assessments frequently. However, 10 out of 12 participants agreed that those planned assessments are based on the grade-level standards, i.e. what it is that must be taught in that unit and not what they teach. Participant 9-D confirmed, "I plan assessments based on the standards for that unit. So, I don't necessarily assess students over what has been differentiated." If assessments are misaligned with instruction, student learning can be hindered (Tomlinson, 2014).

Research Question 3

Setting instructional outcomes guided the third research question: What are teachers' perceptions of how instructional goals based on students' learning needs are developed for each student? Key themes that emerged from research question 3 are: Teacher reflection and pacing guide.

Theme 5: **Teacher reflection.** *Participant consensus suggested that teacher reflection is not present when setting instructional goals. Individualized differentiated instruction calls for modifying instruction to meet students' needs (Tomlinson, 2014). Insufficient teacher reflection may result in teachers setting unrealistic goals for students.*

Teacher reflection allows teachers to examine where the student is in the learning process and set individualized instructional goals (Birnie, 2015). Altering instructional goals can produce change in the learning outcomes. However, participants have indicated that their instructional goals are not developed based on learning needs (Taylor, 2015). Perspectives shared by 10 out of 12 participants did not outline specific goals for individualized lessons. Participant 4-D explained,

> It is difficult to change my instructional goals for each student when they have the same learning goals. Unfortunately, I don't set instructional goals on an individualized basis. I just don't look at the learning objectives and individualize instructional goals.

Participant 3-D confirmed, "I definitely understand how developing varying instructional goals that vary will benefit students. If I reflect more on my day to day lessons, I probably could set instructional goals to meet the different needs. I don't reflect enough." Participant 2-D added,

> At my old school, our lesson plan template called for a place for teachers to reflect on lessons taught each day. With that, I would have to alter my instructional goals according to if the students did or did not grasp the lesson for the day. The tools or template we use at this school doesn't ask for it. So, I do little formal reflection.

> Of course, informally I may look at a lesson and access students to see if they grasp the concept. If they don't, the next day I will change the way I present the lesson. Instruction is not changed based on varying individual needs but strategies are given to help students with grasping the concept.

On the other hand, there are two participants that set instructional goals that vary in learning needs. Participant 7-D acknowledged, "I go in and access which objectives students struggled with. I debrief the day's teachings and look at ways to improve my instructional delivery. Sometimes this calls for actually teaching certain students in a different manner." According to Participant 9-D, individualized instructional goals are set during the RTI process,

> When I am setting instructional goals for my students they are normally not individualized; goals are set for the whole class. How would I set instructional goals individually? No, I don't do that. Wait, come to think of it I do this when the student is in the RTI process. Students being RTI have to have a target. This target is the goal line and in the process of determining the goal line for that student I have to see where that student is in the learning process and then indicate where that student should be at a certain time. In doing so, I plan my instruction accordingly and set goals. Then I go back to see if my instruction is working. More like reflect on my teaching.

Two other participants mentioned the RTI process when attempting to alter instructional goals. These participants noted that during RTI implementation, their instructional goals

do not vary. My analysis of the data revealed that this results from lack of understanding individualized differentiated instruction.

Theme 6: **Pacing guide.** *The school district provided a pacing guide in which teachers used as a guide to when a standard should be taught and the time frame allotted to teach the standard.*

Pacing guides or charts should serve as a road map to ensure that teachers cover all the grade-level standards during the present school term. The timetable is designed to allow teachers to teach the standards before the spring testing date. The literature suggests that guides heighten pressure on teachers to meet the testing deadline (Gunzenhauser, 2012). Participants acknowledged that the district's pacing chart guided the way that instructional goals are developed, therefore, limiting the flexibility to adjust the goals. Participant 8-D indicated, "If I have to have the students ready to test by April, I have to stick to the pacing chart. I understand that sometimes my instructional goals my not fit the needs of all of my students". Participant 9-D added, "Using the curriculum pacing guide concerns me because the goals are not realistic but at the end of the day I will be held accountable for what I taught." In agreement Participant 10-D stated,

> It is difficult to make instructional goals at the beginning of the week and then adjust them. If I do this, I will find myself doing double work because when I set an instructional goal that means that it has to be met by all students. If I alter the goal, it pushes the student further and further behind. I definitely don't want the entire class to fall behind. The worst thing is for it to be time for the test and all the standards have not been covered.

The district's pacing guide outlined when teachers should assess students on mastery of the standard. Participants are inclined to keep up, so that student's will be ready to take these district benchmark assessments. Participant 6-D stated, "When the district creates a benchmark test, everything that should have been covered up to that point will be on that benchmark test." Participant 2-D acknowledged,

> We don't take the state's test in April in lower grades; however, I understand the importance of keeping up with the pacing guide. I also know that my instructional goals for each student should not be the same because they are not on the same level. Sometimes you still have to do what you need to do to meet the requirements.

Though pacing guides may serve as a barrier for struggling students, it is all in how teachers use them. My analysis of the data confirmed that participants' use of pacing guides hindered realistic instructional goal setting for individualized differentiated instruction.

Research Question 4

Professional responsibility guided the fourth research question: What are teachers' perceptions of how enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skills affect their use of individualized instruction? Key themes that emerged from research question 4 are professional development and collaboration and planning time.

Theme 7: Professional Development. *The school under study has not offered individualized professional development in the last 10 years. There are no future*

professional developments scheduled neither are there any PLCs established within the school.

My inductive examination of the data revealed that participants have received an insufficient amount of individualized differentiated instruction professional development. Schools that established Professional Learning Communities (PLC) can create a culture of teachers who value the link between teacher learning and student learning (Cordingley, 2015). The culture of continuous teacher improvement may not exist if teachers are not exposed to professional development that enhance teacher knowledge and improve pedagogical performance (Hord, 2010). Research has been used to conclude that teachers do not think consistently about the connection between pedagogical practice and student learning outcomes (Tam, 2015). The literature overwhelmingly supported on-going professional development to promote a systemic change. Professional development on individualized differentiated instruction is necessary for the teachers at the school under study to demonstrate a significant level of understanding (Smith, 2012). Participants in this study agreed with the need of individualized differentiated professional development. Responses to questions involving professional development were consistent; Participant 7-D responded,

> The content provided during professional development is difficult to apply to individualized differentiated instruction. The professional development is not directly related to differentiation. For example, we may have a training on how to use a computer program and the program may have a piece that will individualize the student's computer-based lessons. However, there is no instruction as to how

> we as teachers can individualize during direct instruction. To be candid, we have had no individualized differentiated instruction professional development since I have been here. It seems like with the push of Response to Intervention and the new teacher evaluation system our school and district would provide more professional development on individualized differentiated instruction.

To delve deeper into participants' individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to professional responsibility, participants were asked to discuss barriers that disallowed them from using knowledge acquired from professional developments when individualizing instruction. Participants with individualized differentiated instruction professional development experience perceived the barriers as being minor as oppose to the lack of professional development in the area. Participant 11-D stated,

> I haven't had enough professional development in individualized instruction. That is the issue….not enough. The couple of sessions I have had do have its cons to implementing effectively when I return to the classroom. One being the lack of follow-up. Professional development facilitators come in one or two days and teach us all of this good stuff and then turn us lose. There is no follow up to see if we were able to transfer the knowledge to the classroom.

Participants' responses were similar to Participant 11-D. Participant 2-D added, "I have had 3 days of individualized differentiated professional development; those 3 days allowed the facilitator to scratch the surface. I had many questions when I returned back to the classroom and no one to address the questions." Participant 6-D explained,

> I understand the process until it is time to connect the content to meet the students' needs. I go through the pretest and diagnostic stage and identify students' deficient areas and I don't have the time to implement the necessary lessons when I know that the students will be tested on the grade-level standards.

I extended coding to assist in providing adequate evidence to reflect participants' views.

Theme 8: Collaboration and planning time. *My analysis supported the consensus among participants that time constraints delimit effective planning and collaboration.*

Collaboration and planning are essential components of the Individualized differentiated instruction process. Teacher planning can be accomplished independently (Cordingley, 2015). Planning allows teachers to prepare for lessons; collaboration requires two or more teachers working and planning together (William, 2010). The literature suggests that teacher collaboration can offer learning experiences for both the teacher and student. Professional learning communities cannot form if collaboration is not evidenced (Dufour, Dufour, R., Eaker, & Many, 2010). Administrators in the local context allowed time for teachers to plan; however, scheduling of performances at the fine arts magnet school interferes drastically with the teachers' planning. Participants expressed the pitfall to past failed professional learning communities within the school under study. Participant 1-D stated, "There is no way we can engage others in learning when we (teachers) haven't collaborated amongst ourselves". Participant 5-D added, "We are expected to implement an individualized teaching strategy that we haven't had time to plan for; it's doomed before it reaches the student. We just don't have time to plan,

period". This sentiment was expressed by 10 out of 12 of the participants. "Our schedule designates a common planning time for teachers on my grade level; on the flip side, this time is often abbreviated or omitted completely due to scheduled school events" explained Participant 10-D. Participant 8-D concurred, "There is simply not enough time for meetings when you have only so many hours in the day. When performances are scheduled for another grade level, our planning time is canceled due to their practice time." Participants have also indicated that common planning time is often interrupted by unannounced meetings. Participant 4-D stated,

> We made plans to meet then an impromptu parent conference takes place. Our common planning time is interrupted by staff meetings maybe to discuss things like the code of conduct. You would expect a faculty meeting would be called for those type things. Speaking of faculty meeting, sometimes we don't find out that we are having one until the last minute so that makes scheduling collaborations after school that much more difficult.

My analysis of the data provided the bases for the participants' responses to this research question. Time constraints are barriers to planning and collaborating for individualized differentiated instruction. In addition, disallowing the local context to form effective PLCs hinders individualized instruction (Hord, 2010).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitation

The assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitation serve as restrictions to this study. The study's limits are recognized and described. Recognizing the boundaries increases the current study's relevancy (Merriam, 2009).

Assumption

I assume that participants gave candid answers and related to the educational jargon used during the face-to-face interviews. The next assumption is that individualized differentiated instruction is inadequately implemented in most classroom instruction. Third, I assume that participants will view me as a researcher and not a teacher in the school under study. Another assumption is that participants will conduct themselves as professionals throughout the data collection. The last assumption is that the selected teachers participated in all parts of the study throughout the conclusion of the study.

Limitations

Limitations of a study highlight potential weaknesses in the study (Creswell, 2013). In the current study, one potential limitation was the location of the study. The location of the study is in rural Georgia. I collected data only from participants of one school under study in rural Georgia. My analysis of the findings may be transferrable to elementary (K-5) teachers because the current study took place in an elementary school. I clearly described the context of the study in Section One so readers can decide if the results may transfer to a common situation. As with all studies, researchers form opinions throughout the study (Merriam, 2009). Opinions are a potential limitation in this study. The researcher's views cannot be used to validate findings.

Scope and Delimitations

The current study's scope examines the perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction. The study is delimited to a fine arts elementary school in Southeastern part of the United States. The interviews and collection of lesson plans make up the data

collection process. Participants include 12 reading or math regular education teachers. Although students may have a viewpoint concerning individualized differentiated instruction, the current study focuses only on teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction. Elementary teachers were considered because of the individualized differentiated instruction foundation that is needed in primary grades. I vetted peer-reviewed articles that pertained to the following subjects: *individualized differentiated instruction, differentiated instruction, individualized instruction, primary instruction, elementary instruction, Response to Intervention, and Danielson's framework.* Another boundary of the study involved a focus on education databases rather than other (business, health, etc.) databases.

Evidence of Quality

I proceeded with the data collection procedure proposed within my approved Walden University IRB application. I listed each tool used for data collection in the appendix section. Appendices C and D are sample interview and lesson plan protocols, respectively. To confirm that the data supported the conclusion, I employed member checking, private discussion of findings with participants, auditing, and data triangulation. Through member checking, I allowed participants the reviewing of segments of the draft to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the data participants reported. I provided members of the sample a copy of the draft and interpretation to confirm the summaries. Participants verified with me that the summaries did or did not represent their views during a private discussion of the findings. In addition, an independent researcher conducted an audit. I reached triangulation through the conduction of interviews and the

collection of lesson plans.

I gathered participants' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibility using interview and lesson plan protocols. I emailed the consent letter and letter of participation to potential participants who met the study's qualifications. Before I collected data, participants consented. Once I selected participants, I devised an interview schedule of the time and location for the interviews. In the schedule, I reflected times that were convenient for the participants. I interviewed twelve participants; on a later date, I collected lesson plans. Before the interviews were conducted, I assured participants of confidentiality, their right to withdraw from the study, and I reminded them of the purpose of the study.

Dealing with Discrepant Cases

Cases that were discrepant were intuitively handled by my examination of interview transcripts and comparing them to lesson plan documents. The discrepant cases are referred to as disconfirming evidence, i.e. evidence that is disagreeing with themes established during data collection (Creswell, 2014). My in-depth examination led to a richer understanding of participants' perspectives of individualized differentiated instruction, amplification of the local problem, and increased trustworthiness. One discrepant theme I noted and handled in the current study: inconsistent definition of individualized instruction. A participant asked that I explain how individualized differentiated instruction differs from differentiated instruction. I explained the difference in individualized differentiated instruction and differentiated instruction; thus, making it a

discrepant case. I am assured that the handling of the discrepant case has strengthened my final analysis.

Data Analysis Summary

Individualized differentiated instruction implemented correctly stands on the bases of educational theory and research (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2012). The research supported teachers planning relevant and meaningful lessons for each student. Danielson's framework for teachers sets the foundation for interpreting the data for the current study. As illustrated in Figure 3, Danielson's framework provided the guideline for viewing the extent of the participants' perceptions of individualize differentiated instruction. Danielson's framework highlighted domains of teaching responsibilities that promotes better student learning outcomes: planning, preparation, and professional responsibility (Danielson, 2011). My analysis of the findings was that participants' view planning, preparation, and professional responsibility as an essential component of individualized differentiated instruction. However, participants struggled with insufficient planning time, ineffective preparation, and inadequate fulfillment of professional responsibilities when meeting the needs of individual students. During the planning and preparation phases, it is important to note that participants do not use consistent lesson plan templates. My analysis of the findings indicated that each grade level completes lesson plans on different templates. Some templates outlined the components necessary for effective individualized differentiated instruction and other templates do not. Teachers need a consistent lesson plan template that outlines the necessary components of individualized instruction and a daily planning time that is uninterrupted (Tomlinson, 2014). When preparing, participants

struggled with connecting the content resources to the student. My analysis of the findings pinpointed two reasons for lack of individualization, lack of time for collaboration and planning and feeling confined to the pacing guide (teaching to the standardized test). Concisely, teacher participants used pretests to assess where students are; however, minimum time is spent to prepare for the individual needs that the assessment tools highlighted as being student deficiencies. My analysis of the evidence showed that the time constraint is a result of the school's fine arts scheduling. Participants do not receive adequate time to plan and collaborate because planning time is canceled when students on different grade levels are preparing for a performance. Lack of collaboration makes it difficult for teachers to become familiar with grade level standards above and below the current grade level. Becoming familiar with grade-level content that is below the grade the student is currently in is necessary when connecting the content resources to meet the students' needs (Smith, 2012). Individualized differentiated instruction may mean students need to learn content not previously mastered in earlier grades. According to my analysis of the evidence, the second reason participants struggled with connecting the content resources to students' needs is because participants focus on the pacing guide. Teachers focused on grade-level standards on which students will be tested and not the standards that students have not mastered. According to the district's mathematics curriculum leader, participants are evaluated on whether or not they are teaching the standards, not on whether they are teaching the individual students with varied needs who are in their classrooms. Teachers in the local context need flexibility with the district's pacing guide. Student data should inform individualized instruction

(Morgan, 2014). However, teacher participants indicated that they struggled with knowing how to use student data to differentiate. Individualized differentiated instruction changes the emphasis from teaching to student learning (Tomlinson, 2014).

With respect to professional responsibility, my analysis of the findings was that teachers in the study have participated in little to no professional development related to individualize differentiated instruction. To change teachers' perceptions of professional development, the professional development needs to be relevant to teachers and students needs and provide support during the implementation phase. Participants with individualized professional development experience struggled with moving from theory to practices. Participants grasped concepts during the professional development sessions; however, they lacked the ability to transfer the knowledge to the classroom. There are no follow-up visits from the professional development facilitators, so participants are concerned about implementing the strategies with fidelity. To improve individualized differentiated instruction, my analysis of the findings indicated that lesson plans, collaboration time, and moving from theory to practice (connecting the content resources to students) must be addressed during professional development. A plan must be devised that addresses collaboration and planning for grade level and cross-grade level planning time constraints, establish a consistent lesson plan template, and develop an understanding of the process of individualized differentiated instruction. Without a solution, the school under study will not be able to enhance individualized differentiated instruction and student learning outcomes.

Project as an Outcome

The research questions for this constant comparison analysis guided my examination of how teachers in the local context perceive individualized differentiated instruction. Through interviews, teacher participants said they valued individualized differentiated instruction. Teacher participants took the initiative to determine the area of deficiency in each individual student's learning by gathering assessment data about each student. However, when I analyzed the interview data, I found that teachers encountered barriers in using their assessment data. The themes I identified in interview data were: relating content resources to students' needs, professional development, and lack of time for planning and collaboration. Teacher participants lack understanding of the process of individualized differentiated instruction. A comprehensive professional development plan will lead to effective individualized differentiated instruction (Dewer, 2012). In addition, I will introduce teachers to collaborative online planning tools to collaborate and plan more efficiently, e.g. Google Docs. Through the project, I will aim to positively influence individualized differentiated instruction; hence improving student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study supported the use of a qualitative case study to enrich understanding of teachers' perceptions of planning, preparing for, and delivering individualized differentiated instruction. Using the purposeful sampling technique, assured that the participants represented the population of the study. Teacher participants were critical in determining teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction. In Section 2, I included the data collection and the analysis, presentation of

the findings, discrepant case, and indications of the quality of the data for this study. Data collected from face-to-face interviews and lesson plans were used to make recommendations to improve differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibility. The recommendations included professional development specific to developing a consistent individualized differentiated instruction process; therefore, providing a framework that improves individualized differentiated instruction. The recommendations included a consistent lesson plan template and a collaborative planning schedule. These recommendations will foster social change by improving student learning outcomes. Section 3 will provide a detailed description of the professional development project.

Section 3: The Project

The purpose of this study was to gather elementary teachers' (K-5) perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities. Only 4% of the teachers at the school under study met the differentiated instruction standard in the Teacher Keys Evaluation System. The lack of individualized instruction within the local context was established to justify the need for the current study. In addition, RTI data supported the purpose of the study.

Section 2 included the methodology that I used to examine the problem under study. The primary research question was: what are elementary teachers' (K-5) perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities? My analysis of the findings was that the school under study should participate in an individualized differentiated instruction profession development to enhance individualized instruction implementation. In addition, I recommend that teachers partake in researched- based collaboration tools.

Throughout Section 3, I will present an in-depth professional development plan that addresses the local problem. Section 3 begins with a brief explanation of the project and follows with a more detailed description of each element. Specifics include purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and the targeted audience. Components of the professional development will be outlined, including: a timeline, activities, trainer notes, and module formats.

Project Overview

Through the project, I addressed the need for professional development in the capacity of individualized differentiated instruction. My analysis of the findings was that the school in this study has not received adequate professional development in differentiated instruction. As a result, teachers have received less than proficient ratings in individualized differentiation according to the TKES, which is used by administrators to evaluate planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities of teachers. My analysis of the findings was that the absence of professional development about individualized instruction has delayed implementation of individualized differentiated instruction. The literature suggests that a lack of individualized differentiated instruction in a classroom affects learning outcomes for students (Tam, 2015). Planning and implementing of a professional development that is tailored to the specific needs of the school under study is necessary. The project will offer an outline that will foster teacher professional learning in the local context that supports student learning; the framework will bridge individualized differentiated instruction implementation gaps highlighted in the current study.

Description of the Project

The project's design is a response to the current professional learning standards (Learning Forward, n.d.). Through the framework, I specifically address identified problems in the local context. The title of the professional learning event, *Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice*, speaks to the overarching subtopics (individualized differentiated instruction) and the intended outcome (theory to practice). I developed a framework that improves student learning outcomes by increasing teacher

knowledge. To meet the target, I carefully considered researched-based best practices in the overall design. In addition, the framework is aligned with the professional learning standards (Learning Forward, 2015b). Killion and Hirsch (2011) support the Learning Forward Standards for professional development planning and recognize that:

> Effective professional learning for effective teaching has seven core attributes, which Learning Forward has defined as Standards for Professional Learning. Professional Learning that doesn't include these attributes is unlikely to produce the same high levels of results for educators and their students that effective learning will (p.14).

To ensure teacher learning, Learning Forward (2015b), highlights the following elements: learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning designs, implementation, and outcomes.

The day to day in-service professional learning will take place over a 3 day period. The time and dates are conveniently scheduled during designated district post planning days. Teachers will be engaged in the professional learning from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, with two 15-minute breaks in the morning and afternoon, and a 1-hour off campus lunch break. The district's curriculum and assessing team (CAT), the school's instructional coach, and teacher leaders who are proficient in individualized differentiated instruction will serve as project facilitators. The facilitators will provide follow-up and support visits after the professional learning. The three modules will give teachers learning opportunities outlined in the project's goals.

In module 1, I will provide: an introduction to individualized differentiated instruction, a model of what a differentiated classroom looks like, grade-level overviews for a grade below and above the taught grade, and a consistent school wide lesson plan. Module 2 will include a differentiated break-out session that allows teachers to choose two, 30-minute sessions in the areas of the greatest need. Module 3 will conclude with professional learning communities collaborating to develop individualized differentiated instruction lessons while looking at their upcoming students' data. Each module will conclude with a formative evaluation. Concerns from the formative evaluations will be addressed at the start of the next day's professional learning. A summative evaluation will culminate the project. Results will inform the project's effectiveness, implicate future professional developments, and guide follow-up and support during classroom implementation.

Project Goals and Outcomes

To implement a systemic change, the literature suggests that teachers participate in professional development that is job embedded, collegial, and collaborative (Zwart, Korthagen, & Attema-Noordewier, 2015). The professional development plan should offer best practices for facilitating learning in a diversified classroom, outline standards for professional learning, and provide clear goals. The four objectives of the current project are as follows:

1. Offer a framework for the local context that creates a school culture that transfers theory to practice, manages the structure of an individualized

differentiated instruction classroom, and uses students' prior knowledge and on-going assessment data effectively.

2. Provide a differentiated professional development experience that addresses the foundational components of individualized differentiated instruction.
3. Address everyday classroom concerns through job-embedded opportunities.
4. Establish a collaborative community that includes a consistent lesson plan template, an online collaborative planning tool, and a designated collaborative planning period that resolves time barriers.
5. Encourage a culture of on-going learning for teachers based on teacher and student needs.

The Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice project emphasizes the high- quality principles of professional development to drive its job-embedded professional learning plan.

Rationale for Professional Development

To implement individualized differentiated instruction that yields the same results for all students, in-depth planning and preparation is required (Tomlinson, 2014). Duford suggested that a systematic process that brings about improvement be established. Desimone and Garet (2015) supported the importance of a well-developed professional learning plan. Researchers explain that teachers' learning development is complex and requires more than providing information on best teaching practices (Koul, 2017). Teacher learning requires a structured framework that includes job-embedded activities.

Professional development offers a means to enhance classroom performance for both the teacher and student (Dewer, 2012). Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice will offer a framework that fosters professional learning that is unique to the needs of the school in its local context.

Only 4% of the teachers met the differentiation standard in the Teacher Keys Evaluation System; therefore, teachers lack individualized differentiated instruction skills. Several themes developed from participants' responses to the submission of lesson plans and face-to-face interviews: pre-assessment, new knowledge isolation, running record, unaligned formative assessment, teacher reflection, attention to pacing guide, professional development, and collaboration and planning. My examination of the 8 themes revealed a need for teacher professional learning.

Each theme is centered on the focus of the Learning Forward professional development standards. According to Learning Forward (2015b), pre-assessments, new knowledge isolation, formative assessment, and teacher reflection are described by scholars in the field of professional development as essential parts of data collection. Data collection is necessary for effective individualized instruction; therefore, teachers' concern for the above themes will be addressed in the professional development. The tailored collaborative professional development project that I developed for the current study addresses pacing guide directives and collaboration. Pacing and collaboration are addressed by offering a framework that informs planning and preparation for individualized instruction. In addition, during face-to-face, teachers made a direct petition for professional development on individualized instruction.

The school under study has not offered individualized differentiated instruction professional development in the last 10 years. There are no future professional developments scheduled neither are there any professional learning communities established within the school. New developments in instructional strategies and "teaching pedagogy are occurring continuously, teachers need to keep themselves updated" (Koul, 2017, p. 49).

Review of the Literature

To provide a review of the extant literature that supports the professional development framework, I used The Education Source database and Google Scholar to guide my initial searches. The education data-bases that I explored through Walden University library included: (a) Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), (b) Education from SAGE, and (c) ProQuest Central. I used the following key expressions to inform the literature review: *educational professional development, professional learning communities, professional education responsibilities, job-embedded training, professional learning framework, collaboration, educational coaching,* and *staff development.* The peer reviewed articles are from educational journals, web journals, periodicals, reports, and handbooks

To fully inform the literature review, I explored the Business Source Complete database through the Walden University Library. The following terms guided my search: *Integrating professional development, instructional coaching, transfer of training, social learning theory, experimental learning, situated learning,* and *affordance theory.* Scholars in the field of professional development have published books; hence, I

conducted additional literature searches that support the project. The extensive literature search strategy included a search by topic at the Walden University library and the use of Google Scholar. I used the following terms: *professional development theory, leadership and professional development, adult learning, differentiated training opportunities,* and *educational learning communities.*

Professional Development

To understand how teachers may shift their perceptive of professional development, it is important to note the background of teacher continuing education. Background information regarding professional development clarifies elements relevant to the professional learning concept, theoretical context, and the implementation. Professional development, also known as in-service education, professional learning, staff development, or continuing education, has been around since the early 1900's (Dewer, 2012). Professional learning allows teachers to increase personal growth, improve in their professional careers, and enhance teaching performance (Kazemi, Ghousseini, Cunard, & Turrou, 2016). The advancement occurs through the attainment of acquired knowledge, skills, and best instructional practices to meet students' individual needs (Yurtseven & Altun, 2017). Professional development influences student achievement. Literature suggests that there is a correlation between students' academic success and the knowledge and skills of the classroom teachers (Shaha & Ellsworth, 2013).

The primary purpose of professional learning is to enhance teachers' knowledge and improve student learning. Dewer (2012) noted that professional development should also offer support to teacher educators. When teachers are actively engaged in current

professional learning and supported in implementation, there is a greater effect on practice (Shaha et al., 2013). To foster a school culture of academic improvement, teachers must be held accountable for continuous professional development (Kempton, 2013).

To accomplish the desired results, it is important that approaches to professional learning are well-designed. Taylor, Roth, Wilson, Stuhlsatz, and Tipton (2017) argued that content deepening combined with analysis-of-practice professional development is an effective approach. Teachers involved in content embedded professional learning may collaborate while engaged in content learning, analyzing lesson videos and examining student artifacts. Content-focused professional development provides teachers with the subject matter needed to establish better instructional practices (Van Dreil and Berry, 2012).

Though student learning outcomes were not examined, Piasta et al. (2017) contributed that an effective approach to professional development is to make the content the central focus and intertwine instructional practices. However, Piasta et al. (2017) do not note the depth to which content should be addressed to achieve the desired outcome. Schachter (2015) suggested that more diversity be included in the professional development approach. The diversity should reflect the instructional target highlighted in the professional development. Moreover, Desimone and Garet (2015) confirmed that a well-developed approach to professional learning influences the quality of professional development implementation.

Teachers should be allowed to build their pedagogy knowledge and actively participate in the larger context of the role of educators. Professional development

contributes to professional growth for both the novice and experience teachers (Kazemi et al., 2016). The contribution of professional development is not without strategic planning. Tam (2015) advised that professional learning must be carefully planned and structured to meet the instructional techniques necessary to advance students. To stay in tune with the evolving educational standards and diversified student challenges, professional development should be ongoing. Continued professional learning allows the teacher to constantly self-reflect on the pedagogies that define effective teaching; these effective teaching approaches are cultivated and retained through constant professional learning (Luneta, 2012) .

Differentiated Professional Development

Not only should student learning be differentiated but teacher learning should also be tailored to meet teacher needs. Therefore, professional development should be both sustaining and relevant (Kazemi et al., 2016). To ensure the relevance of professional learning, students' instructional needs should be considered. Likewise, teachers' understanding of professional development topics needs should be considered. Koul (2017) conducted a study at a middle school in the Eastern region of the United States. Before the start of the professional development, teacher participants took a pretest. Researchers used the pretest data to gain an idea of participants' conceptual knowledge of the subject matter and to differentiate the professional learning. Teachers took a post-test at the end of the study; the researcher noted that teachers scored higher on the post-test because they attended the professional development. According Koul's (2017) analysis of the findings, these improvements were a result of engaging in practical activities,

participating in discussions amongst themselves, and differentiating the professional development. King (2013) added that teachers have different learning objectives and these goals should be considered during professional development planning.

Hedrick (2012) examined teachers engaging in a professional development that involved curriculum leaders providing teachers with diversified instructional toolbox that contained models and strategies to arrange their differentiated instruction. After observing teachers' reactions and engagement, Hedrick (2012) concluded that teacher learners should receive varied avenues and support to guide them to successful differentiation implementation. A diversified professional development can be achieved by getting to know the teacher participants (Schachter, 2015). In addition, Hedrick's (2012) results are consistent with Koul's (2017) study in that diversified professional development is effective and provides meaningful experiences. It is important to note that the professional development project in the current study offers job-embedded professional development. Job-embedded professional development lends to individualized professional development (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010).

Job-embedded Professional Learning

Job-embedded professional development is the idea that teacher training should reflect the day to day activities in the classroom and students' needs DuFord & Matto, 2013). Schachter (2015) suggested that despite the importance of job-embedded professional learning, there remains a lack of continued job-embedded professional learning received by teachers. Three key concepts that emerge from job-embedded professional developments are (a) encourages educators to obtain and enhance knowledge

of content and pedagogy (b) mirrors best practices in teaching and learning, helping adults with varied interests, learning profiles, and readiness learn to work together and feel part of a community of learners (c) focuses on teacher effectiveness and student learning (DuFord et al., 2013). A gap remains despite the call for reforms and the plethora of knowledge and information discussed in the literature review; little has changed regarding the lack of ongoing, sustained, job-embedded, and content-specific professional development received by teachers.

Althauser (2015) took a qualitative approach to determine the influence on a job-embedded mathematics professional learning on teacher efficacy. Teacher participants attended a job-embedded mathematics professional learning. After attending, they transferred what was acquired into their instruction. The state's mathematics standardized test was used to measure student achievement. It was concluded that job-embedded, continued professional learning can lead to improved student performance in mathematics. DuFord et al. (2013) acknowledged that when job-embedded development is established, teachers are more engaged, teacher learning is inevitable, and professional learning communities are strengthened.

Professional Learning Communities

A PLC is the engagement of a collective group of teachers and staff simultaneously in learning (Smith, 2012). Engagement in a PLC allows teachers to share ideas and best teaching practices. According to Shaha et al. (2013), PLCs positively affect teacher learning and teaching performance. Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, and Goe (2011) agreed that learning communities "serve as the most obvious catalyst for teacher

professional growth in collaborative setting" (p. 5). DuFord (2011) concured with Shaha et al. (2013) in that quality teaching has resulted from strong PLC. During collaboration, the collective group may share students' test data and discuss ways to improve student achievement. There are innovative ways in which collaboration may take place in a PLC (Blitz, 2013a). In the literature, there is significant emphasis on computer collaborative learning (Zhu, 2012). Online collaboration tools make the PLC convenient and accessible. My data analysis of the findings in the current study suggested a time constraint concern when scheduling collaboration meetings. Online collaboration eliminates time and scheduling challenges.

William (2013) conducted a study of 200 schools in an urban Texas school district. The schools were placed into smaller PLC. Researchers used focus group data to gather teachers' perceptions of PLC meetings; quantitative reading data were also gathered over a 5-year period. The interviews yielded 4 themes: "collaborative teacher learning, data-driven decisions, curriculum, instruction, and student learning, and school culture" (Williams, 2013, p. 35). The findings indicated that student achievement increased over a 3-year period; therefore, collaboration through PLCs is an important professional development strategy for continuous student growth. Smith (2012) added that not only are student learning outcomes improved, but professional learning communities contribute to increased levels of trust among teachers and team building. Other factors determine the effectiveness of a school's PLC. Kyoung-Oh Song and Jinyoung Cho (2017) contributed to the literature by examining the social, organizational, and operational components of professional learning communities. PLCs can be influenced not only by external features

of the school's structure, but also the varied leadership characteristics of school administrators, the assigning of authority, and the buildings' social resources and educational programs (Kyoung-Oh Song et al., 2017). Hord (2010) outlined attributes of effective PLCs: (a) supportive and common leadership, (b) shared inventiveness, (c) shared ideas and beliefs, (d) supportive situations, and (e) shared reflective self-practices. These characteristics ensure that the benefits of PLCs are at a level of capacity. Through the current professional development project, I build a culture of collaboration.

Transfer of Knowledge

Teachers are empowered to enhance classroom instruction as they learn through effective professional development (De Rijdt, Stes, van der Vleuten, & Dochy, 2013). A phrase that educators use to describe the application of information acquired in a professional learning is transfer of knowledge. Transfer of knowledge, often referred to as transfer of training, can be used to measure the effectiveness of a professional learning (Floria, 2012). It is important to note that transfer of training is a term that is associated with business entities; however, the phrase has the same connotation as transfer of knowledge.

The overarching goal of professional development is to elicit change in teacher practices that yields positive student learning outcomes (Kazbour, McGee, Mooney, Masica, & Brinkerhoff, 2013). Transfer of knowledge is improved through a plethora of approaches used during professional development. The approaches that are widely used in the literature are stimulus variability, identical elements, and general principles. Kazbour et al. (2013) highlighted the following approaches:

- Stimulus variability is when the facilitator provides examples and experiences of a concept in different situations; participants may engage in hands on activities related to the concept.
- Identical elements occur when the facilitator presents experiences that resemble those in the classroom setting.
- The general principles method includes general problem- solving strategies; the participants learn to use broad approaches to solve problems in the classroom.

The literature suggests that an approach alone does not suffice for a successful transfer. The approach must be shadowed by successful transfer components to increase the percentage of transfer (Floria, 2012).

Research underpins the role that motivation plays in transfer of knowledge. When creating a professional development, it is necessary to understand which aspects positively influence motivation to transfer knowledge. Transfer motivation refers to the degree that participants desire to use the new information. Massenberg, Schulte, & Kauffeld (2017) confirmed that knowing what motivates participants increases the facilitator's percentage of reaching the desired transfer of knowledge. However, the literature does not discuss the motivational factors that increases transfer (Floria, 2012).

Transfer of knowledge is most successful when an effective follow-up plan has been strategically included in the professional learning's framework (Saks & Burke, 2012). The plan should include social support that includes both goal setting and feedback. Homklin, Takahashi, and Techakanont (2014) acknowledged that supervisory support is a significant factor when applying the knowledge learned in a professional

development. However, to achieve a higher percentage of knowledge transfer, the work environment should be conducive to peer support. A transfer climate that encourages colleague support includes designated personnel to help leverage teachers' use of the new knowledge. Specifically, professional learning that involves support through coaching, during in-service and follow-up, positively changes teacher instructional delivery (Garbacz, Lannie, Jeffery-Pearsall, & Truckenmiller, 2015).

Guiding Theory

The theory guiding the project is Knowles' adult learning theory. Knowles advocates that adults more readily commit to learning when they understand the benefits (Zepeda, Parylo, & Bengton, 2014). Adult learning theory supports the role of professional development in implementation of individualized differentiated instruction. Adult learning theory states, "Adults desire to learn when they experience a need to learn in order to cope more satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems" (Kearsley, 2010, p. 6). Knowles' theory acknowledges "adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences" (Beam, 2009, p. 2). When a sense of meaningfulness is derived, teacher learners are eager to put what they have learned into practice.

Through a qualitative study, Zepeda et al. (2014) applied the principles of the adult learning theory to identify practices for principal professional learning. The focus on principals as learners took place in four school districts in Georgia. The researchers collected data through face-to-face interviews and artifacts; relevant documents provided the artifacts. Examining current practices through the lens of the adult learning theory, provided suggestions for implementing the adult learning theory in preparing for and

providing principal professional development. The analysis of the findings implicated that adult learning principles should provide the basis for professional learning. Another suggestion is that adult learning components need to be established and job embedded within the professional development learning activities. It was concluded that self-directed learning is critical when implementing the components of adult learning theory. Though the current project informs teachers' professional development, this study is relevant because it eluded to the multiple roles of teacher leaders.

Knowles, Holton III, and Swanson (2014) outlined a professional development focus that shifts the trainer's role as the expert to the facilitator yields positive outcomes. Teacher learners do not want to feel that their learning is controlled by someone else. Likewise, transfer of knowledge is more likely when the adult learners have control (Herod, 2012). Professional development not only includes the learning aspect but the implementation of the information learned afterwards.

Professional development for teachers involves teachers as the learners. The adult learning theory encourages professional developers to center curriculum strategies on the teacher learner. The learning should be practical, pertinent, and implementable immediately (Dewer, 2012). Teacher adult learners need opportunities to ask questions and share their experiences. In addition, teacher learners must experience professional enhancement that emphasizes reflective practice to achieve improved practices (Zepeda et al., 2014). The current project was developed to increase the adult teacher learners' knowledge and skills, as the project's framework reflects how adults learn.

Project Description

Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice is a professional development project that is customized to satisfy the problem in the local context. To ensure the plan's effectiveness, the three training modules are aligned with the seven standards of professional learning (Learning Forward, 2015b). The project was created around the professional learning goals which were established based on specific teacher needs. The Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice project provides educators with the necessary tools to effectively plan, prepare, and meet professional responsibilities relating to individualized differentiated instruction. District's scheduled teacher pre-planning days have been approved for implementing the three days of professional learning. The project includes on-going professional development, support through learning communities, and implementation follow-ups.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice project involves both physical and human resources. The human resources include a group of eight facilitators. Three district curriculum specialists, the local context's instructional coach, and four teachers who have been district identified as being proficient in individualized instruction. Module one and three will be conducted in the school's media center. Module two's afternoon break-out sessions will take place in classrooms 201-202 in the kindergarten wing of the building. Approval to buy and provide refreshments out of the school's funds is needed from the school's principal. The following list are physical resources:

- Wi-Fi providing access to the district's network
- Google Classroom accounts
- Promethean boards/Projectors
- PowerPoint presentation
- Participants' presentation
- Grade Level Curriculum Overviews (List of the standards taught in each grade)
- Participants' laptops
- Lesson plan template
- Formative and summative surveys
- Teacher Keys Evaluation Rubric
- Office Supplies (chart paper, pens, and pencils)
- Student data from previous school year (2016-17)

District leaders' and building administrators' receptivity have made the project's planning a cohesive effort. Each module is designed to build upon the previous module which will in turn elicit collaboration that will create learning communities.

District curriculum specialist**s** will support teacher participants throughout the learning process as well as the implementation phase. In addition to the support of district leaders, a representative from the district's technology department will be available to address any technical difficulties. The school's media specialist will assist in providing any media resources. The office manager will make supplies and materials for copying available.

Potential Barriers

Teacher commitment is one potential barrier for the project implementation. Teachers at the local context have not had adequate professional development; therefore, they have not experienced success from effective professional learning. Teachers may not understand the value of professional development. Teacher participants may believe that they have the capability to figure things out on their own and not see the need for the professional learning. Teacher learners need to see the benefits of professional development. Offering a professional learning plan that is relevant to teachers' and students' needs, that differentiates teacher learning, and that considers their classroom experiences, will inspire teachers to willingly participate and create new self-knowledge.

Another barrier may be time. Teachers must have time to plan individualized differentiation. Teachers may experience time constraint issues during the transfer of knowledge phase. The professional development plan encourages professional learning communities that use Google Docs as an online collaboration tool. Google Docs allows teachers to share resources and engage in dialogue about best practices online; teachers do not have to meet face to face.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice professional development plan must be reviewed and approved by the district's superintendent and board members. During a face-to-face meeting with the superintendent, I will present a Powerpoint with facilitator notes, an implementation timeline, and a report briefly outlining the study's findings. Local school board members will be included in the

debriefing of the study's outcome and project proposal. During the scheduled monthly school board meeting, questions and concerns will be addressed before the members grant approval. The necessary project revisions will be made based on the school board's recommendations. In addition, project facilitators will need to become familiar with the revised PowerPoint and other handouts that will guide the presentation. Although district leaders and building administrators have approved the plan implementation time for August 2018 during district scheduled pre-planning days, they will have the flexibility as to which three days will be used. The professional learning will begin at 9 a.m. and end at 3 p.m. daily. Lunch will be off campus from 12:00 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. The timeline recommended in the plan considers of the other duties that teachers are required to complete during the six designated pre-planning days.

The ideal timeline includes 3 modules that are implemented consecutively and will include an introductory piece to be presented in module 1, differentiated teacher participant break-out sessions in module 2, and differentiation planning according to student data in module 3 (See Appendix A). The introduction, on day 1, will include the components of a differentiation classroom and the importance of planning and preparation with an explanation for the approved consistent lesson plan template. The morning session on day 2, Module 2, will consist of an overview of the topics covered during the break-out sessions. The break-out sessions will cover the following topics: Using Data to Inform Individualized Differentiation Instruction and Collaborating Effectively. It is important to note that teacher participants will choose one break-out session based on their instructional needs. Module 3 will take place on day 3. Module 3 will allow teacher

participants to meet with their specific grade-level, view the students' testing data from the previous school year, determine the necessary resources, and design differentiated lessons according to the data. Throughout the 2018-2019 school year, district leaders will conduct follow-up visits to support teachers during implementation. Table 3 offers an outline of the professional development timetable. The information in the table gives an overview of the daily agenda.

Table 3

Daily Professional Development Timetable

Time	Activity	Place
8:45 – 9:00	Sign-in	School's Media Center
9:00 – 9:45	IDI: Introduction Presentation	School's Media Center
9:45 – 10:00	IDI: Activity	School's Media Center
10:00 –10:45	IDI: Slide Presentation	School's Media Center
10:45 –11:00	Break (*Parking Lot*)	School's Cafeteria
11:00 –12:00	IDI: Slide Presentation	School's Media Center
12:00 –12:45	Lunch	Off Campus
1:00 – 2:30	IDI: Slide Presentation	School's Media Center
1:00 – 2:15	Break-Out Sessions (Day 2)	Classrooms 201-202
2:00 – 2:15	Break (*Parking Lot*)	School's Cafeteria
2:15– 3:00	Wrap-Up Session (*Module Evaluation*)	School's Media Center

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

As the project developer, my role is to oversee the implementation of the professional development. I will have to ensure that the building administrators and facilitators clearly understand the direction of the professional development plan, their roles in the process, and implementation procedures. In addition, I will provide feedback to building administrators that informs future professional development efforts. After the professional learning, teachers are expected to transfer the knowledge to the classroom. Sharing knowledge with others gives teachers a dual role as the learner and the educator. In turn, the students receive instruction that elicits the desired learning outcomes.

The teacher participants take on a centralized position in the process. Teachers are responsible for transferring their roles as learner and instructor along with fulfilling other obligations associated with testing accountability and school and district expectations (Petrie & McGee, 2014). Teachers are expected to bring their classroom experiences to the professional learning. Building administrators will provide student testing data and ensure that classrooms are accessible. Teacher models will be responsible for facilitating break-out sessions that will allow the differentiation of the profession learning. District curriculum leaders are responsible for presenting the introductory module and follow-up visits. The school's instructional coach will assist the district's curriculum leaders in supporting teachers during transfer of knowledge.

Project Evaluation

The effectiveness of a professional learning can be determined by how well the goals of the professional development are met (King, 2013). It is essential that I designate

an evaluation tool during the design phase of the professional learning. The weakest connection of the professional development chain has been found to be the evaluation of the goals (Herod, 2013). The lack of goal evaluation may be due to the high focus on helping teachers to use what they learned. Nevertheless, it is important to know if the professional learning goals are being met (King, 2013).

The central goal of the Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice project is to offer the local context a framework for improving individualized instruction to enhance student learning. I designed the specific project goals to ensure that the essential components of an individualized differentiated instruction professional learning are addressed. Addressing the components, increases teacher teaching (Herod, 2013). Therefore, a goals-based evaluation is necessary to determine if goals are met.

To evaluate the objectives of the Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice project for my audience, teacher participants, I will conduct formative evaluations at the end of each day or the end of each module. Through surveys, teachers will have the opportunity to anonymously answer questions concerning the specific goals. To address the first objective, whether a professional learning that is differentiated to meet participants' needs was provided, I will use the formative survey. I will ask participants if their unique instructional needs were met. To determine if job-embedded opportunities were provided, I will give teacher participants the opportunity to express every day classroom concerns during the "parking lot" method. The "parking lot" technique will be used to give teachers an opportunity to post questions, about the modules, on chart paper using sticky notes. The "parking lot" will be opened during the built-in breaks and

questions will be addressed immediately following the break. When addressing the concerns, the facilitator will reference the IDI presentation and activities. The presentation and activities are job-embedded incorporated. During the formative survey, teacher participants will be asked if they can use the module content and instructional strategies in their classroom instruction. At the end of the professional learning, teacher participants will receive a summative evaluation created by me. All summative surveys will be completed anonymously on paper. I will evaluate the components of the project's goals through the formative, summative, and follow-up evaluations.

Another goal is to establish a collaborative community. To evaluate this goal, the interventionist will attend grade-level meetings and the instructional coach will monitor online collaboration. The instructional coach and interventionist will report concerns to building administrators. Building administrators will also collect and evaluate weekly lesson plans. The last goal is to create a culture that transfers theory to practice. Through a collaborative effort, the district's curriculum leader, building administrators, and instructional coach will conduct follow-up classroom visits. To address transfer of knowledge, the district's curriculum leader, the building administrators, and the instructional coach will note instructional changes in the classroom and the influence that the changes have on student learning outcomes. Building administrators will address all questions and concerns during scheduled PLCs.

Results from the surveys and follow-up visits will provide insight for key stakeholders; the key stakeholders include the district's superintendent, curriculum leaders, building administrators, instructional coach, teachers, and parents. Students also

serve as stakeholders who receive the instructional transfer. The results from the formative surveys will be used to adjust the Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice professional development according to the project's goals and inform parents of ways to serve their students at home. In addition, I will include information from the summative evaluation and follow-up visits in an on-going evaluation report; guidelines are in Appendix A. All Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice content, future professional development material, and best instructional practices will be placed in an electronic folder and shared with teachers.

Implications and Significance Including Social Change

Providing a framework that addresses the problem in the local context will improve individualized differentiated instruction thus improve student learning outcomes. The project, if implemented with fidelity, will help teachers in the local context to overcome challenges that disallow effective differentiated instruction. I will address the time constraint that hinders collaboration and PLCs by introducing teachers to an online collaboration tool, providing a common planning time, and creating a consistent lesson plan. The project's job-embedded opportunities will allow teachers to look at student data and devise an individualized plan for instruction. The project will foster a culture of on-going professional development through a framework that shifts teachers' perspectives of professional learning by offering differentiated professional development. The culture shift will keep teachers abreast of the latest trends in instructional strategies. As a result, teachers' instructional strategies will meet the diversified learning needs of their students. Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice will allow building

administrators and the instructional coach the opportunity to support teachers in their efforts to transfer knowledge and skills that are acquired in the professional learning to the classroom. The project's plan provides follow-up support that will lend to teachers' capacity to transfer instruction that promotes student achievement. The district's superintendent and curriculum leaders will use feedback from the implementation to inform future district-wide professional learning. Principals in the local context struggle with soliciting the resourcefulness of district curriculum leaders. The curriculum leaders past routine visits to evaluate teachers on their teaching performance; were based on "got you moments". To ensure the intended outcome, the project requires long-term commitment from school administrators, teachers, and district curriculum leaders. District leaders will serve as a physical resource; therefore, making teachers comfortable with the follow-up visits. The project will encourage collaboration among the district's superintendent, curriculum leaders, the building administrator, instructional coach, teachers, and parents. Through the framework, parents will be able to effectively assist their students at home. Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice project is important to the local context because it provides the district, which is under an RTI state corrective action plan, a professional learning that addresses the dilemma that prevents not only effective differentiated instruction but RTI implementation. The Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice project encourages differentiated instruction that in turn will improve the navigation of tiers in the RTI process. The professional development plan offers a framework that can be transferred to similar learning contexts. School districts in the state of Georgia may struggle to provide

teachers with adequate professional learning that gives teachers a toolbox for differentiating instruction. In the larger context, the project allows school districts in the state of Georgia to offer educators a plan that will enhance instruction by meeting the needs of all students.

Conclusion

In Section 3, the project was described; a foundation for the development of the professional learning plan was outlined. The use of theories provided the connection between the project and research. Section 3 contained elements that were used to develop the project and evaluate the project as well as details of implementation. In addition, the section included implications for social change. Section 4 will culminate with a reflection of the development of the study and project. The information in the section provides insight to the project's strengths, limitation, and implication. The lessons learned during the development of the study are also discussed in the Section 4.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Students possess diverse capabilities for learning; therefore, teachers must acknowledge responsibility for providing the necessary instructional strategies to reach each student's learning capacity. Teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction shape their planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities of implementation of individualized instruction (Bernie, 2015). Using the same instructional strategies simultaneously for the whole class is ineffective; "one size fits all" strategies support a traditional factory idea of classroom instruction that does not contribute to positive learning outcomes. Though differentiation has been around for years, research involving the instructional approach is relatively new (Morgan, 2014). Teachers must stay abreast of best instructional practices by participating in collaborative professional development. There is little research that highlights specific professional development models regarding its impact on student learning outcomes (Althauser, 2015). My project will elicit social change by providing a framework that positively impacts student learning.

I investigated elementary teachers' (K-5) perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction as it relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibilities. My analysis of the findings warranted professional development as the project necessary to address the problem in the local setting. I devised a precise professional development framework that may be transferred to similar school settings.

In Section 4, I will retrace the doctoral process by reflecting on the project's strengths and limitations, and outline alternatives to addressing the problem. I will also

discuss my engagement in learning, scholarship, project development, and leadership change. A self-reflection will allow me to examine myself through the lens of a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. The intended social change will then be addressed along with the final project. A brief overview of the implications, applications, and recommendations for future studies will conclude this section.

Project Strengths

In this study, I addressed the problem of teachers' lack of individualized differentiation skills. Dissecting the problem informed my design of a comprehensive professional development plan. In the detailed professional development plan, I focused on an elementary school in which only 4% of the teachers met the differentiation standard in the Teacher Keys Evaluation System. Professional development addresses the problem by enhancing teachers' ability to meet the needs of students (Dewer, 2012).

After analyzing the data, I had a clearer understanding of the problem in the local context. I used candid interviews and lesson plans to inform the study. I arrived at the project's goals after analyzing the interview and lesson plan data. I allowed the following authors Dewer (2012), Koul (2017), Hedrick (2012), Athauser (2015), and Roy et al. (2013) to shape the data analysis. Therefore, other scholars also influenced the project.

One strength of the project is that the framework is grounded in research. Through the individualized differentiated instruction training modules, teacher participants are provided job-embedded professional development opportunities. According to Duford et al. (2013), teachers are more engaged when classroom experiences are incorporated in their professional development. To evoke a better understanding of individualized

differentiated instruction, The Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice breakout sessions are differentiated according to teachers' needs. Koul (2017) notes individualized professional development as a strength as it provides tailored content knowledge specific to teachers' needs. In addition, the project plan includes PowerPoint presentations, modeling, introduction of online collaboration tools, and opportunity for reflection. Danielson (2011) stated that reflecting on teaching, participating in the educational community, and demonstrating knowledge of resources are researched-based components grounded in how teachers acquire knowledge. Under the umbrella of each module, an expectation of continued collaboration is built in which is supported by Viviano's (2012) research. The session topics include: Individualized Differentiated Instruction Overview, Putting it All Together, Teach the Teacher, IDI Breakout, and Taking it to the Classroom.

Another strength of the project is that teachers will have the opportunity to view student assessment data and, in turn, become familiar with their students' needs. Like Tomlinson (2014), Danielson (n.d.) also stated that demonstrating knowledge of students is a necessary process to providing meaningful instruction. The project encourages the teachers to reflect on their teaching and to continue refining their instructional delivery. An additional strength is that an electronic folder will be created that contains materials from the Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice for future reference. The archive will include best practices and video clips of teachers implementing these practices in the classroom, which will be overseen by the school's instructional coach. The instructional coach will continue to support and follow-up with

teachers after the professional development. The follow-up process and resource electronic folder will provide paramount support needed for transfer of knowledge (Viviano, 2012).

A noteworthy strength is that the study and project received an overwhelming amount of support from district leaders, school administrators, teachers, and local school board members. Teacher participants were eager to participate and maintained a remarkable level of respect and professionalism throughout the study. Building administrators offered their assistance and allowed me access to pertinent data. The Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice dates were approved and coincide with the district's assigned teacher workdays. The study's relevance was enhanced by the receptiveness of the stakeholders.

Project Limitations

Several limitations were noted during the creation of the framework. The first limitation of the project is location; the study took place in a rural school district. An elementary school (K-5) was the study site, which makes transferability limited to elementary schools (K-5) with common situations. My project may not be transferrable to other school settings. Schools considering transferring the results should note Section 1, where I elaborated on the context of the study. Perhaps a follow-up study can be conducted that includes secondary grade levels from the local school district and state. Another limitation is teacher buy-in. Seasoned teachers may view the framework as unnecessary because it is not their traditional way of teaching. To remediate, district leaders need to foster a level of comfort through self-reflection, collaborative support, and

nurturing follow-ups, encouraging teachers to readily subscribe to the instructional shift. To support teachers' levels of comfort, district leaders should work with the building administrators, instructional coach, and interventionist to ensure teachers that they are there to support them through the implementation process. District leaders' support can be communicated by providing teachers with a clear and realistic follow-up plan that allows teachers to reflect on their experiences and give feedback. The leaders should be accessible to teachers that have questions and concerns. To nurture teachers, district leaders should emphasize the positive things that teachers are doing during instruction.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Through a professional development framework, the project addressed teachers' lack of individualized differentiated instruction skills. However, an alternative approach to the problem is to use the resourcefulness of an inclusion teacher. An inclusion teacher serves special education students in a regular education classroom setting (Dewer, 2012). Inclusion teachers not only work with special education students but with regular education students as well. Using an inclusion teacher in the classroom will allow the special education teacher to work alongside the regular education teacher. The inclusion teacher may serve as a physical resource because of the diverse instructional strategies that an inclusion teacher is trained to implement. For example, the class may be arranged into groups by ability levels, and the regular education teacher may teach one group while the inclusion teacher provides individualized instruction for individual students. Serving as a co-teacher, an inclusion teacher may implement individualized instruction to meet the needs of all students. An inclusion teacher must collaborate, plan lessons, and create

assessments with the regular education teachers (Dewer, 2012). The inclusion teacher approach provides an effective alternative to the problem in the local context.

There were no teacher observations conducted for the current study; therefore, another alternative approach to the problem would be to conduct teacher observations. Structured classroom observations could address how teachers perceive individualized differentiated instruction through implementation. This data would provide insight as to how students react to the instruction as well. If I did classroom observations, I may have concluded that a different project was necessary.

Discussion of Process

My experience as a doctoral student at Walden University has refined my perspective on research; research is a process that requires a systematic approach to each component. The process is complex, comprehensive, and requires critical thinking. Walden's pre-requisite classes prepared me for the overwhelming task of beginning and finishing my project study. Early in my tenure, I attended my residency. The residency allowed me to connect with the Walden staff. As the researcher, I had the opportunity to view research from a different lens. The residency was a hands-on approach to learning. Walden professors took us through the research process. We went from identifying a problem to developing research questions. I also attended colloquies and critical thinking seminars, where questions that I had about the program and the research process were answered.

The rigorous coursework provided me a foundation built on sound writing skills, analytical thinking, and understanding of the research process. I familiarized myself with

literature and peer-reviewed articles that directed me in the research process. Through countless draft revisions, multitasking, and meeting deadlines, I have learned the true meaning of perseverance. Not only was I afforded the opportunity to progress in the doctoral program, but I acquired knowledge that I can apply to my daily work as an early intervention teacher. I have developed a genuine appreciation for research.

Scholarship

At this stage in my project study, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. The prospective doctoral study is exemplar of scholarship because of its contribution to the improvement of individualized differentiated instruction. My contribution can lead to enhanced instructional delivery and thus positively impact student learning outcomes.

The study is supported by peer-reviewed literature with publication dates primarily from 2012 to 2017. It was not until a thorough review of the literature that I understood the importance of my project study. The review of the literature was the center point of the study; every component of the study was aligned with the literature. The reading on my topic from scholars continuously served as an inadvertent apprenticeship for me, providing me with the necessary mechanics to produce my own scholarly work. In addition, my work performance on my new job was enhanced because of the traineeship that the literature provided.

The qualitative data collected reflects teachers' perceptions of individualized differentiated instruction. Through data saturation, I am reasonably confident that I gained insight of collective teachers' ideas. Analysis of the data allowed me to create a professional development plan that address teachers' concerns. My project study can be

applied beyond the local setting and added to the body of research on the topic individualized differentiated instruction; therefore, my work demonstrates scholarship.

Project Development and Evaluation

When I decided to address the local problem, I did not realize the challenge that it would pose. The problem in the local context is not a unique one, a matter of fact. However, the body of research is limited; there is no explanation offered as to the reason why there is a lack of research. Recommendations outlined in past studies could not address the problem in this study. To fully satisfy the local problem, I had to develop a project that can be applied to the local context. The Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice was created to support teachers as well as address the school's problem.

As the primary developer of the project, I had to seek the advice of experts. I reached out to district leaders who advised me of the professional development process in the district and of other pertinent information. The leaders provided me with curriculum frameworks and past professional development outlines. I evaluated the frameworks in the refereed articles and noted emergent patterns. The themes helped shape my project's design. Reviewing research- based professional development frameworks assisted me in creating a project that guided implementation and fostered professional learning. Formative and summative evaluations were created to gain insight on the effectiveness of the project. Each module contained a formative evaluation to provide instant feedback and to improve subsequent sessions. At the end of the professional development, I created

a summative evaluation to access the efficacy of the entire project. Results from formative evaluations can inform follow-up visits during implementation.

Leadership and Change

My experience as a researcher has given new meaning to organizing and facilitating change. To evoke change in education, teachers must be equipped with tools that empower them. Teachers must understand where they are going and have the necessary resources to get there. I have learned that teachers are more inclined to follow leadership when they feel supported. It is the responsibility of the change leader to ensure that the components of change are addressed. Educational change leaders must be data-driven, specific, innovative, and focused (Tam, 2015). To be an effective educational leader, all decisions made should be based on the well-being of the students. Teacher-center decisions may be difficult when working with adult learners; however, this dichotomy is essential when trying to improve student learning outcomes.

Each actor has a role in the change process. All the roles point to the characteristics that I outlined above. Teachers must monitor student progress by tracking the data and it is the job of school leaders to monitor data to track the effectiveness of teachers' instructional delivery. Through interviews, I learned that teachers at the study site have a plethora of student data; however, they struggle with how to analyze the data. Teachers should analyze data to guide instruction and to meet students' intellectual needs. Building leaders analyze data to inform systemic change. Leaders should possess the ability to be clear and specific in communicating the goals of the change. Teachers, on the other hand, have the task of delivering specific instruction to meet students' individual

needs. Change leaders should be creative in developing a plan to foster change. Planning for change requires using available resources and involving stakeholders. Teachers should use innovative methods when meeting students' academic needs. Each entity of the change process must remain focused on student learning outcomes. The process is a collaborative effort among all stakeholders. As a change leader, I now realize that I am not an island. However, what makes me a leader of change is our togetherness.

Reflection on the Importance of Work

As a doctoral student, I had to take ownership of my learning. To maximize learning, I explored my inquiries beyond what my committee members recommended. As a result, I have become an education- scholar. As a Walden University student, my experiences have allowed me to grow both personally and professionally.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

I enrolled at Walden University with little knowledge about scholarly research. I expected the road to be bumpy; however, I knew that I was not on the journey alone. I had to now become the diligent student that I had strived daily to instill in my students as I taught them. As I started the doctoral writing process, I wondered for quite some time what distinguished a project study from a dissertation. Determining the difference was daunting because colleagues that had gone through the dissertation process did not have encouraging experiences. As I progressed through the process, the difference became apparent. No, a project study is not an uncomplicated means of obtaining a doctoral degree. I perceive a project study as a needs assessment. However, it goes beyond assessing; it elicits action to address the need.

Writing a project study offered me the opportunity to dive into the local context's problem. In doing so, I identified the gap in research and established justification for my study. Working to solve a district problem has given me an instinctive response to other obstacles in education. As a scholar, my reaction includes examination of current research and exploration to gain a deeper understanding of the problem. I learned a distinctive way to synthesize findings and to justify my ideas through those findings. Through the completion of this project study, I now understand that a project study is a call to action.

I have also gained an appreciation for qualitative research. The collection of the two forms of data gave the teachers in the local context a chance to be a part of the study. The participants were just as important to the development of the project as I was. Our professional bond was made stronger through the interviews. During the analysis, I gained an understanding of how other teachers view educational issues outside of my doctoral topic. Participants felt comfortable enough to thoroughly expound upon the interview questions. As a scholar, I listened and made note of all enquiries.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

I have always wanted to be the change that I wish to see in the world. To promote social change is merely a goal that I have long pursued. In multiple capacities, I serve as a leader informally and formally on a day to day basis. Through every experience, I become more skilled at what I am called to do. Scholarship helped me to grow as an effective practitioner. Since my doctoral experience, my desire to stay abreast of the latest educational trends has heightened. I take the newest approaches to instructional delivery, problem solving, and addressing student data.

It is my desire to advance to a professional level that allows me to impact a larger number of educators. In turn, this will permit me to influence student achievement on a greater scale. My future research involves a look at a larger school setting that has addressed a need for instructional change. As a practitioner, I automatically take the knowledge that I acquire and apply it to appropriate situations.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

It gives me great confidence to know that I have developed a project that will be used as a tool to impact student achievement. After analysis of the data, it was obvious that professional development would be the project to fully address teachers' needs. The project was created to equip teachers with the necessary tools to plan, prepare, and fulfill professional responsibilities to implement individualized differentiated instruction successfully. I did not complete the project alone; many stakeholders and my aunt participated.

My aunt served as the voice of the teachers because she used past professional development experiences to inform me as to what works and what may not work. These suggestions were essential because quite often teachers hear professional development and automatically think that it is just another worthless and drawn out day. My aunt reminded me that teachers are territorial they want their own space and prefer to drive their own learning (continuously accessing the Internet to find teaching strategies and ideas), so that they can improve. Teachers like to know that they are doing things for a purpose. They want to know why a certain task is necessary before they even begin to engage and they

like to know that they are making a difference; they appreciate purpose. Therefore, as I developed my project, I considered teachers' perceptions of professional development.

My professional development plan addresses teachers' needs both professionally and personally. I differentiated to respect teachers' autonomy. Differentiation will allow teachers to have some flexibility without demanding that they attend a training that does not fit their needs. Supporting autonomy does not mean that I am not pushing accountability; some sessions are mandatory. I developed activities that would capture the teachers' attention. If I keep their attention, they will perhaps become tangled in what they are doing and mastery will be more probable. To address purpose, I designed modules that are relevant to everyday classroom instruction. To respect teachers' expertise, individuals will be recognized throughout the professional development.

Teacher insight along with research was used to develop my project. Although face to face interviews and lesson plan data were considered to meet delicate needs, research frameworks shaped each module design. I relied on research to ensure that certain tasks had already produced success. The combination of teacher insight and research provided me with multiple perspectives. Hence, I developed a comprehensive professional development plan that addresses the needs in the local context.

The direction that my study initially took was completely rerouted by the end. I was faced with a local school setting that had several problems under the umbrella of instructional delivery. Teachers struggled with moving students through the response to intervention tiers. Appropriate movement through the RTI tiers has been problematic for quite some time. Therefore, response to intervention became the focus of my study.

District leaders and building administrators were also a concern with individualized differentiated instruction implementation; teachers were not meeting the differentiation standard on TKES evaluations. It appeared that I had two problems in the local context; there was a lack of RTI style differentiation and teachers who needed more differentiation skills. At the recommendation of my committee members, my study took a new turn. My focus shifted from an emphasis on response to intervention to individualized differentiated instruction. Hence, the study's local problem was defined as teachers' lack of individualized differentiation skills.

Though I served in dual capacities at the local context as interventionist and researcher, my relationship with the school fostered a vested interest in my research. I was not just interested in changing my name to "Doctor" but I wanted to impact student learning and teacher effectiveness. My main objectives were to create a framework that enhances teachers' ability to plan and prepare instruction that meets each student's needs, foster learning communities, and encourage teachers to satisfy professional responsibilities. The project study has met my goals. This project creates social change through its design as a training framework for teachers to implement individualized differentiated instruction as relates to planning, preparation, and professional responsibility.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications for my project study are a change in teaching strategies. I suggest that future studies discover best practices for individualized differentiated instruction. Studies should include an analysis of specific students' needs. The literature supports the

need for research-based instructional strategies that accommodate students with varying instructional needs (Tomlinson, 2014). When instruction is tailored to fit students' needs, student achievement is enhanced. When aligning instruction with the student's needs the teacher should ensure three things: (a) articulation of the curriculum, (b) identification of learning differences through assessments, and (c) collaboration among teachers. Research is inadequate in that it fails to provide specific details on the link between assessment, curriculum, and instruction as it relates to individualized differentiated instruction (Taylor, 2015). The implications of these factors suggest investigating instructional strategies based on identified individual learning needs.

The application that can be made to the educational field are comprehensive. Teachers can explore aspects that impact the implementation of individualized differentiation. Individualized differentiation involves extensive planning and preparation to implement with fidelity. Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice professional development provides a framework that models the planning and preparation phase of individualized instruction. The professional development plan was created to address the local problem which in turn will improve how teachers implement individualized instruction. Application of this study ensures positive learning outcomes when individualized instruction is effectively planned and prepared.

The project study's findings and the noted limitations enhance the need for future studies. Future research could involve classroom observations with the teachers after they implement additional RTI techniques. The potential follow-up research could provide insight to the effectiveness of the framework, best individualized practices, and other

factors that affect how teachers implement RTI. In addition, the project could be retraced to include a greater context that involves data collection from several schools in the district.

Conclusion

The project study culminates with a finished product that demonstrates fulfillment of Walden University's doctoral program. Preparatory coursework equipped me with the tools necessary for scholarly work and the development of a project that impacts social change. My developing expertise in the field of qualitative research encourages me to take scholarly approaches to issues in my day to day encounters. In Section 4, I reviewed the research process by retracing the strengths that emerged from the project. Limitations were identified with suggestions for remediation. I also noted other avenues that will aide in addressing the problem. I detailed the learning process that lead to my becoming a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. I discussed my engagement in learning, scholarship, project development, and leadership change. The project encourages learning communities that will collaborate to improve student achievement.

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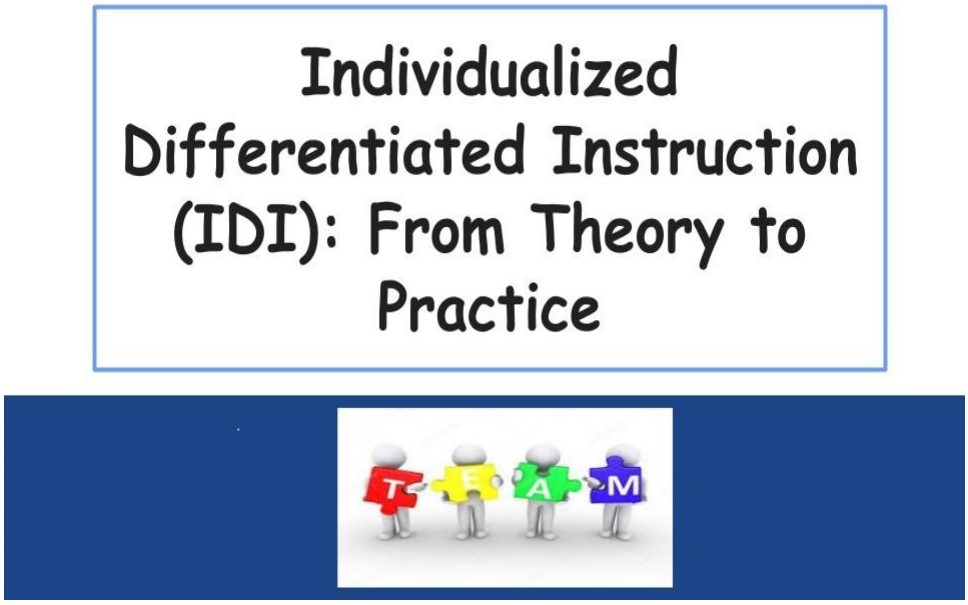
Appendix A: Individualized Differentiated Instruction: From Theory to Practice

Slide 1



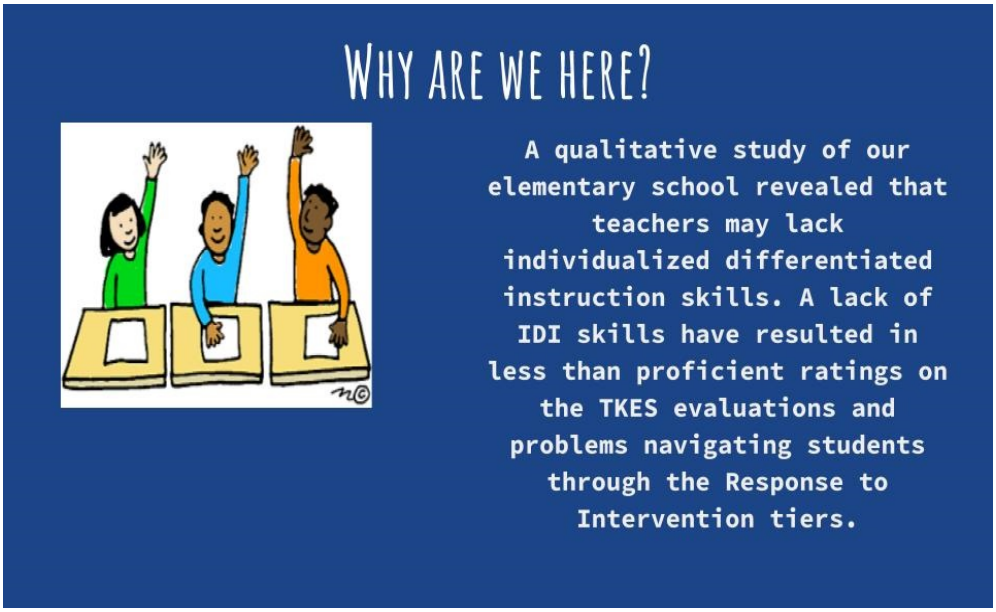
Facilitator Notes: Greet teacher participants and other attendees. Give introduction of professional development and a brief introduction of the facilitators.

Slide 2

Facilitator notes: Remind teacher participants -How often do we say to ourselves, "If only I had the time?" I believe we all will agree that being flexible is much easier when

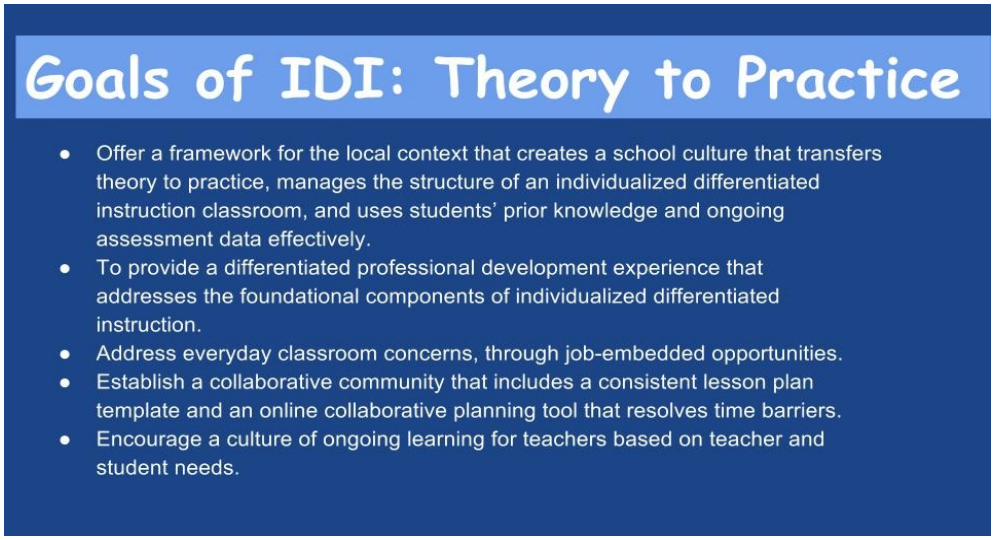
time permits. Today and throughout this IDI Professional Development we are going to be respectful of your time and expertise.

Slide 3



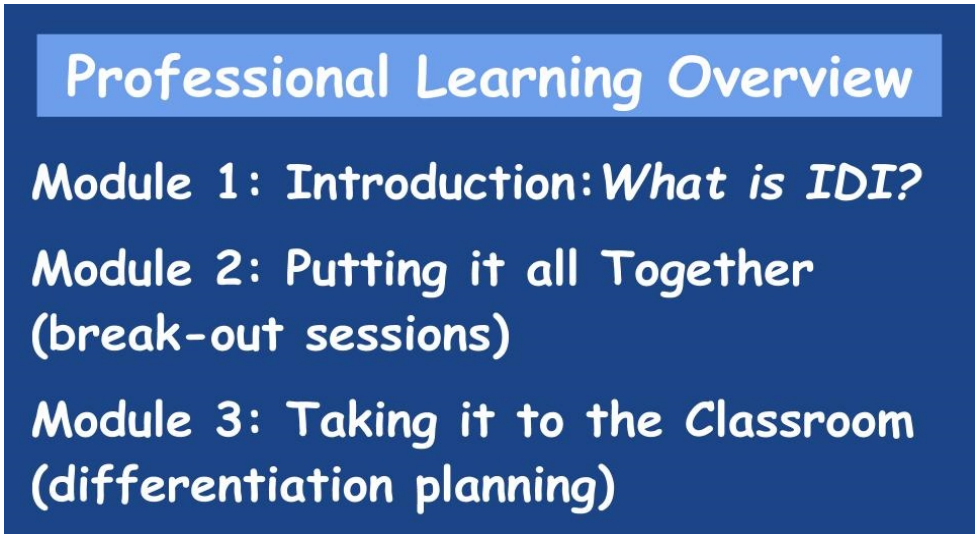
Facilitator Notes: A qualitative study that was conducted in our building yield findings that suggested an IDI professional learning was needed. Though these findings were revealed, this faculty has been making great strides to move towards proficient rating on the differentiated instruction standard. One stride is your presence here today.

Slide 4



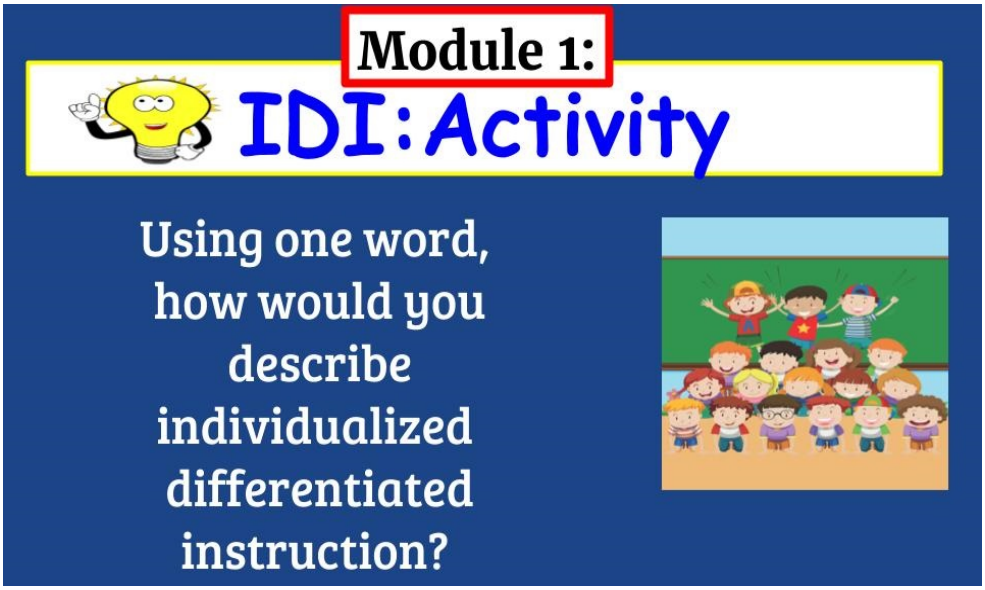
Facilitator Notes: The goals are listed.

Slide 5



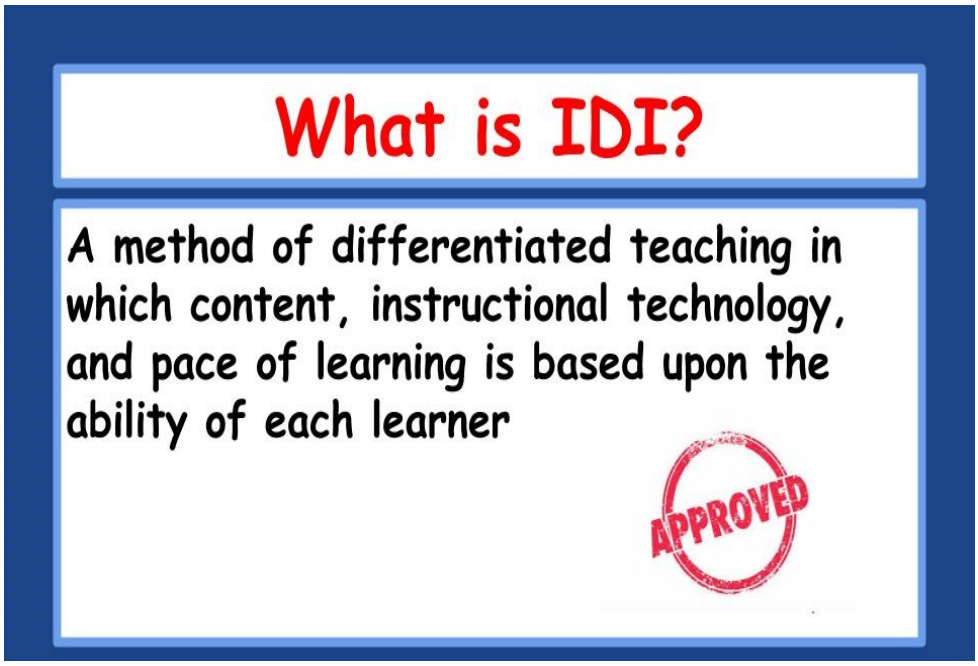
Facilitator Notes: “The IDI Project will take place over the next three days. Each module will build upon the previous module with module 3 culminating the PD. In addition, there are 2 built in each module (morning and afternoon). We will be using the parking lot method to address questions/concern when sessions resume after each break. At the end of each module, participants will complete a formative (survey) evaluation. Questions and concerns from the survey will be addressed the next morning. The survey results will be used to guide the professional development.”

Slide 6

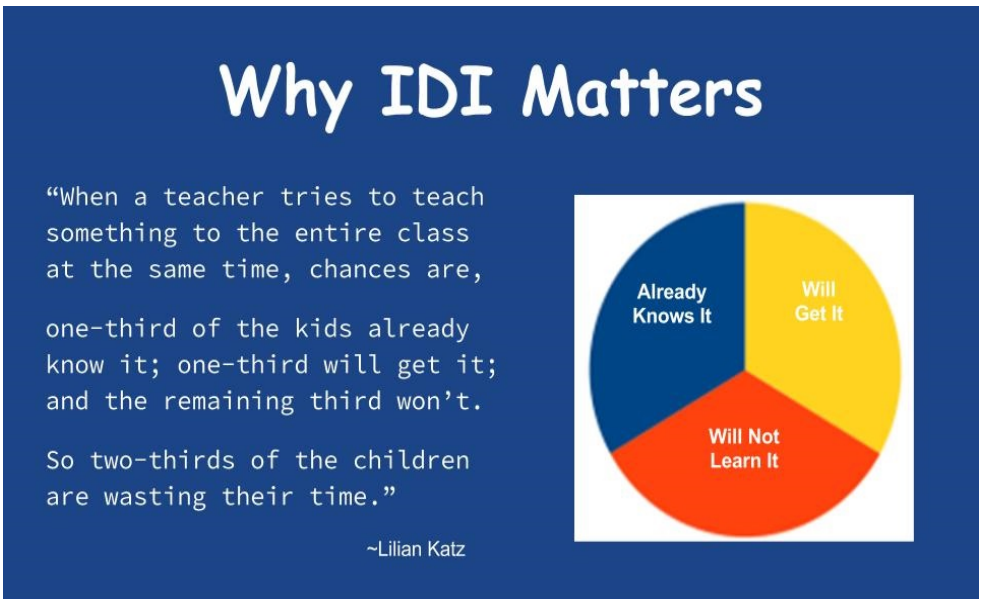


Facilitator Notes: Invite teachers to engage in this activity. Record teachers' responses and discuss the responses.

Slide 7



Slide 8

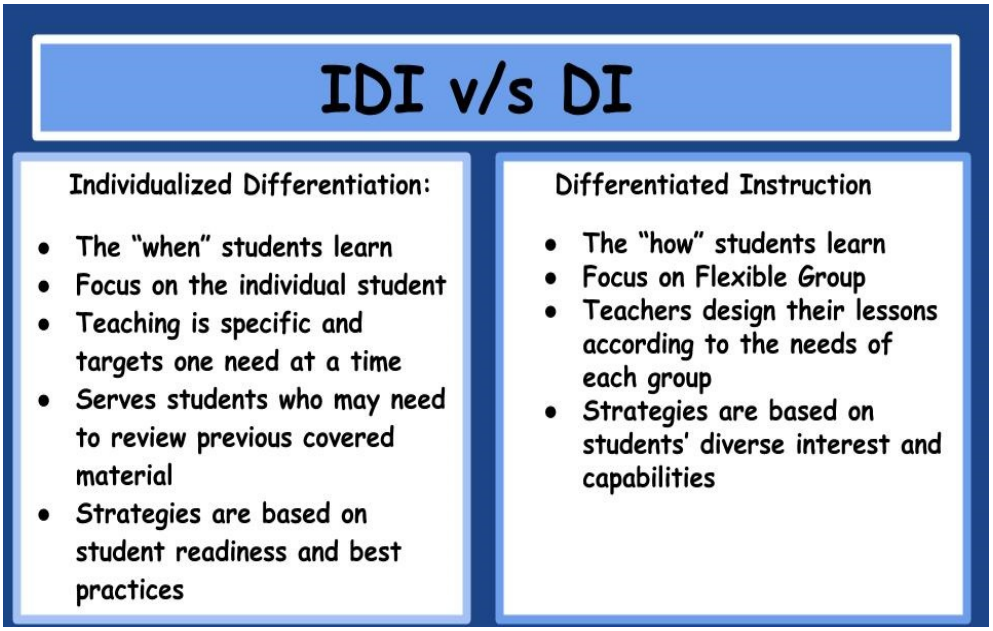


Facilitator Notes:

"Have you ever tried on a pair of shoes that were too small? Makes you feel

uncomfortable. Right? However, those same shoes may fit the next person. We like to say that IDI are shoes that are designed to fit the individual student and when our students try on their individual shoes, learning takes place. Students are more successful because of the tailored instruction."

Slide 9

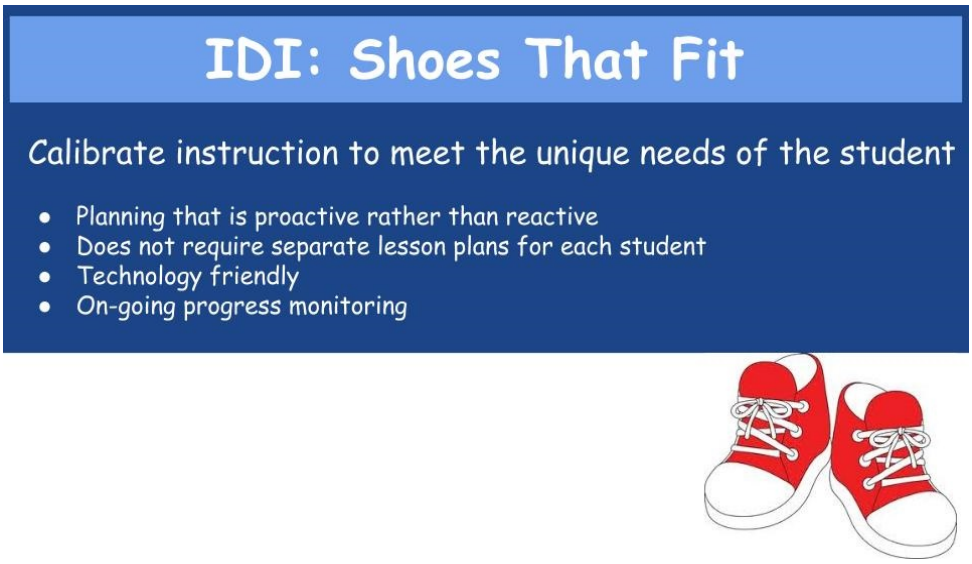


Facilitator Notes; Invite teacher participants to exam the difference in IDI and DI. Point out that individualized differentiation cannot take place without differentiated instruction.

Slide 10

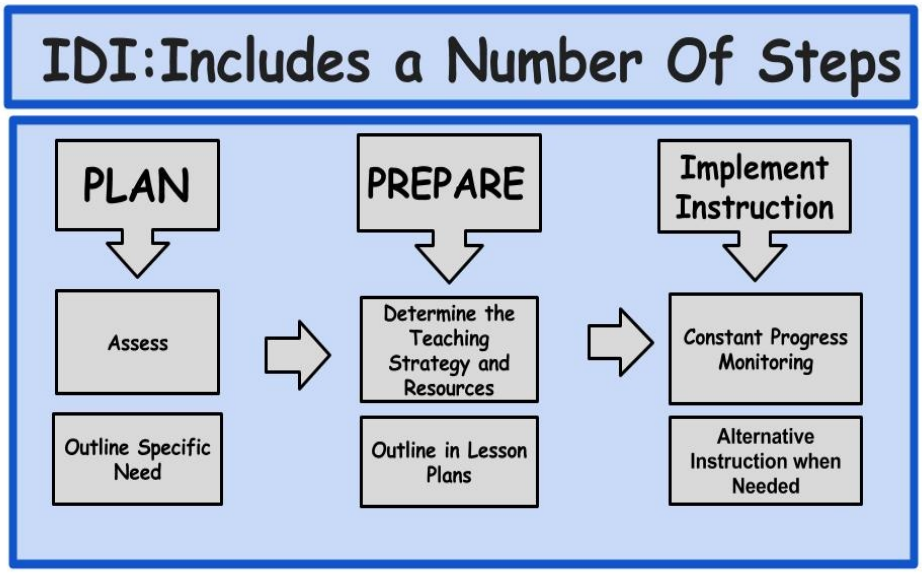
Facilitator Notes: Encourage teachers to use sticky notes to post questions and/or concerns on the designated chart paper. All questions will be addressed after the 15-minute break.

Slide 11



Facilitator Notes: ID is tailoring instruction to fit each student's needs.

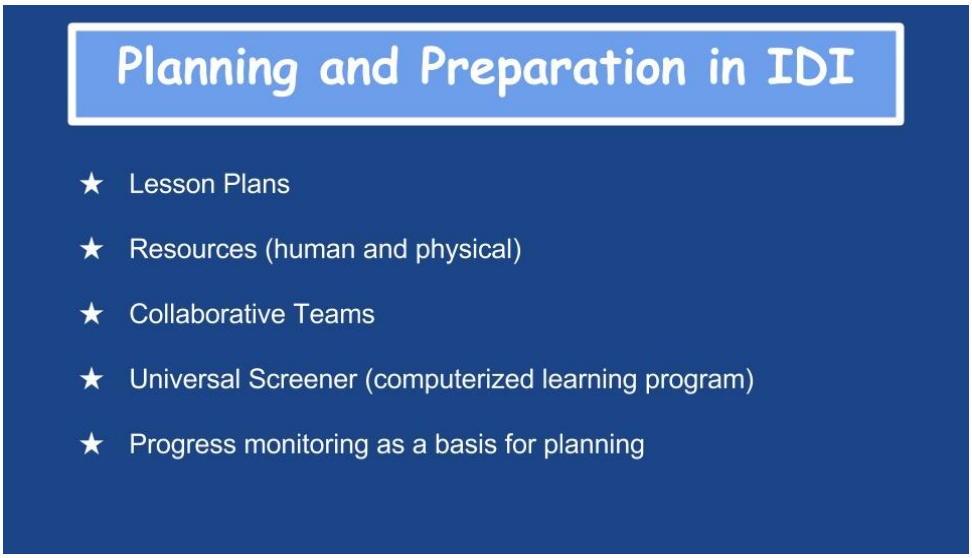
Slide 12



Facilitator Notes: "The students should first be assessed. Not all students will need individualized instruction. Then specific needs should be outlined according to the

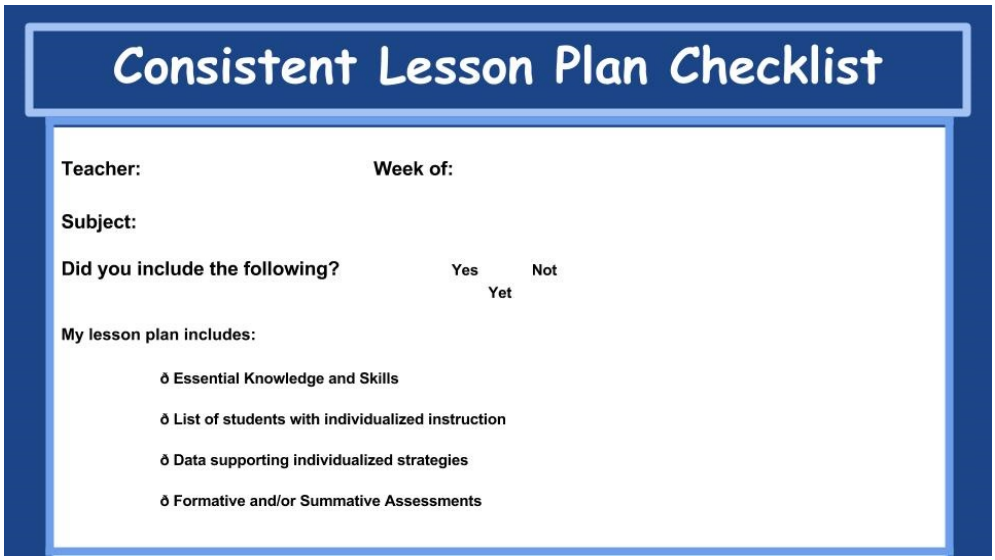
assessment data. In preparing to meet the individual needs, instructional strategies should be determined and highlighted in the weekly lesson plans. It is important to continue progress monitoring during the implementation phase and to make the necessary adjustments according to the progress monitoring data." Remind teachers that following these steps yield positive results.

Slide 13

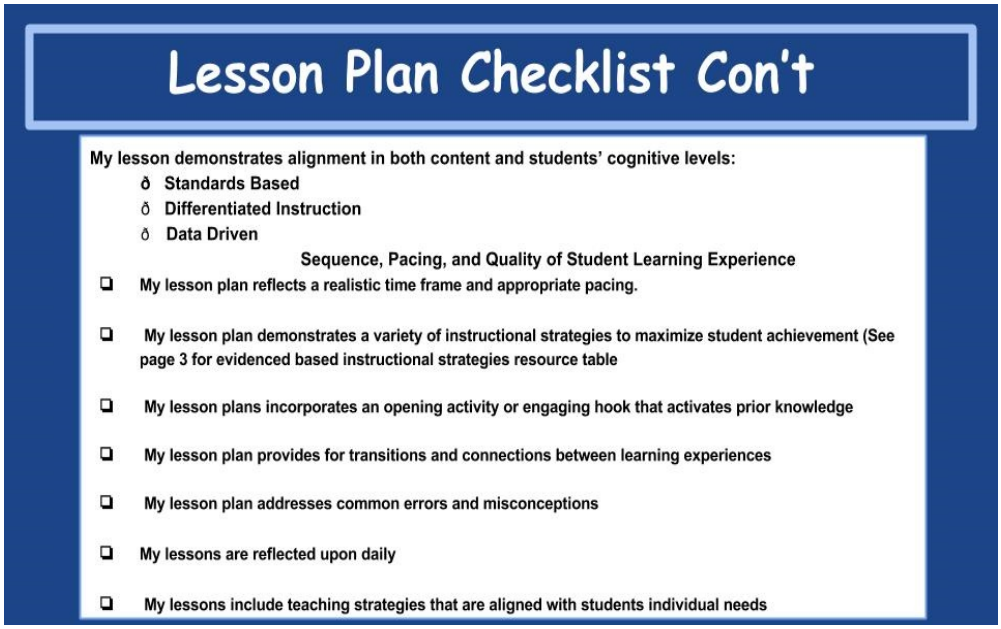


Facilitator Notes: Teachers will be offered ways in which planning is made easier. At this time, all teacher participants will create a Google Account. Google Drive will be our online collaboration tool. Teacher participants will navigate through Google Drive to become familiar. We will view the district's Universal Screener for both Reading and Math.

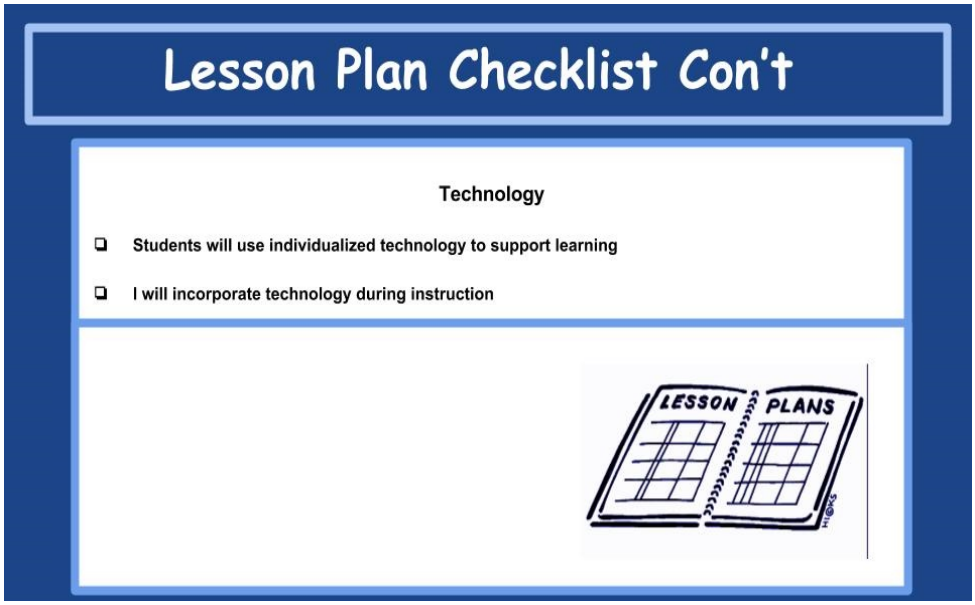
Slide 14



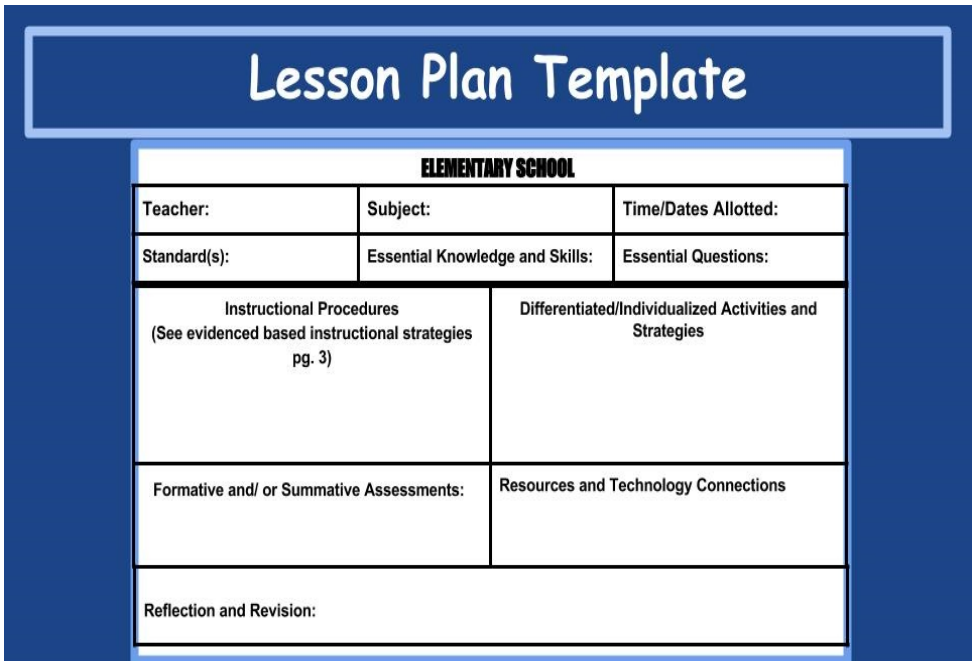
Facilitator Notes: Handout: Lesson Plan Checklist and Template. Introduce the consistent school wide lesson plan template/checklist and the components. Remind teachers that the components of the plan will help teachers to ensure that individual student needs are planned.
Slide 15



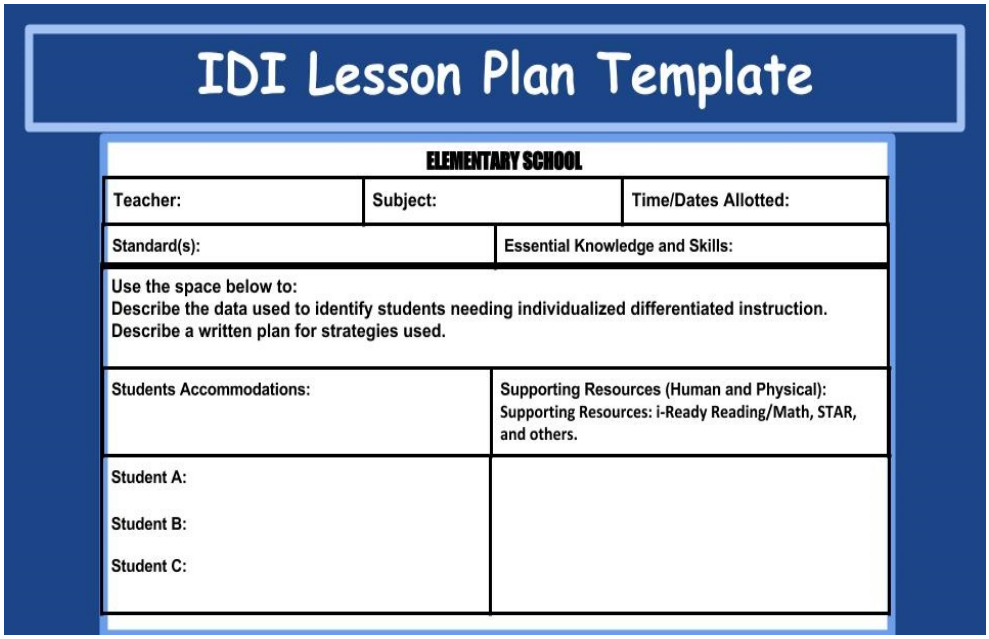
Facilitator Notes: Continue discussing components of the consistent lesson plan.
Slide 16



Facilitator Notes: “Remember this template will be placed in shared electronic folder”.
Slide 17

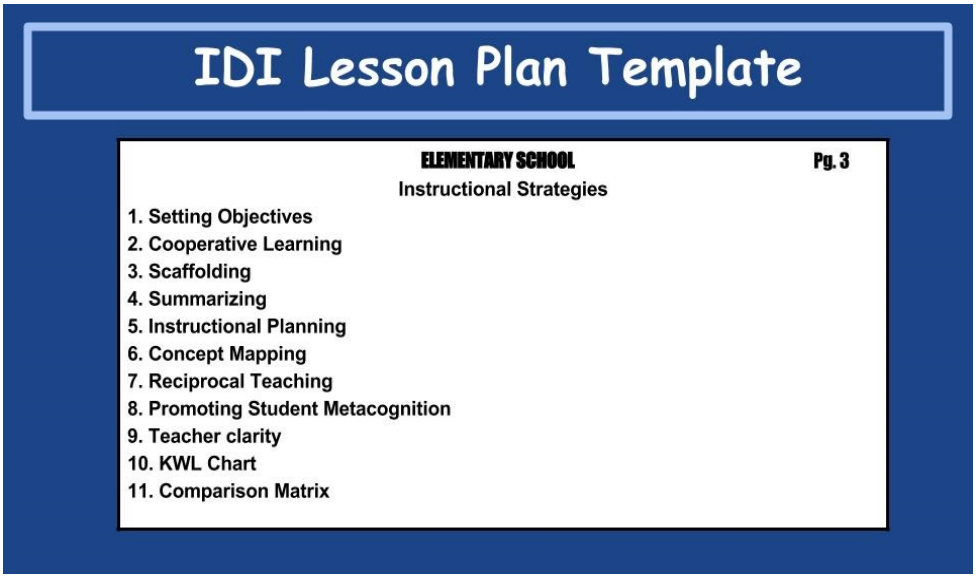


Facilitator Notes: This is a continuation of the lesson plan. This plan is tailored for IDI.
Slide 18



Facilitator Notes: This is a continuation of the lesson plan. This plan is tailored for IDI

Slide 19

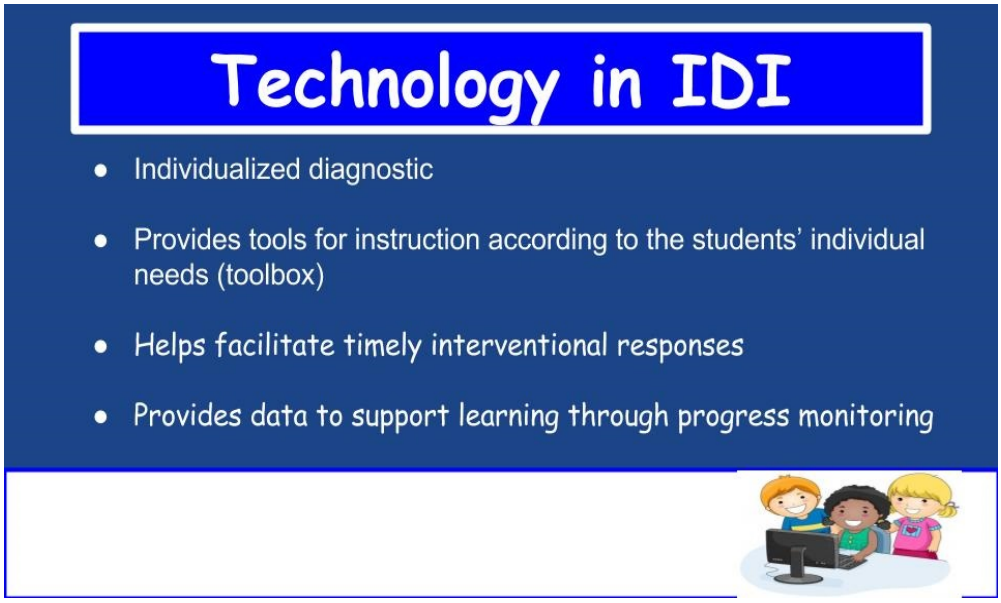


Facilitator Notes: "Page 3 offers a list of instructional strategies that can be used when planning"

Slide 20

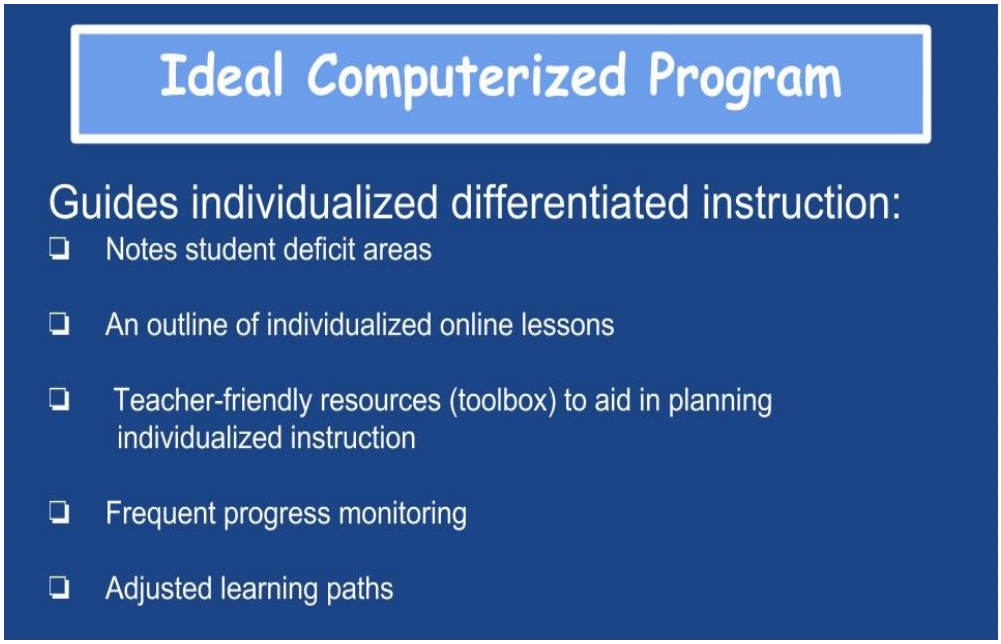
Facilitator Notes; Encourage teachers to use sticky notes to post questions and/or concerns on the chart paper. All questions will be addressed after the 15-minute break

Slide 21

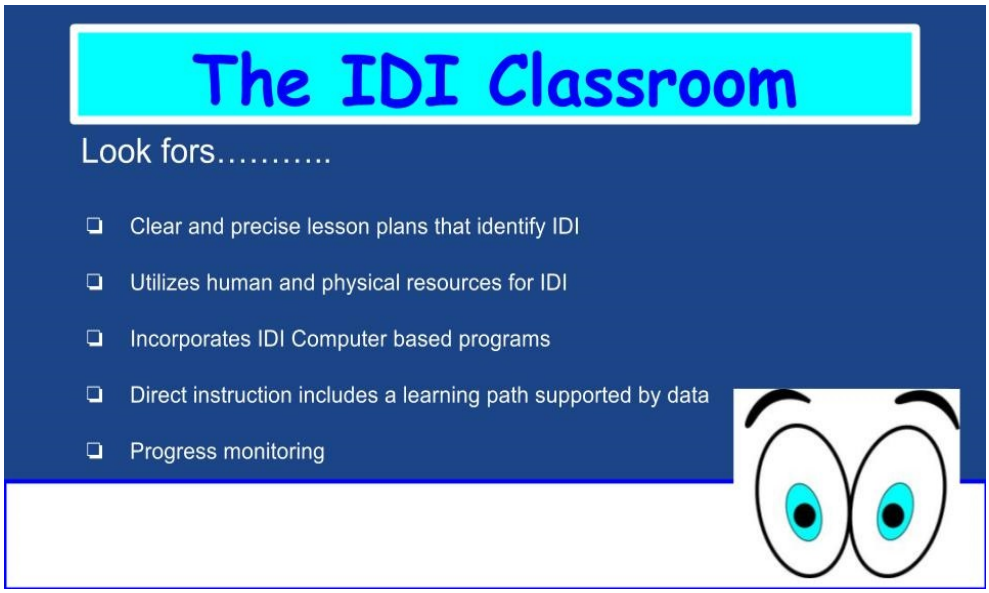


Facilitator Notes: Remind teacher participants that it is up to the teachers to connect the appropriate technology program with the right student.

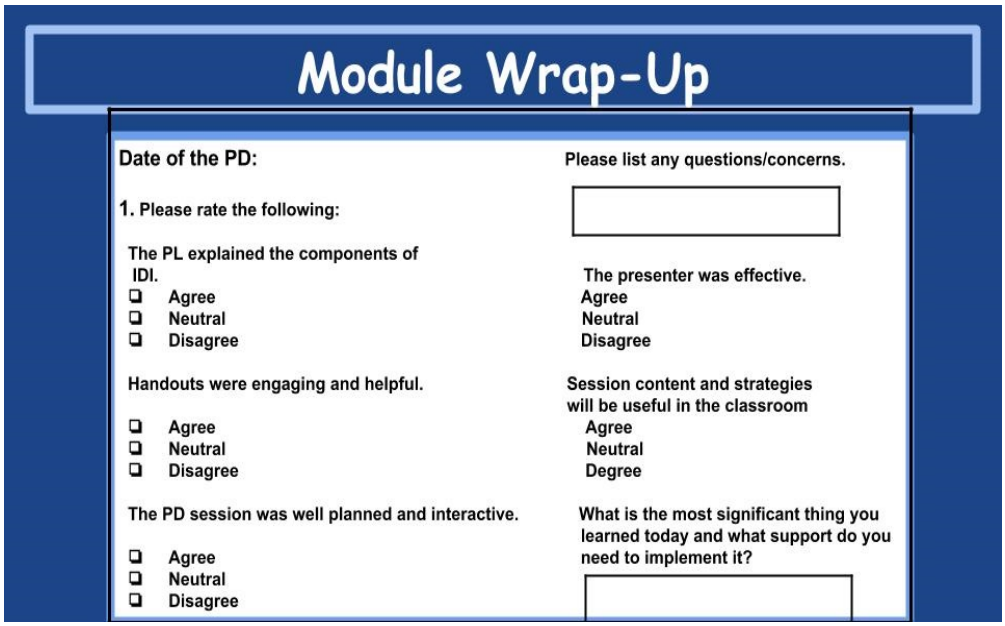
Slide 22



Facilitator Notes: Remind teacher participants that it is up to the teachers to connect the appropriate technology program with the right student.
Slide 23



Facilitator Notes: “The IDI look fors are also outlined in the TKES evaluation of the IDI standard.” Teacher facilitators will model what an IDI classroom looks like.
Slide 24

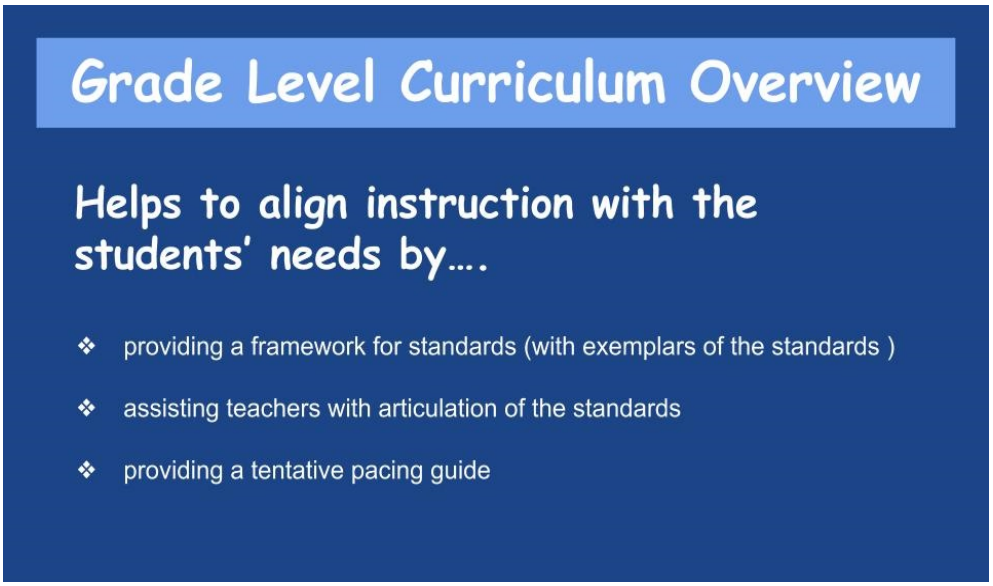


Facilitator Notes: Teacher participants will complete the survey. Questions/Concerns will be addressed at the start of tomorrow's module.

Slide 25

Facilitator Notes: Greet and thank teacher participants for attending the second day of the IDI professional development. “If you are not sitting with your grade level, please sit in a group with your grade level.”

Slide 26



Facilitator Notes: Each teacher participant will receive a copy of his/her grade-level overview and the previous grade level overview. Encourage teachers to take the current

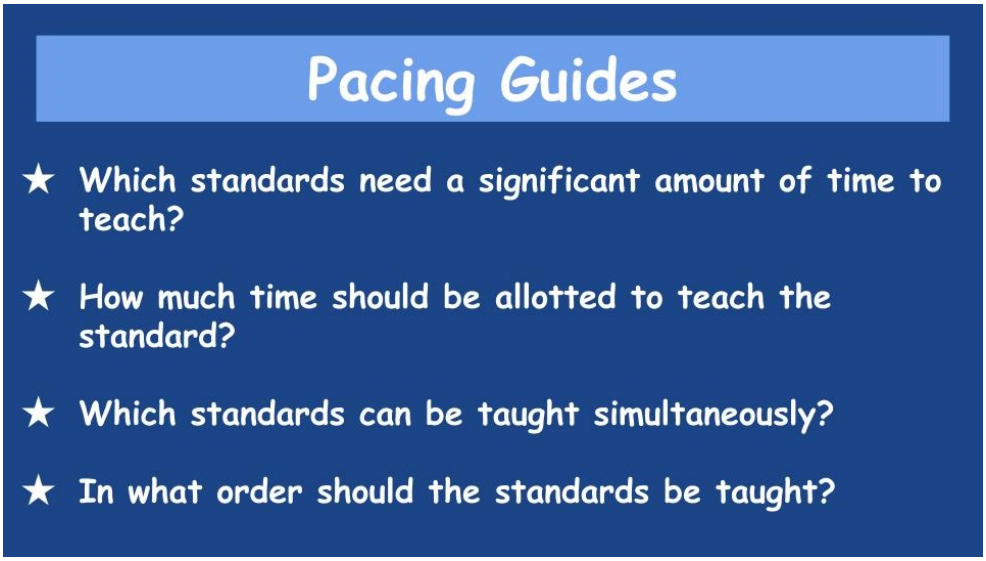
standards and look at prerequisites standards. Most of the prerequisite standards will be listed in the previous grade level overview. This will give teachers an idea of what students need to master before they can be taught the current standards. Also, if students have not mastered the prerequisite standards, it will be difficult for students to grasp new concepts.

Slide 27

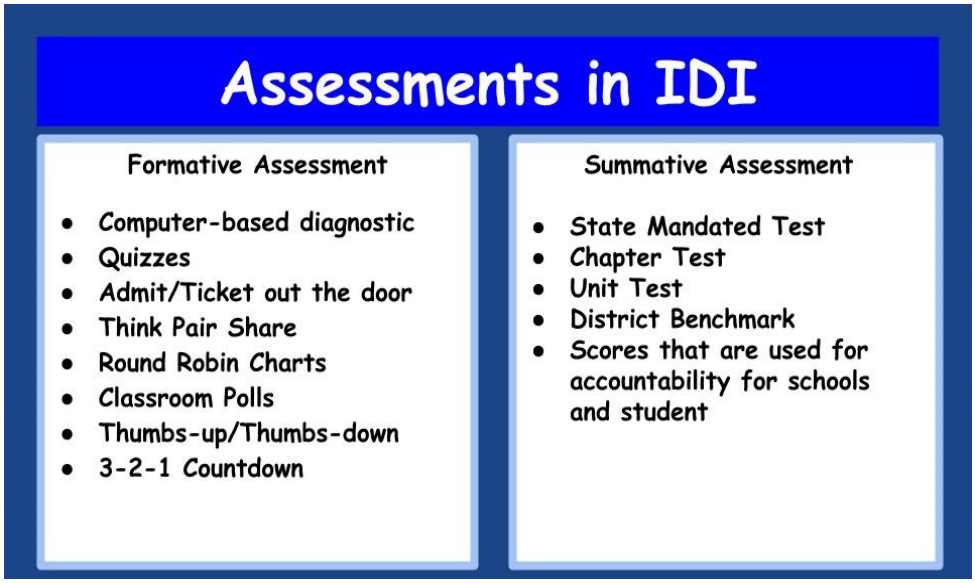
Facilitator Notes: Teacher participants should have the opportunity to collaborate across grade levels. Ask teacher participants to move to the group where the previous grade level teachers are sitting. Kindergarten teachers will sit with first grade teachers, second grade with third grade, and fourth grade with fifth grade. After 30 minutes, teachers that have not had the opportunity to collaborate will then switch groups: first will group with second and fourth grade with third grade.

Slide 28

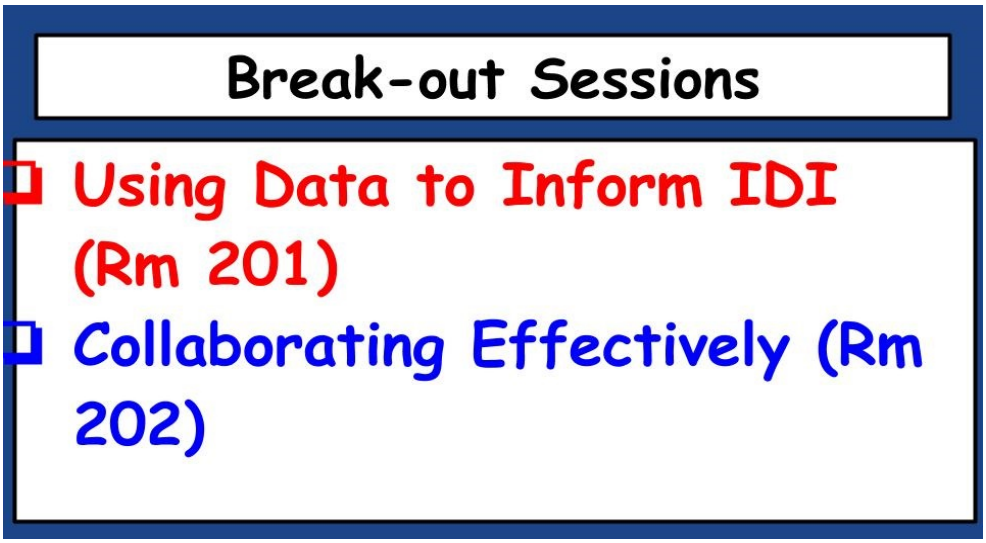
Facilitator Notes: Encourage participants to use the parking lot method for questions.
Slide 29



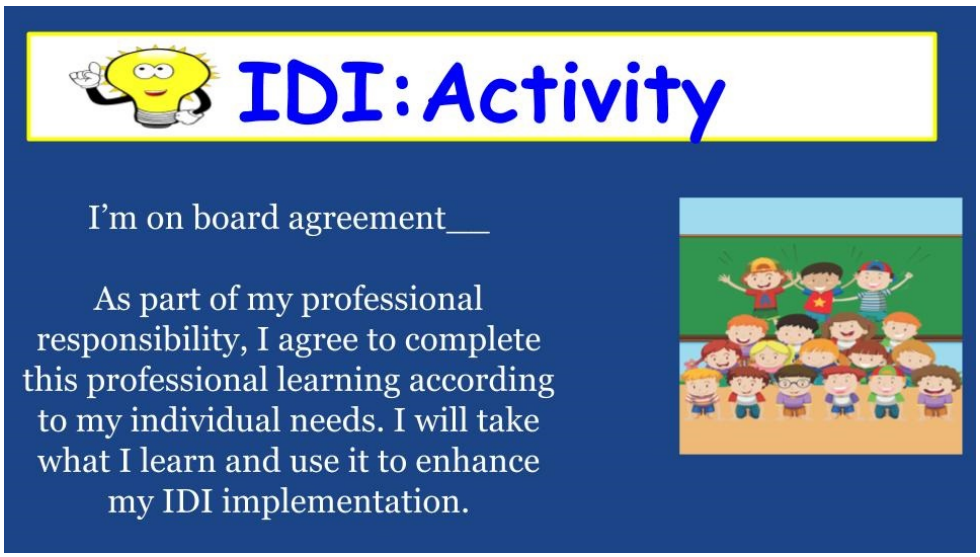
Facilitator Notes: Teachers will look at each standard and prioritize them, i.e., Which standards need a significant amount of time to teach? How much time should be allotted? Which standards can be taught simultaneously? In what order should the standards be taught? "This is a proposed pacing guide that will have to be approved by curriculum leaders."
Slide 30



Facilitator Notes: “Formative assessments are assessments that are given during the learning process. Formative assessment data helps us to modify instruction to improve student learning. Summative assessment. Summative assessments are assessments used to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark.
Slide 31

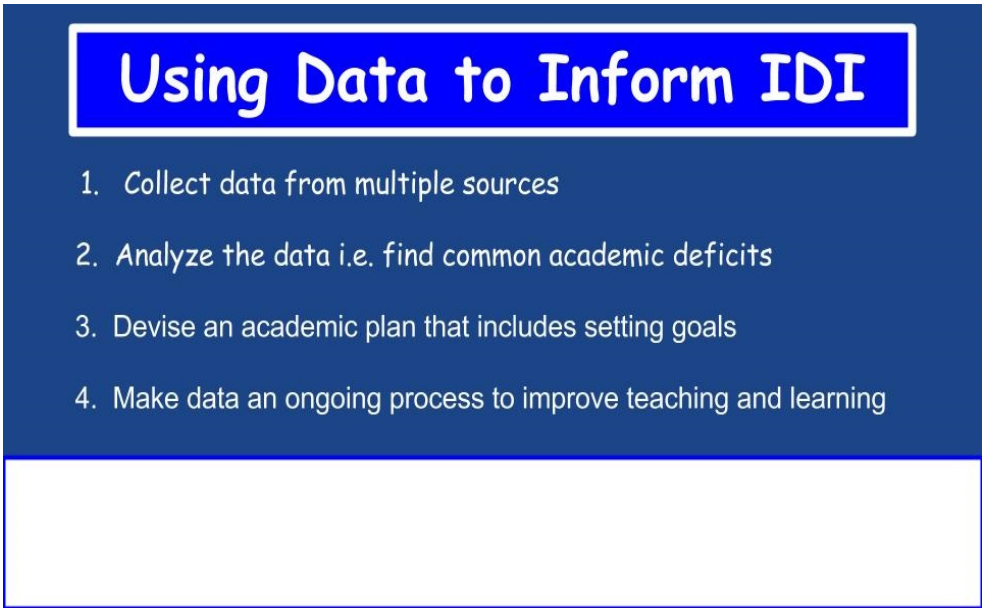


Facilitator Notes: After lunch, teacher participants will be engaging in break-out sessions. Teachers will have the opportunity to now (before lunch) sign-up for one session. “Please indicate your first choice based on your greatest needs in those areas. Each session is color- coded.”
Slide 32



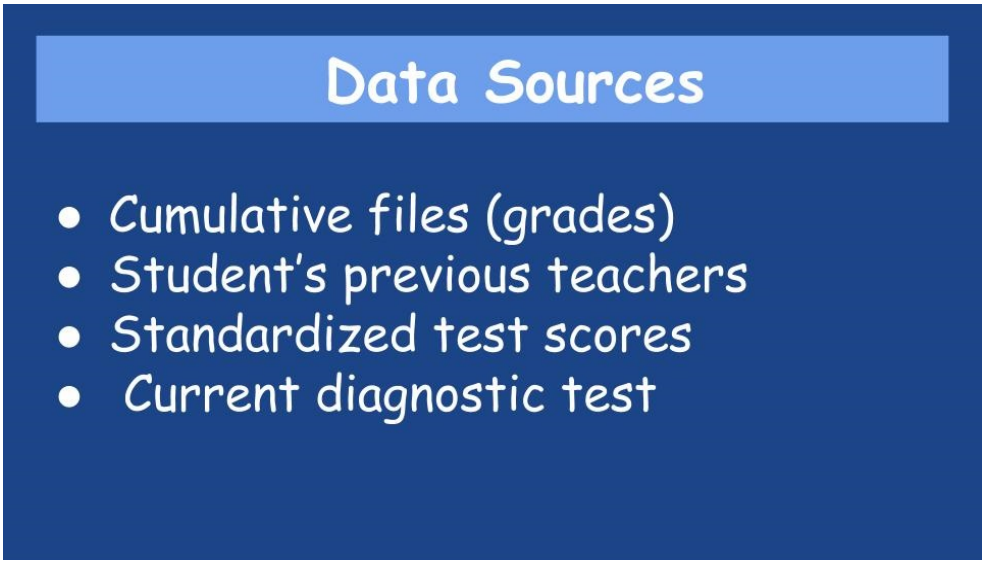
Facilitator Notes: Give teacher participant the handout for this agreement. Teachers will go to their break-out sessions.

Slide 33



Facilitator Notes: Discuss the steps of collecting data. Remind teacher participants that data collection is one step of many when differentiating individualized instruction.

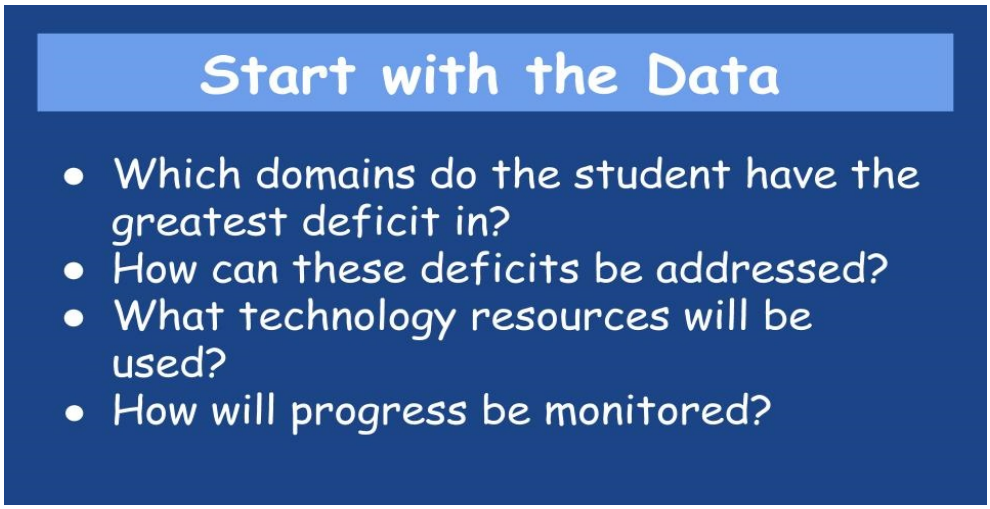
Slide 34



Facilitator Notes: Remind teacher participants that a student's' cumulative folder/file is an important way to answer questions about students' academic performance beyond the data in hand. Reaching out to previous teachers can also be beneficial when collecting

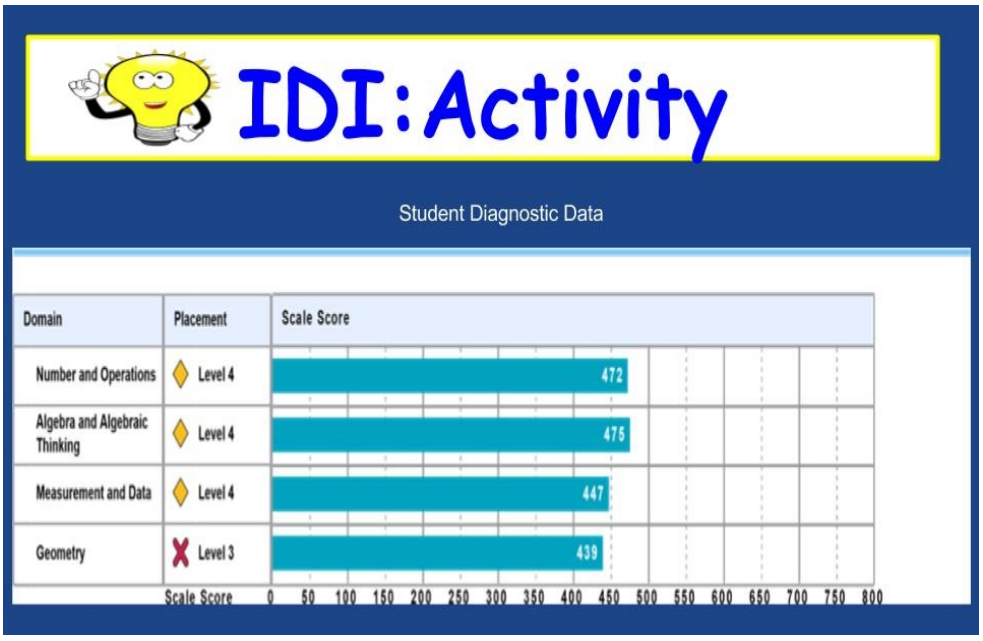
pertinent information on a student. Standardize test scores give a clear picture of where the child is academically. The beginning of the school year is the best time to give a diagnostic. Diagnostics can inform learning and instruction.

Slide 35



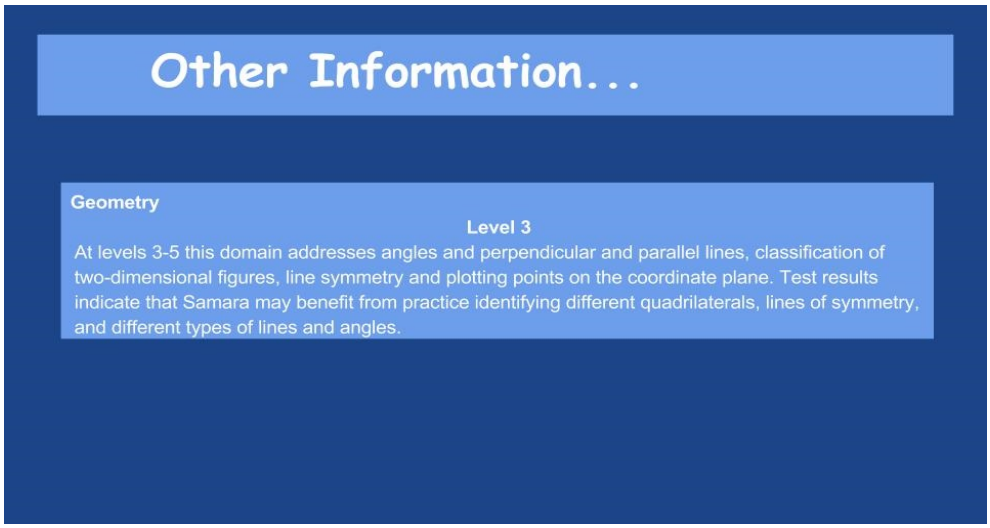
Facilitator Notes: Invite teacher participants to discuss these questions. Give the common domains in mathematics: Numbers and Operations, Algebra and Algebraic thinking, Geometry, and Measurement and Data. Ask teachers to talk about their experiences as to which domains students have the biggest deficits.

Slide 36



Facilitator Notes: Give teacher participants this recent data of a 5th grade student's diagnostic. Have teachers to follow the steps to using data to inform IDI and devise a plan for instruction.

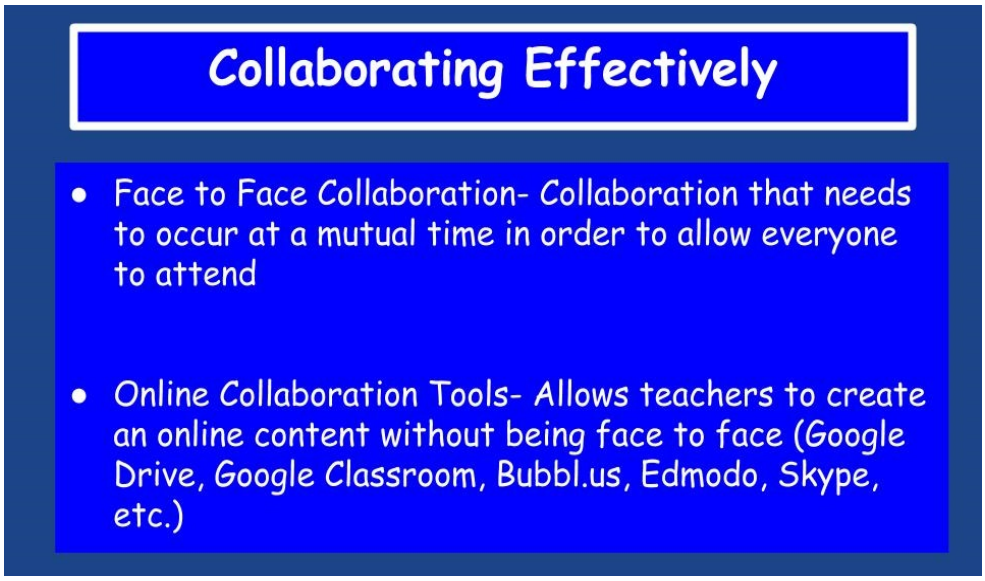
Slide 37



Facilitator Notes: After teacher participants have discussed findings remind them that other data sources can be considered in order to note specific problems the student may be having. When completed, teacher participants will discuss their experience with looking at the data. Today's module will conclude in the media center.

Slide 38

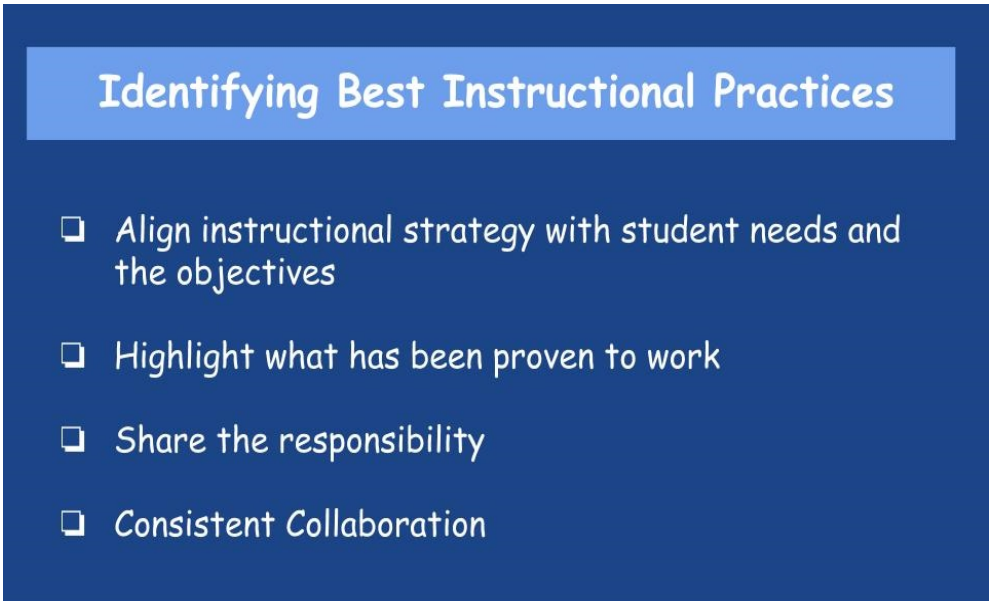
Facilitator Notes; Encourage teachers to use sticky notes to post questions and/or concerns on the chart paper. All questions will be addressed after the 15-minute break.
Slide 39



Facilitator Notes: Discuss the difference in face to face collaboration and on-line collaboration.
Slide 40

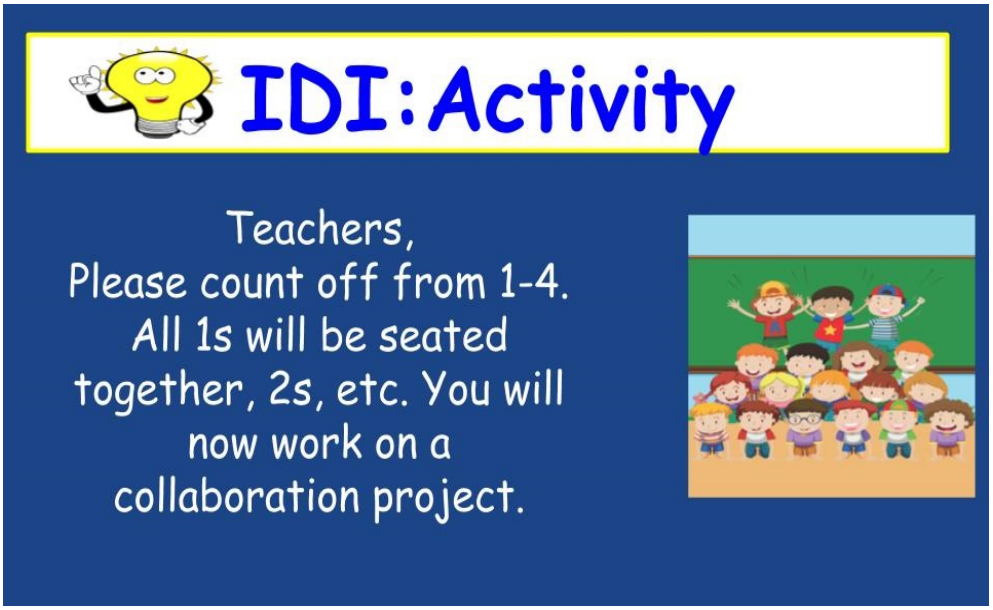
Facilitator Notes: "Preparing for face to face and online collaboration is the key. Time is valuable and as teachers, we need to respect each other's time. Ideas should be mapped out prior to a meeting and an agenda in place."

Slide 41



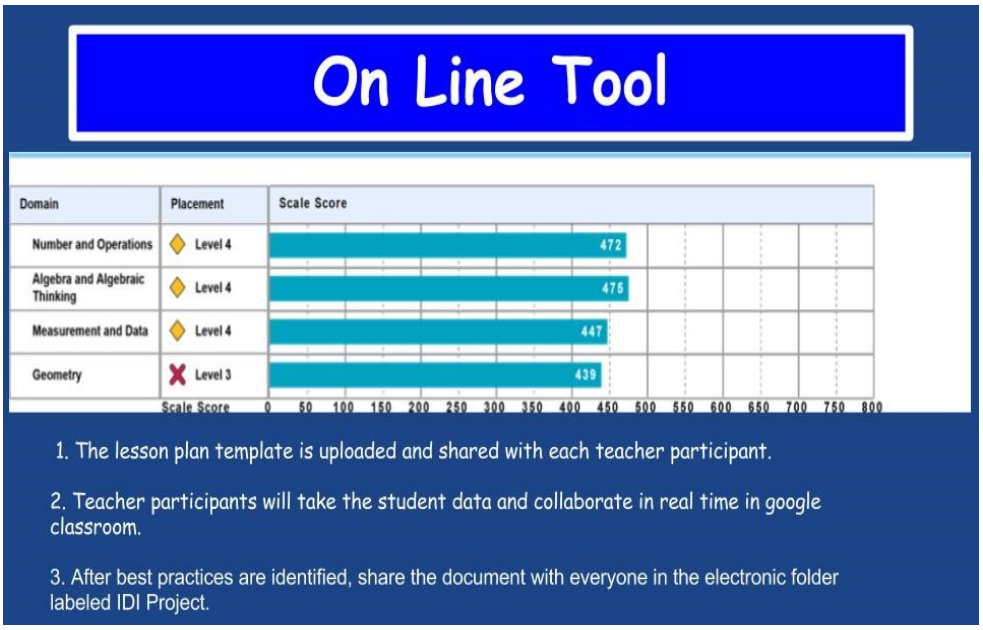
Facilitator Notes: Share the process that identifying best teaching practices involves.

Slide 42



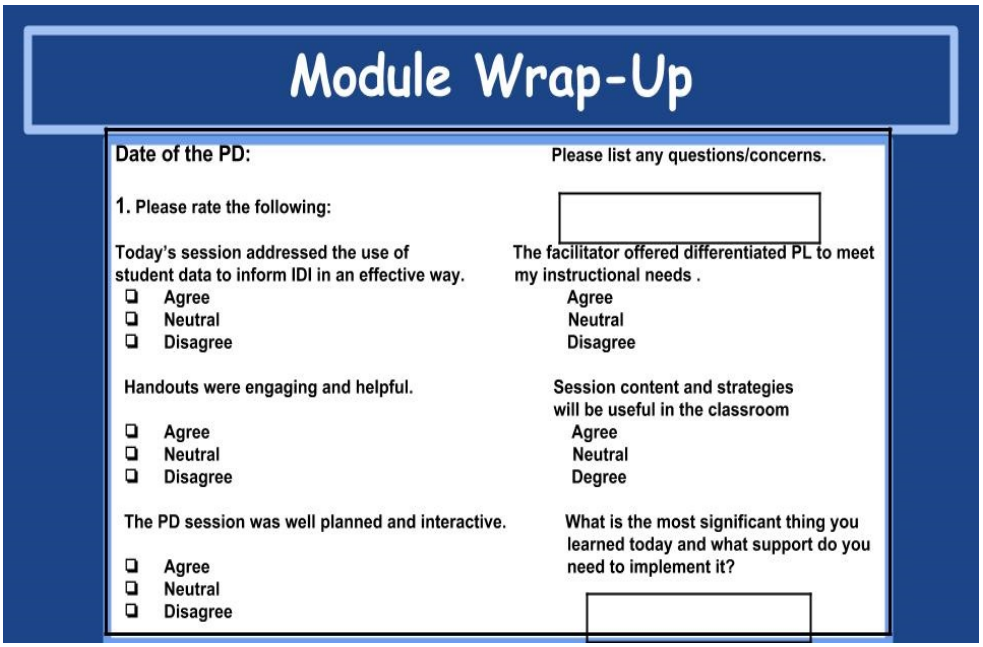
Facilitator Notes: Invite teacher participants to count off and move to their specific groups.

Slide 43

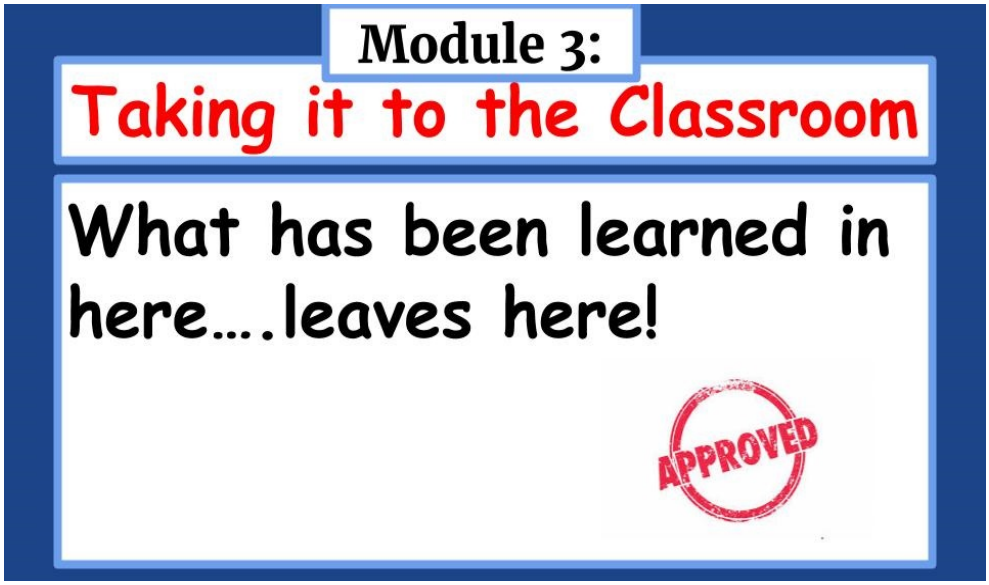


Facilitator Notes: Walk teacher participants through these steps. After teachers have shared the document, each group will share their experience. Today's module will conclude in the media center.

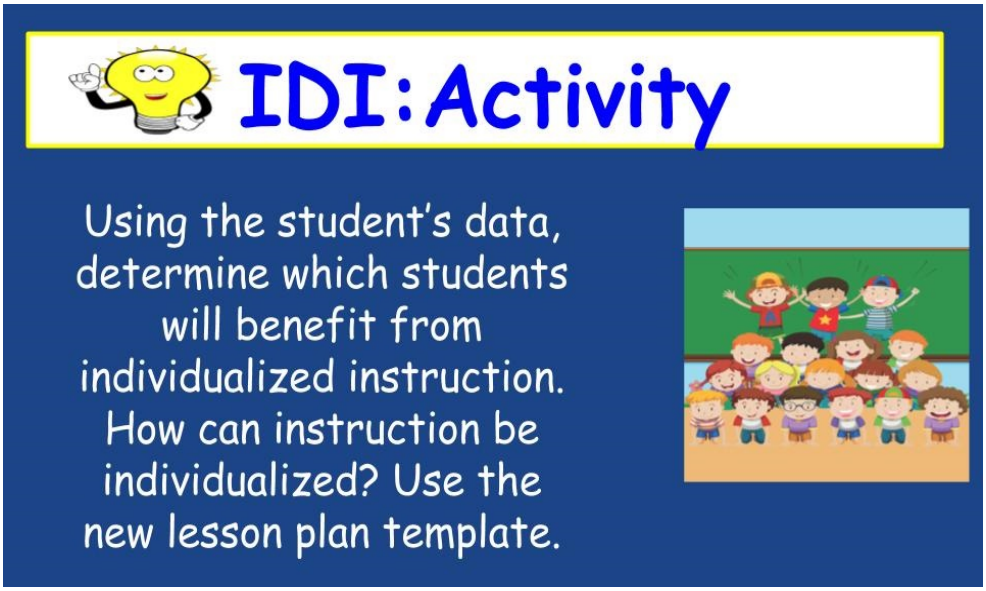
Slide 44



Facilitator Notes: Teacher participants will complete the survey. Questions/Concerns will be addressed at the start of tomorrow's session.
Slide 45



Facilitator Notes: Greet teachers and thank them for attending the PL. Invite teachers to sit in a group with their grade levels. Address any questions/Concerns that were highlighted on yesterday's survey.
Slide 46



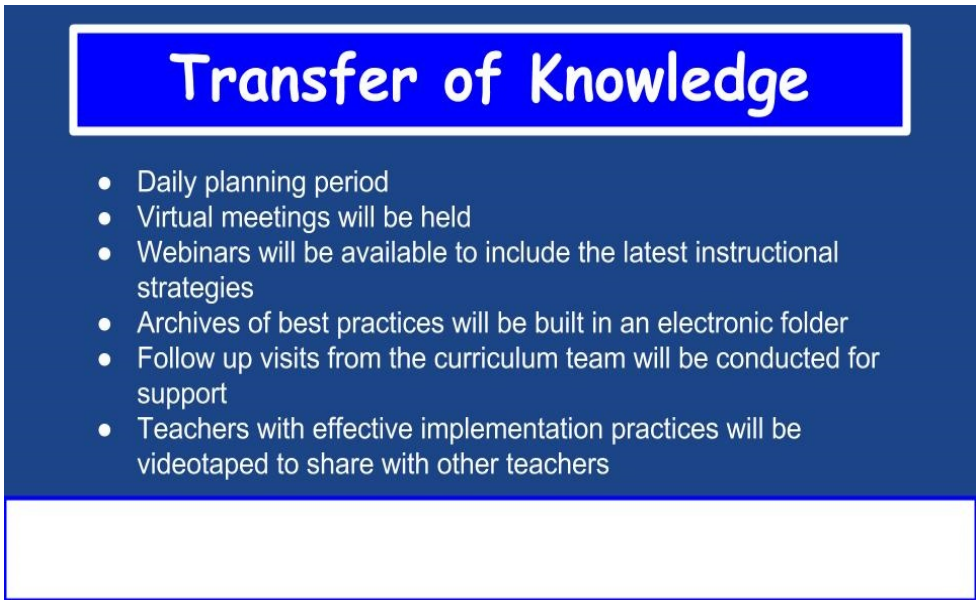
Facilitator Notes: Teachers will receive student data from the previous year: standardized test scores, end of year diagnostics, and final grades. As a grade level, teachers will

discuss best teaching practices. How can instruction be individualized to meet the student's needs?
Slide 47

Facilitator Notes: Encourage teachers to post questions and concerns.
Slide 48

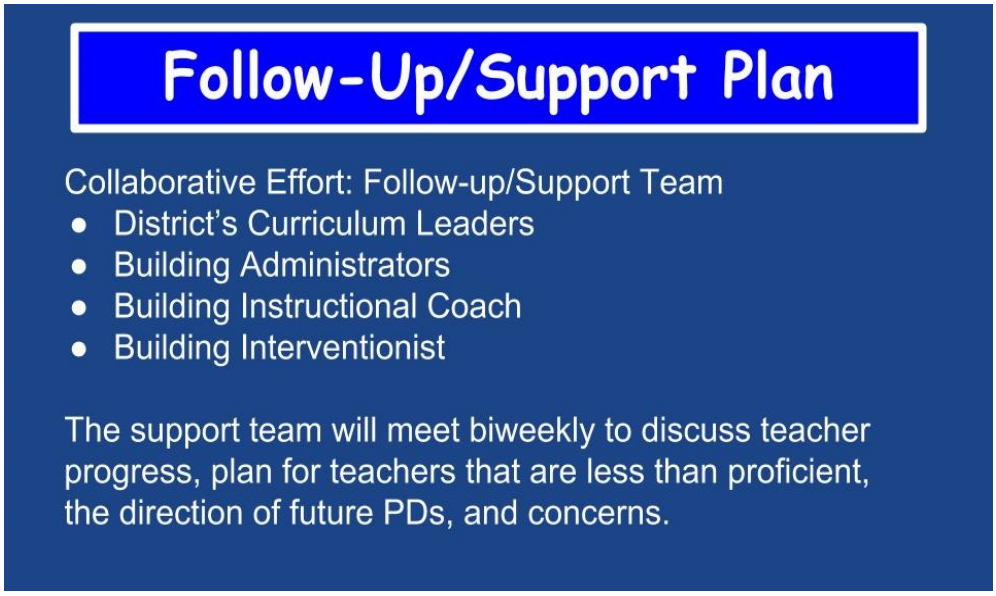
Facilitator Notes: Teacher Participants will share issues that they may have encountered when viewing data and planning. Issues and concerns will be addressed.

Slide 49



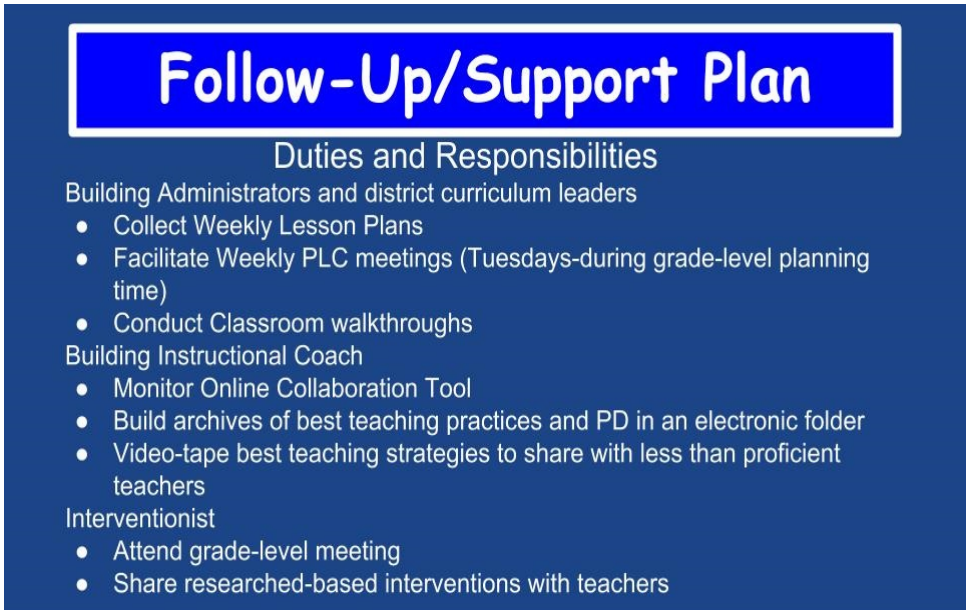
Facilitator Notes: Discuss the next steps to supporting implementation in the classroom.

Slide 50

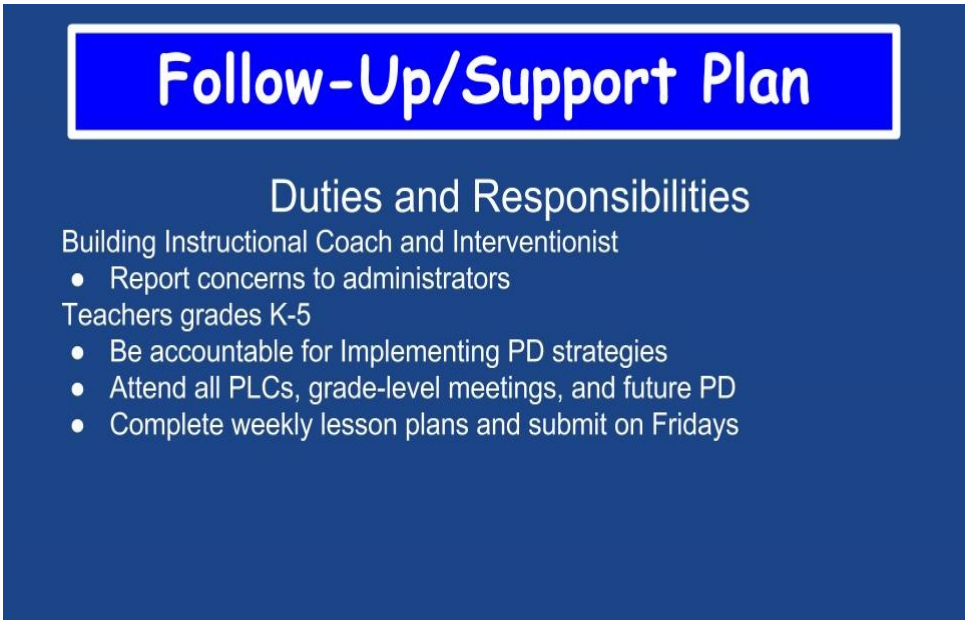


Facilitator Notes: "The next five slides will explain our tentative follow-up/support plan. Please ask questions, if you need to."

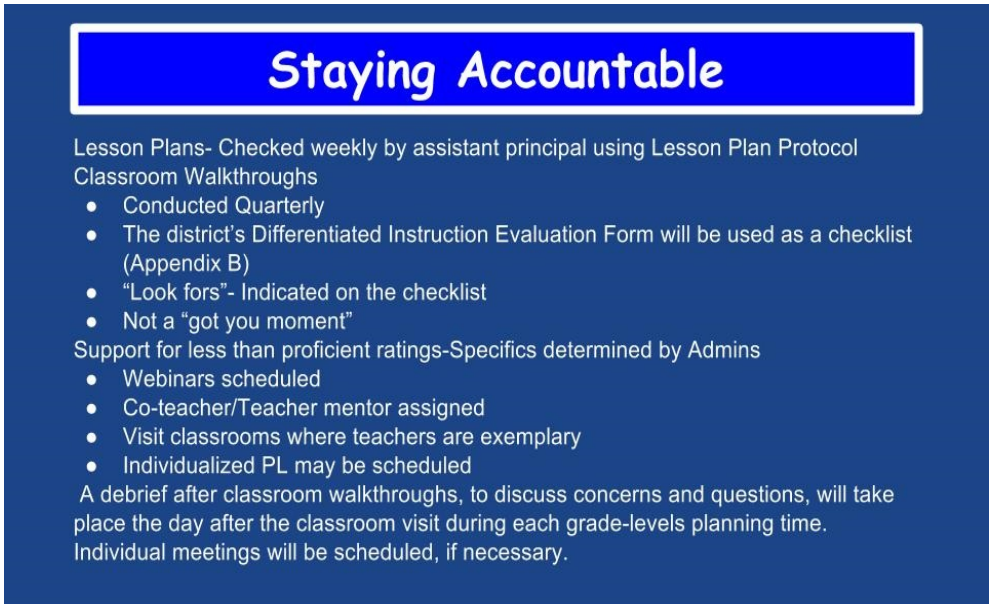
Slide 51



Slide 52

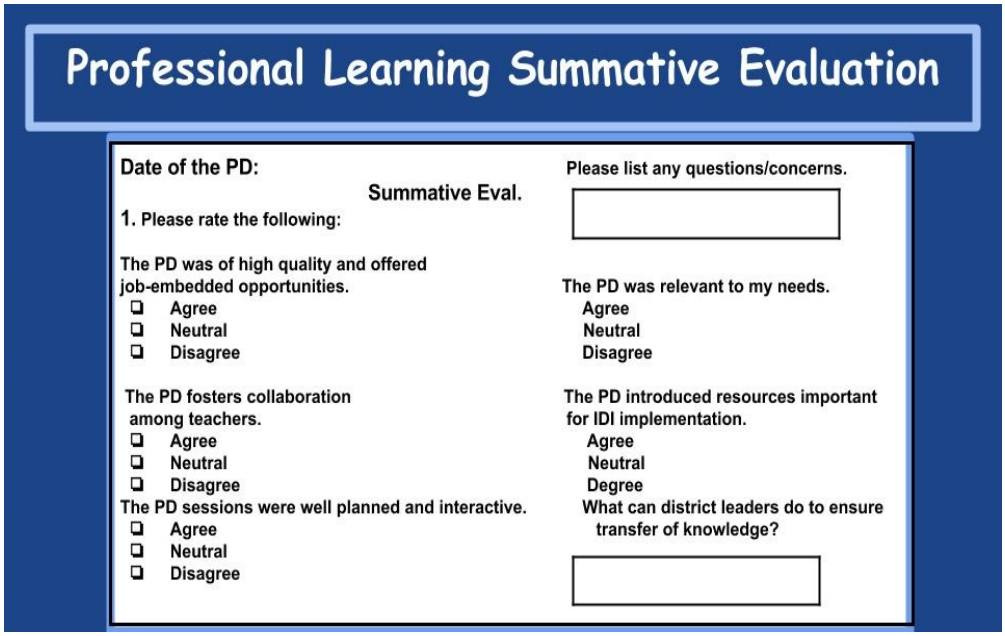


Slide 53



Facilitator Notes: Assure colleagues that they are not in this alone!

Slide 54



Facilitator Notes: Teacher participants will complete the survey. Questions/Concerns will inform future PLs and follow-up visits.

Appendix B: Differentiated Instruction Teacher Evaluation Form

Georgia Department of Education
Teacher Keys Effectiveness System
Handbook

Instructional Delivery	Rating	Comments
4. Differentiated Instruction	____Exemplary ____Proficient ____Needs Development ____Ineffective	Strengths: Areas for Growth:

Exemplary	Proficient	Needs Development	Ineffective
The teacher continually facilitates each student's opportunities to learn by engaging him/her in critical and creative thinking and challenging activities tailored to address individual learning needs and interests. (*Teachers rated as Exemplary continually seek ways to serve as role models or teacher leaders.)*	The teacher consistently challenges and supports each student's learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences.	The teacher inconsistently challenges students by providing appropriate content or by developing skills which address individual learning differences.	The teacher does not challenge students by providing appropriate content or by developing skills which address individual learning-differences.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

1. What type of individualized differentiated instruction professional development have you participated in?

2. How do you assess students' prior knowledge and skills?

3. How do you use students' knowledge and skills to plan individualized instruction?

4. What do you see are the advantages of assessing students?

5. How do you use assessment data to plan individualized differentiated instruction?

6. How is progress monitored in individualized instruction?

7. How do you believe developing instructional goals that vary based on learning needs benefit student progress?

   a. Probe: what steps are taken to develop instructional goals?

8. What tools are used to reach varying instructional goals needs?

9. How is content acquired at professional developments used to enhance individualized differentiated instruction?

   a. Probe: How do students respond to this method?

10. What are some barriers that disallow you from using knowledge acquired from professional developments when individualizing instruction?

Appendix D: Lesson Plan Protocol

LESSON PLAN PROTOCOL

Participants' ID_____ **Grade Level**_____

Subject: Reading ☐ **Math** ☐

Pre-Planning Consideration:

Does the teacher identify specific students? Yes ☐ **No** ☐

Are specific goals outlined for the individualized lesson? Yes ☐ **No** ☐

Learner considerations (List special accommodations):

Learner prior knowledge (How is prior knowledge assessed):

Resources and equipment:

Does the teacher identify resources for specific students? Yes ☐ **No** ☐

Description of resource(s) :

Physical resources:

Human resources:

Instructional Design and Lesson Planning		**Notes:**
Select Appropriate Formative Assessment to monitor learning	☐	
Use student data to adjust individualized lessons	☐	
Uses student prior knowledge to design individualized lessons	☐	
Apply a variety of instructional strategies and resources, including tailored technology, to provide individualized instruction	☐	
Differentiate instruction according to an assessment of student learning needs and awareness of individual variances in students		

Assessment		**Notes:**
Analyzes and applies data from multiple assessments and measures to diagnose students' learning needs, informs instruction based on those needs, and drives the learning process	☐	
Uses a variety of assessment tools to monitor progress	☐	
Designs and aligns formative and summative assessments that match learning objectives and lead to mastery	☐	
Modifies assessments and testing conditions to accommodate learning styles and varying levels of knowledge		

Appendix E: Completed Lesson Plan Protocol

LESSON PLAN PROTOCOL

Participants' ID : 6-D **Grade Level** Third

Subject: Reading ☐ **Math** ■

Pre-Planning Consideration:

Does the teacher identify specific students? Yes ☐ **No** ■

Are specific goals outlined for the individualized lesson? Yes ☐ **No** ■

Goals are specified for each lesson; however, the teacher does not outline goals for student's individualized lessons.

Learner considerations (List special accommodations):

There are no learner considerations listed.

Learner prior knowledge (How is prior knowledge assessed):

The teacher listed assessment evidence: To activate prior knowledge the teacher utilizes a computer game-base response system that allows the input of questions. The teacher inputs the questions and projects the game for student access.

Resources and equipment:

Does the teacher identify resources for specific students? Yes ☐ **No** ■

Description of resource(s) :

There are no resources identified for specific students. The teacher does identify resources for whole group. These resources are not listed in a particular area on the plan. Resources are listed in the actual learning activities. For example, the teacher uses a book entitled" Even Steven and Odd Todd" to teach even and odd numbers whole group.

Physical resources:

Math enriched books and computer game-based programs (Kahoot and I-ready),

Human resources: *Although there are students served by an intervention teacher, the classroom teacher makes no mention of the interventionist as a resource.*

Instructional Design and Lesson Planning		**Notes:**
Select Appropriate Formative Assessment to monitor learning	■	
Use student data to adjust individualized lessons	☐	
Uses student prior knowledge to design individualized lessons	☐	
Apply a variety of instructional strategies and resources, including tailored technology, to provide individualized instruction	☐	
Differentiate instruction according to an assessment of student learning needs and awareness of individual variances in students	☐	

Assessment		**Notes:**
Analyzes and applies data from multiple assessments and measures to diagnose students' learning needs, informs instruction based on those needs, and drives the learning process	☐	It is evidenced that the teacher uses multiple sources of data, i.e. performance tasks; however, there is no evidence that says that instruction is driven to meet students' individual needs
Uses a variety of assessment tools to monitor progress	■	
Designs and aligns formative and summative assessments that match learning objectives and lead to mastery	☐	The teacher uses formative assessments: Ticket out the door, Kahoot, I-ready, Thumbs- up
Modifies assessments and testing conditions to accommodate learning styles and varying levels of knowledge	☐	Though learning objectives are present, there is no evidence of

		summative assessments that is aligned with the objectives, The teacher does not note specific accommodations given to meet the needs of the individual students