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### **The Need for a Differentiated Classroom with Universal Design**

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“A teachers question remains much the same as it was 100 years ago: How do I divide time, resources, and myself so that I am an effective catalyst for maximizing talent in all of my students”. ( Tomlinson, 1999) Ask yourself, what is different today in the way we teach our students, compared to how students were taught in the time of Socrates? Now ask yourself “What has changed in the way we live, work and play as compared to the time of Socrates?” As we try to raise the standards in our school system, we also struggle with under funded programs, and overcrowded classrooms. Today's teachers strive to have a better understanding of why some learners are more successful than others, while we also try to deliver coursework to a blended classroom. We realize that our students each have a unique learning level and ability, but we are forced as teachers to blend our coursework to accommodate what we believe is the median level of our classroom learning

ability. We realize that our learners grow up with digital technology that enhances their daily actions and their thoughts. We understand that by the time our learners reach “Ninth Grade,” countless hours have been spent surrounded by a News medium that delivers information at the bottom of the screen in tickertape style, while a newscaster delivers the events of the day through voice, and film footage plays in the background. Our students have spent countless hours using computers, playing videogames, and programming, as well as using DVD players. They shop on eBay, they have their own cell phones, most have iPods and all the gadgets of the digital age that are deemed as common tools of our day to day life. Yet when our learners enter our classroom, they face a method of learning that has not experienced very much change since the days of Socrates.

As the study of the neurosciences continues to increase in the future, as it has over the past few years, we will continue to learn even more about the complexities of the human brains activity, and of multiple levels of how our students individually learn and interact. The theories brought forward today which highlight the

cognitive element of learning, will continue to explore how teacher intervention will impact the learning ability and variability among our students. The challenge that we as teachers face is how to best use this information to personalize a learning medium for our students. Through the use of technology we are able to adapt learning technologies that match individual learning differences.

□ Through the use of a Differentiated Classroom, and by enhancing the instructional design process with an Avatar, we are able to enhance the classroom experience through cumulative learning, as well as individual learning. As teachers we integrate erudite technology that makes the Differentiated Classroom an adaptive learning environment that will fit the learning needs of all students. The concept of personalizing our coursework for all learners is certainly not new. But the Differentiated Classroom and the use of today's technology that is powered by an Avatar elevates personalization to a new level. Through the use of the Differentiated Classroom with the implementation of an Avatar, our individual learners can be uniquely identified, and relevant course content as well as learning environments can be specifically tailored to them.