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| IRIS Center logo. | **Outline** |

**Understanding Student Differences**:

Recognizing the Impact and Facilitating Student Success

Module Home

* Module Description: This module offers a broad overview of how different student characteristics (i.e., culture, language, exceptionality, and socioeconomic status) affect learning and how teachers can better meet the needs of all students in their classes (est. completion time: 1 hour).

Challenge

* Video: Ms. Christie—a history instructor at Chester Himes Middle School—is playing private detective this week.

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Initial Thoughts

* Is it important to acknowledge students’ differences in classroom settings? Why or why not?
* What should teachers understand in order to address student differences in their classrooms?

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Perspectives & Resources

* Module Objectives
* Describe the heterogeneity of students in today’s classrooms
* List five ways in which student differences influence learning
* Identify considerations for teaching students with varied characteristics and abilities

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* Page 1: Introduction to Student Differences
* Students in our nation’s classrooms represent different races, ethnicities, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and they speak many different languages.
* Consider the following statistics… [bullet points]

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* Page 2: Influence of Teacher Perceptions
* *Teacher perceptions*—the thoughts or mental images teachers have about their students—are shaped by their background knowledge and life experiences.
* Video: Watch the *First Thoughts/Digging Deeper* movie below.
* Why Perceptions Matter
  + Expectations: High/Low [table]
  + Research Shows
  + Activity

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* Page 3: Cultural Differences
* When we use the word culture, we are generally referring to the beliefs, values, customs, and social behaviors of a group that are reflected in their everyday life.
* Why Culture Matters
  + Click here for an example of how cultural dissonance can escalate from one day to the next, leaving the teacher and the student feeling misunderstood and disrespected. [drop-down menu]
* Making a Difference in the Classroom
  + Teachers are culturally responsive when they… [bullet points]
  + For Your Information

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* Page 4: Linguistic Differences
* Teachers lead classrooms with a mix of students who may be fluent in English, learning English as a second language, or bilingual.
* Why Language Matters
  + Video: To get a better sense of what these students might be experiencing, watch the movie below and try to follow along with the teacher’s lecture in Portuguese.
  + For more information about BICS and CALP, click here… [drop-down menu]
  + Audio: Janette Klingner talks about some common misperceptions teachers have about English language learners.
* What Teachers Can Do
  + [drop-down menu]
  + Link: English Learners: Understanding Sheltered Instruction [IRIS Activity]
  + Audio: Janette Klingner discusses the use of evidence-based practices with ELs. Further, she talks about elements of a learning environment that help ELs to be successful in the classroom.
  + Research Shows
  + Something to Consider
  + Audio: Diane Torres-Velasquez explains why the belief that mathematics is a universal language is false and what teachers need to consider when teaching mathematics.

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* Page 5: Exceptionalities
* The term *exceptionalities* in K–12 schooling refers to both disabilities and giftedness.
* IDEA recognizes fourteen disability categories: [bullet points]
  + Link: intellectual disability [definition]
* Special Education Jargon at a Glance
  + Link: free appropriate public education (FAPE) [definition]
  + Link: least restrictive environment (LRE) [definition]
  + Link: related services [definition]
  + Link: accommodations [definition]
  + Link: modifications [definition]
  + Link: individualized education program (IEP) [definition]
* Why Exceptionalities Matter
* What Teachers Can Do
  + Link: assistive technology [definition]
  + Link: accommodations [definition]
  + Link: modifications [definition]
  + Link: differentiated instruction [definition]
  + Link: Universal Design for Learning [definition]
  + Audio: Ginger Blalock discusses some key considerations for individualized instruction with students with disabilities.
  + Audio: Ginger Blalock discusses some key considerations for accessing the general education curriculum with students with disabilities.

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* Page 6: Socioeconomic Factors
* Just as students will have varied cultural backgrounds, speak many languages, and have different learning needs, so too will they come from various socioeconomic levels.
* Students from low-SES families typically… [bullet points]
* Did You Know?
* Why SES Matters
  + Potential Challenges for Students Related to Low SES [box]
  + Audio: Listen as Lanette Waddell, former Director of Teaching and Learning in Urban Schools (TLUS), discusses this in more detail.
  + Audio: Listen as Dolores Battle discusses the relationship between language and behavior.
  + For Your Information
* What Teachers Can Do
  + [drop-down menu]
  + Audio: Listen as Dolores Battle discusses the importance of language for developing literacy and what teachers can do to support students’ learning
  + Activity
    - Audio: Richard Milner provides some insights into this situation.
    - Audio: Richard Milner discusses how teachers might address similar circumstances.

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* Page 7: References & Additional Resources
* Suggested module citation
* References
* Additional Resources
* Credits

Wrap Up

* Summary of the module
* Student Differences/What Teachers Should Understand [table]
* Audio: Lanette Waddell, former Director of Teaching and Learning in Urban Schools (TLUS), suggests ways that teachers can better get to know their students.
* Revisiting Initial Thoughts

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Assessment

* Take some time now to answer the following questions.

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