



NTACT

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition

Quick Guide: Universal Design for Learning in Secondary Education

Language arts teachers at Southwest High School collectively began implementing universal design for learning strategies. They started by augmenting lessons for Lord of the Flies and offering multiple means of representation. In addition to using the standard text, they used adapted texts with simplified language and listened to the audio version of the book. They also provided multiple means of action and expression. The teachers decided to give students a list of possible assignments they could complete for their final project including creating their own film version of the book, writing an essay, or creating a graphic novel representing themes from the text. Finally they offered multiple means of engagement. The teachers attempted to engage students in the text by comparing it to a relevant context or looking for other references in popular culture. Teacher's discovered that students accomplished learning goals and participated more during class.

What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?

The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST, 2010) defines Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as “a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone--not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.” UDL has three guiding principles which include; provide multiple means of representation, provide multiple means of action and expression, and provide multiple means of engagement.

Why Is UDL Important?

Individual students bring with them a variety of skills, needs, and ways they learn best. UDL is a framework that addresses the barriers to learning and allows students flexibility instead of a cookie cutter curriculum where everyone does the same thing, but to still achieve the same learning goals. In addition to increasing the learning of every student, there are legal mandates that support the use of UDL including The Assistive Technology Act, 1998; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004; and Higher Education Opportunity Act, 1998.

How Does Research Support UDL?

Research on UDL is split into guidelines under the three principles (multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement) and pinpoints specific studies showing the benefits and ways to customize the display of information (e.g., Boon, Burke, Fore III, & Spencer, 2006; Brunken, Plass, & Leutner, 2004; Papalewis, 2004). Studies supporting multiple means of action and expression include studies which demonstrate ways to provide options for physical action, expression and communication, and executive function (e.g., Alper &

Raharinirina, 2006; Boon et al., 2006; Graham & Perin, 2007). Studies under multiple means of engagement identify strategies for providing options for recruitment interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and self-regulation (e.g., Luiselli, Putnam, & Sunderland, 2002; Mak, Blewitt, & Heaven, 2004; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996).

Where Do You Find the Primary Source for UDL?

More information on UDL strategies, research, professional development and case studies can be found at the National Center on Universal Design for Learning: www.cast.org.

How Does This Apply to Families?

- A parent's guide to Universal Design for Learning (UDL)-National Center for Learning disabilities
 - <http://www.cpacinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/ParentsGuidetoUDL.pdf>
- Factsheet on Universal Design for Learning for Parents and Families
 - http://www.udlcenter.org/sites/udlcenter.org/files/UDL_Familiesfactsheets.pdf

How Does This Apply to Administrators?

- Universal Design for Learning and the Transition to a More Challenging Academic Curriculum: Making it in Middle School and Beyond (2005) by Beth Casper and Deborah Leuchovius:
 - Universal design means that environments and curricula are designed, right from the start, to be flexible and useable by students of widely varying abilities.
 - http://www.ncset.org/publications/parent/NCSETParent_Apr05.pdf
- Factsheet on Universal Design for Learning for administrators
 - http://www.udlcenter.org/sites/udlcenter.org/files/UDL_Adminfactsheets.pdf

How Does This Apply to School-Level Practitioners?

- Using Universal Design for Learning: Successful Transition Models for Educators Working with Youth with Learning Disabilities NCWD-Y Info Brief 2/201:
 - Provides background information on Universal Design for Learning and strategies for special education and general education teachers to implement in the classroom.
 - http://www.ncwd-youth.info/sites/default/files/infobrief_issue33.pdf
- Universal Design of Instruction in Elementary and Secondary Education from the Do-IT website (this is a collection of links to other sources)
 - <http://www.washington.edu/doiit/programs/center-universal-design-education/primarysecondary/universal-design-instruction-elementary>
- Fact sheet on Universal Design for Learning for teachers
 - http://www.udlcenter.org/sites/udlcenter.org/files/UDL_Educatorsfactsheets.pdf
- Online learning modules that introduce theory and strategies surrounding Universal Design for Learning

- <http://www.udlcenter.org/implementation/modules>

Additional UDL Resources Relevant to Secondary Education References

- Other National Centers Supporting the research and implementation of UDL:
 - National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials
 - <http://aem.cast.org/>

Examples of UDL practices in Secondary Education

- Examples from four school districts of how Universal Design for Learning is being implemented
 - <http://www.udlcenter.org/implementation/fourdistricts>
- UDL Spotlight features teachers practicing UDL strategies in applications of technology, courses, tools and web sites to support teaching and learning. In each Spotlight, segments of the UDL Guidelines are highlighted that are met by any implementation.
 - <https://udlspotlight.wordpress.com/>

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