



Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a research-based set of principles to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and effective for all. UDL guidelines address the WHY (engagement), the WHAT (representation), and the HOW (action and expression) of learning (www.cast.org). In a traditional classroom, a teacher may devote a great deal of time and energy to planning lessons but unknowingly create barriers that exclude some children. Using UDL principles, educators can be ready to reach all learners at any age or grade level.

Use UDL principles to get **READY** for instruction. By using these principles to guide planning, a teacher will consider the needs and interests of all the students in the room from the very beginning rather than as an afterthought. One goal may address all students but the teacher embeds various teaching methods, assistive technologies, and engaging materials/activities in the lesson to support all students in reaching that goal (Council for Exceptional Children, 2005).

To use UDL when crafting a lesson on new vocabulary:

- » Early Childhood: Plan for materials that are colorful, appealing, have interesting textures, and are easy to use & flexible yet still teach the message (e.g., puzzles with knobs; magnetic or foam letters; felt boards; assortment of crayons, pencils, & markers, etc.).
- » Upper Elementary/Middle School: Create choice boards, games, foldables, puzzles, visuals, and tactile examples that appeal to students' interests.

» High School: Plan introduction of vocabulary using computers or tablets; embed hyperlinks to images, videos, and/or sound clips to help students experience multiple representations of terms.

To **SET** the stage for applying UDL during instruction, involve the students in the learning process which allows engagement with content. Students "experience" the new vocabulary instead of listening to excessive "teacher talk" and are provided multiple formats for demonstrating what they know. With UDL in mind, the teacher may note students' progress throughout the lesson and adjust future instruction in response to student performance (Council for Exceptional Children, 2005).

Use UDL during instruction:

» Early Childhood: Present content in multiple formats (e.g., verbal, print, video, concrete objects, repeating key words) in understandable/ culturally appropriate language. Use a variety of activities to allow children to "experience" the word. Let children dictate, draw, or use computer programs to share knowledge of vocabulary words.

» Upper Elementary/Middle School: Use matching games, graphic organizers, word sorts, vocabulary apps, and structured conversations with partners to allow students the opportunity to play with terms. Create interactive word walls to revisit terms, make storyboards that embed vocabulary with content, and connect vocabulary to student lives.

» High School: Students choose from menu of activities to demonstrate understanding of terms (write song lyrics using the vocabulary, create a card game integrating the vocabulary, teach the class body movements/hand gestures to represent the vocabulary, etc.). Give students a chance to voice which vocabulary assignments were most helpful to their understanding of the words, and then revise future assignments based on student response.

To read more about using UDL principles, **GO** to:

» *Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) Universal Design for Learning* a nonprofit research and development organization that works to expand learning opportunities for all individuals through Universal Design for Learning.

<http://www.cast.org>

» *Let's Play! Projects - University of Buffalo Center for Assistive Technology* provides ideas and strategies to promote play through better access to play materials, and use assistive technology and universal design to give children this critical access.

<http://letsplay.buffalo.edu>

» *National Center on Universal Design for Learning* to learn the basics, find research, and discover resources (including UDL Guidelines, articles, books, presentations and videos).

<http://www.udlcenter.org>

» *The Iris Center UDL Module* - A US Department of Education Office of Special Education (OSEP) funded resource site for evidence-based practices in education, this module examines the three principles of UDL and discusses how to apply these principles to the four curricular components (goals, instructional materials, instructional methods, and assessments).

<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/udl>

» *UDL at a Glance* - YouTube video created by CAST which illustrates the three principles of UDL.

http://www.udlcenter.org/resource_library/videos/udlcenter/udl#video0

» *Universal Design for Learning Implementation and Research Network* - a grassroots organization that supports the scaled implementation and research related to UDL, as well as, supporting and promoting the identification and development of models, tools, research, and practices designed to foster effective UDL implementation in educational environments.

<http://udl-irn.org>

References and Resources

* Center for Applied Special Technology ([CAST](#)).

* Council for Exceptional Children (2005). *Universal design for learning: A guide for teachers and education professionals*. Arlington, VA: Author.

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* Ralabate, P.K. (2016). *Your UDL lesson planner: The step-by-step guide for teaching all learners*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

* Rapp, W.H. (2014). *Universal design for learning in action: 100 ways to teach all learners*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

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