



Universal Design for Learning – Core Ideas

“UDL helps educators with their delivery of the curriculum instead of trying to “fix” the students.”

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Defined

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) originated in architecture and was adapted and developed by CAST. UDL is a framework to guide the design of learning environments that are inclusive, accessible, and challenging for all.



Each word reflects the priorities of UDL:

- **Universal:** UDL is an approach for designing instruction for all students.
- **Design:** UDL is incorporated from the start, as instruction is being planned.
- **Learning:** UDL is based on a deep understanding of how humans learn.

Benefits of Universal Design for Learning

- Supports an inclusive learning environment for all students.
- Identifies and removes barriers to learning.
- Addresses learner variability.
- Ensures access, participation, and meaningful and challenging learning opportunities.
- Creates an environment in which materials and content are presented in a variety of ways, including multiple ways of engagement, representation, action, and expression.

“UDL is an expression of a belief that all students are capable of learning and that instruction, when crafted and implemented with this belief in mind, can help all students succeed in inclusive and equitable learning environments.”

-Katie Novak

For education to achieve equity, the following conditions must hold true:

- All students should have fair access to inclusive classrooms where they can learn alongside their grade-level peers.
- Every student should have equal opportunities to learn in a way that aligns with grade-level standards.
- There should be equitable expectations for all students to succeed when provided with appropriate support.
- Every student should feel a sense of belonging and hope.

“Learner variability refers to the unique mix of strengths and limitations we experience based on context and the varied paths we may take in performing a task.”

-Rose & Fisher

Variability is the rule & is contextual

- Learner variability recognizes that every individual has a distinct combination of strengths and limitations.
- Understanding student variability is crucial for educators to tailor instruction and support to meet individual needs effectively.
- Learner variability is influenced by the context in which learning occurs. Learners' abilities and limitations can manifest differently depending on factors such as the subject matter, learning environment, instructional methods, or assessment formats.

Clear Goals, Flexible Means

- Goals are the foundation of any effective learning experience, whether it is a face-to-face class, a remote learning opportunity, or other kinds of learning interaction.
- When we articulate clear goals and objectives for learners to accomplish, we can then tailor flexible assessments, methods, and materials that effectively support those goals.
- Goals should be crafted using language that is easy for learners to understand and should be presented in multiple formats to ensure accessibility.
- When we separate the goal from the means, learners can choose what works best for them.

“What is essential for some is beneficial for all.”

The barrier is in the environment, not the student

Classrooms should be usable to the greatest extent possible by all students because creating inclusive and equitable learning environments is essential. Here are some reasons why:



1. **Equal access to education:** Every student has the right to access and participate in education.
2. **Improved learning outcomes:** All students benefit when classrooms are designed to be equitable and inclusive.
3. **Fostering a sense of belonging:** Inclusive classrooms create an environment where all students feel valued, respected, and included.
4. **Preparation for the real world:** Inclusive classrooms reflect the real world's diversity.
5. **Compliance with legal and ethical standards:** In many countries, legislation and educational policies mandate inclusive education.

Resources

1. To learn more about UDL, visit - <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>