Overview

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a practice of preparing and providing lessons that include multiple means of representation, multiple means of action and expression, and multiple means of engagement. UDL is scientifically based research based on how the brain recognizes and perceives information. UDL is not limited to students with special needs, but aids all learners in the acquisition of knowledge. Lessons require more preparation from the onset, but students are engaged, motivated, and opportunities for learning are increased.

Historical Context

The passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in 1973 and IDEA in 1975 laid the foundation for UDL by emphasizing the need to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. The law mandated that, "as much as appropriate," students with disabilities should be educated in general education classes with appropriate aids and supports.

The development of UDL is a concept that began in the 1990s with advances in technology, universal design in architecture, and the integration of students in American schools with more complex needs. New technologies were developed to be accessible for people with disabilities (closed captioning, automatic doors, etc.) Universal Design was applied to education through organizations such as CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology), exploring the possibility of utilizing technology to support students in inclusive education.

With the reauthorization of IDEA 1997, special education was redefined as enabling the child access to the curriculum. These provisions reinforced the potential for UDL emphasizing access, accommodations, and modifications in the regular classroom. IDEA 1997 also required students with disabilities to be included in state accountability systems.

The emphasis of inclusion and access is supported in No Child Left Behind and IDEA 2004. UDL was incorporated in IDEA 2004 with its requirements for National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) and the movement toward response to intervention (RTI). NIMAS is the first explicit legal mention of universal design by requiring publishers and school districts to have digitized versions of texts. §300.172(c)(1).[1]

Driving Question: Do school/classroom structures support student's ability to access and acquire information through multiple means?

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[1] Hehir, T. (2009). Policy foundations of universal design for learning. In D.T. Gordon, J.W. Gravel & L.A. Schifter (Eds.), A policy reader in unversal design for learning (pp. 35-45). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. http://www.udlcenter.org/sites/udlcenter.org/files/Hehir_Policy_Foundations_of_Universal%20Design_for_Learning_0.pdf

<u>Instructions</u>

Prior to beginning the self-assessment, the teacher or team may need to gather and review educational records, processes, information and documents related to **UDL**. This information may include:

1) **Lesson plans**
2) **Record of resources (Assistive technology equipment inventory, computer accessibility, math manipulates, reading materials, etc.)**
3) **Accommodations required for specific students (instruction and assessment) and/or other relevant needs in the classroom (i.e. fears/phobias, behavior factors, conflict students, family background matters, etc.)**
4) **Lesson objective (short term/long term)**
5) **Pre-existing lesson supplements (pre-test/post-test, student assignments, etc.)**
6) **Accompanying materials (Textbook, paperback readers, printout of web-based materials, etc.).**

Each component and best practice description is followed by a list of measures and examples of those measures. A teacher's stage of practice should be informed by these measures.

<u>Stages of Practice</u>

The self-assessment is intended to identify a teacher's stage of practice in the area of universal design for learning and provide guidance for teachers in improving their practice. The OSDE-SES envisions stages of practice along this continuum:

1) None
2) Exploring
3) Partial
4) Adequate
5) Best

A teacher or team may assess its practice as "Best Practice" if there is measurable/observable evidence of the practice and documentation of consistent use.

<u>Components</u>

For the area of **UDL**, the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services division (OSDE-SES) has identified 5 components. These components provide a comprehensive description of **implementation of UDL** in the LEA.

1) **Lesson Planning**
2) **Multiple Means of Representation**
3) **Multiple Means of Action & Expression**
4) **Multiple Means of Engagement**
5) **Professional Development**

<u>Self-Assessment Team</u>

The self-assessment may be completed by an individual teacher or group of teachers. If a group of teachers is completing the self-assessment, list the team here.

Name	Role	Signature

Components

To determine your level of practice, utilize the following measures. Information for these measures should be gathered by reviewing school-wide procedures, site observations, and through discussions with students.

1) Lesson Planning

Best Practice: Teachers incorporate UDL principles and options into *all* lesson planning based on student need. *Barriers to the curriculum and to the learning environment are identified and addressed on a continuous basis.*

Measures:

— Lesson Plans are color coded or otherwise identified for the specific UDL principle addressed. Example elementary science lesson on rocks: http://lessonbuilder.cast.org/explore.php?op=static&pid=rocks_2-4

— A document addresses the specific needs of the students in the class. The lesson clearly addresses the specific needs of the students. (i.e. Activities are broken up in 10 minute increments to address a child's needs of ADHD).

— The teacher readily accesses a tool to address the provision of accommodations to address the three principles of UDL (UDL wheel, guidelines, checklist, worksheet, notes, etc.)

— The teacher has identified potential barriers to the learning environment (i.e. difficult readability level of grade level text, multiple new vocabulary words).

Documentation/Comments:

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2) Multiple Means of Representation

Best Practice: The teacher provides all students multiple formats to perceive and comprehend information in all subject areas (including mathematical expression and symbols). *The teacher evaluates the effectiveness of the chosen means of representation and changes practice to meet the needs of students.*

Measures:

— Multiple formats of representation are documented in the lesson plan.

— Multiple formats of representation are incorporated for students throughout the lesson.

— Content is scaffolded to provide foundational skills for mastery.

— Multiple formats of representation selected address the specific needs of the learners in the class.

— Multiple formats of representation are incorporated in all subject areas.

— The teacher self-reflects the appropriateness of the selected form of representation and writes notes in the lesson plan to reflect the suggested areas of improvement.

Questions for reflection:

- ✓ What are the needs of the learners in my class?
- ✓ Which forms of representation will help my students learn the given objective?
- ✓ Does the selected form of representation meet the needs of my learners?
- ✓ Are there are student needs not being addressed by the current form of representation?
- ✓ Are there any forms of representation I would like to explore and possibly include? If so, which?

Documentation/Comments:

3) Multiple Means of Action and Expression

Best Practice: All students are provided opportunities to express knowledge with options for physical action and multiple means of communication. *The teacher evaluates the effectiveness of the chosen means of action and expression and changes practice to meet the needs of students.*

Measures:

— Multiple forms of Action and Expression are documented in the lesson plan.

— Multiple forms of Action and Expression are incorporated for students throughout the lesson.

— All students are provided opportunities to express knowledge with options for physical action and multiple means of communication.

— Teacher provides multiple strategies for supporting executive functioning. (e.g. goal setting, self-supervising).

— The Multiple forms of Action and Expression selected address the specific needs of the learners in the class.

— Multiple formats of Action and Expression are incorporated in all subject areas.

— The teacher self-reflects the appropriateness of the selected form of Action and Expression and writes notes in the lesson plan to reflect the suggested areas of improvement.

Questions for reflection:

✓ What are the needs of the learners in my class?
✓ Which forms of action and expression will show me that they have learned the given objective?
✓ Does the selected form of action and expression meet the needs of my learners?
✓ Are there are student needs not being addressed by the current form of action and expression?
✓ Are there any forms of action and expression I would like to explore and possibly include? If so, which?

Documentation/Comments:

4) **Multiple Means of Engagement**

Best Practice: The teacher is purposeful to provide all students multiple opportunities for engagement including options for recruiting interest, options for sustaining effort and persistence, and options for self-regulation. Students are engaged in *authentic,* relevant, and meaningful learning opportunities. *The teacher evaluates effectiveness of the chosen means of engagement and changes practice to meet the needs of students.*

Measures:

— Multiple forms of Engagement are documented in the lesson plan.

— Multiple forms of Engagement are incorporated for students throughout the lesson.

— All students are provided opportunities to express knowledge with options for recruiting interest, options for sustaining effort and persistence, and options for self-regulation.

— Students are engaged in *authentic,* relevant, and meaningful learning opportunities. (i.e. relevance to students is measured through a pre-test informal evaluation (thumbs up, class created checklist, KWL chart, etc.)) (i.e. student interests are taken into consideration (quick reference sheet for teachers based on student survey or interest profile).

— The Multiple forms of Engagement selected address the specific needs of the learners in the class.

— Multiple forms of Engagement are incorporated in all subject areas.

— The teacher self-reflects the appropriateness of the selected form of Engagement and writes notes in the lesson plan to reflect the suggested areas of improvement.

Questions for reflection:

✓ What are the needs of the learners in my class?
✓ Which forms of engagement will help my students learn the given objective?
✓ Does the selected form of engagement meet the needs of my learners?
✓ Are there are student needs not being addressed by the current form of engagement?
✓ Are there any forms of engagement I would like to explore and possibly include? If so, which?

Documentation/Comments:

5) Professional Development

Best Practice: Teacher has participated in training and has accessed materials on Universal Design for Learning. The teacher applies the knowledge gained in all lesson planning. *Teachers work collaboratively to implement new initiatives related to Universal Design for Learning into lesson planning.*

Measures:

— Teacher has participated in multiple professional development activities and has accessed materials on universal design for learning (UDL).
- o Professional Development Title/Date:_____
- o Professional Development Title/Date:_____
- o Material Accessed/Format/Date:_____
- o Material Accessed/Format/Date:_____

— Teacher applies the knowledge gained in classroom practice.
- o Ex. Teacher can reference UDL principles in the classroom acquired from a related professional development experience.

— Teacher seeks new strategies for providing access through the use of UDL.
- o Ex. Teacher participates in professional development, school or LEA meetings, or seeks out support from colleagues regarding UDL.
- o Ex. Teacher actively seeks information from the State department website regarding UDL.

Documentation/Comments: