http://www.cast.org

WHAT IS UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles to develop learning environments that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn.

UDL proposes not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather a set of flexible scaffolds and supports that can meet individual needs. Individual learners are very different from one another and may require different methods and means to reach a common goal. These differences—both seen and unseen—may be shaped by brain development, learned and innate skills, cultural and social experience, and a host of other factors.

The UDL framework encourages creating flexible designs from the start that have customizable options, which allow all learners to progress in the curriculum. The options for accomplishing this are varied and robust enough to provide effective instruction to all learners.

FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES

Affective Networks
The "why" of learning

How learners get engaged and stay motivated. How they are challenged, excited, or interested. These are affective dimensions.

☑ Stimulate interest and motivation for learning

Provide Multiple Means of Engagement

Strategic Networks
The "how" of learning

Planning and performing tasks. How we organize and express our ideas. Writing an essay or solving a math problem are strategic tasks.

☑ Differentiate the ways students can express what they know

Provide Multiple Means of Action & Expression

Recognition Networks
The "what" of learning

How we gather facts and categorize what we see, hear, and read. Identifying letters, words, or an author's style are recognition tasks.

☑ Present information and content in different ways

Provide Multiple Means of Representation

PERSPECTIVES ON UDL

"Universal Design for Learning is one of the few big and truly transformative ideas to emerge in education over the past two decades. Here is where [UDL] is transformative. It exposes and proposes remedies for several fundamental biases in a traditional curriculum …. Those biases proceed on the assumptions that (1) print is the best medium for acquiring information; (2) writing is the best means for expressing what one knows; (3) the ability to learn and engage in rich content depends solely on mastering these particular media; (4) "book smarts" are what matter most to learning; and (5) those who find print inaccessible or difficult deserve a less challenging, less rich, and less stimulating curriculum. Driving these assumptions is another more harmful one: that some individuals simply will never learn as much or as well, and that is their problem, not a problem for the standard educational system. "

Martha L. Minow, Dean, Harvard Law School and civil-rights advocate

"UDL offers a new way of thinking about creating multiple learning opportunities in every area of course design. Once you start thinking this way, the sky's the limit!"

Sandra Yang, Music Professor at Cal Poly Pomona

"[UDL] is nothing less than a manifesto declaring the right and ability of all learners to soar. At Scholastic, we embrace its moral authority and its business practicality."

Marjery Mayer, President, Scholastic Education

"The definition of UDL that appears in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (103 U.S.C. § 42) has come to dominate the field because of its broad applicability and its research foundation in the learning sciences, both cognitive and neurosciences."

National Education Technology Plan, US Department of Education, 2010, p. 19.