Universal Design for Learning: Opening the Doors to Academic Success for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

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What is Universal Design for Learning?
UDL Definition

• Universal design for learning is a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that
  (a) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and
  (b) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient.

(Higher Education Opportunity Act)
Why Universal Design for Learning?

• Students come to the classroom with a variety of needs, skills, talents, and interests.
• The typical curriculum—which includes goals, instructional methods, classroom materials, and assessments—has many barriers and roadblocks.
• Students and teachers are expected to make all of the necessary adjustments.
• UDL places the burden to adapt on the curriculum itself.
Universal Design for Learning in the Common Core State Standards
UDL in the Common Core Standards

- UDL, as defined in the Higher Education Act, is referenced specifically in the section called Application to Students with Disabilities

  “Instructional supports for learning— based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) which foster student engagement by presenting information in multiple ways and allowing for diverse avenues of action and expression.”

- The standards emphasize what must be learned without specifying how it must be taught
UDL in the Dynamic Learning Maps

• Focus on conceptual and cognitive development rather than specific skill mastery
• Inclusion of multiple and alternate pathways to account for diverse student needs and styles
• Increased emphasis on multiple & flexible means of presentation, engagement and expression.
Common Core State Standards Essential Elements Also Reflect UDL

- Considered principles of universal design in writing Essential Elements.
- Each Essential Element was written so that there would be multiple ways to demonstrate achievement of the essential content and skills.

This is Universal Design for Learning
Principles of UDL

• Provide multiple, flexible means of:
  – Representation
  – Expression
  – Engagement
Provide multiple and flexible methods of representation to give students with diverse learning styles and needs various ways of acquiring information and knowledge.
Provide multiple and flexible means of **expression** to provide diverse students with alternatives for demonstrating what they have learned.
Provide multiple and flexible means of **engagement** to tap diverse learners' interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn.
How does Universal Design for Learning Improve Student Outcomes?
Recognition Networks

• The what of learning

• We use the recognition network to identify and interpret patterns of sound, light, taste, smell, and touch
Strategic Networks

• The **how** of learning
• Plan, execute, and monitor actions and skills
Affective Networks

- The why of learning
- Evaluate and set priorities
“UDL provides a framework to create and implement lessons with flexible goals, methods, materials, and assessments that support learning for all students” (http://lessonbuilder.cast.org/learn.php)
Shifting to Universal Design for Learning for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
Must Change Some Traditions

• No more singular views of
  – Representation
    • From rote repetition to repetition with variety
  – Expression
    • From one skill with 80% on 4 of 5 days to application on a specified number of occasions
  – Engagement
    • From extrinsic rewards & motivators to cognitive engagement
Learn More About UDL at the National Center on Universal Design for Learning

www.udlcenter.org/
THANK YOU!

For more information, please go to: www.dynamiclearningmaps.org