

What You Need to Know About Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for Educators, Leaders, and Parents

UDL for Educators

Universal Design for Learning is a research-based framework for designing curricula—that is, educational goals, methods, materials, and assessments—that enable all individuals to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. This is accomplished by simultaneously providing rich supports for learning and reducing barriers to the curriculum, while maintaining high achievement standards for all students.

(Source: www.cast.org)

In the Classroom

Universal Design for Learning supports educators' efforts to meet variability in their classroom by providing flexible instructional materials, techniques, and strategies that help them remove barriers to meet these varied needs. It does this by providing options for:

- Presenting information in different ways,
- Providing options on ways students can express what they know, and
- Stimulating interest and motivation for learning.

Students bring a huge variety of skills, needs, and interests to learning. Neuroscience reveals that these differences are as varied and unique as our fingerprints. The most important tool a student brings to the classroom is his/her brain. UDL is about supporting the whole child.

UDL for Leaders

Universal Design for Learning is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone—not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.

The beauty of UDL is that it's not just another initiative or program to add on to the ever-increasing list. The framework brings our learning initiatives together and provides strategies for successfully integrating them into our day-to-day curriculum. The UDL framework supports initiatives that are already in place in Ohio's schools, while supporting equity, partnerships, and quality schools.

UDL for Parents

Universal Design for Learning is a set of strategies for teaching that allows teachers to recognize students differing background knowledge and skills. It is a way to teach all learners, while honoring the variability in the same classroom.

Parents can help implement UDL approaches in the classroom by:

- Asking educators if they are familiar with the concept of UDL or if they are currently using universally designed curriculum in their classroom.
- Seeing that related goals are incorporated into a student's IEP so that he or she can learn the same content as their peers. For instance: Discuss how members of the IEP or transition planning team can help general educators understand and implement these concepts in the classroom.

For more information on Universal Design for Learning, please visit the Universal Design for Learning Center at OCALI at www.ocali.org.

