

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

FACT SHEET

Definition

UDL is an educational approach to teaching, learning and assessment, drawing on new brain research and new media technologies to respond to individual learner differences. It is an approach to designing course instruction and materials.

“Barriers to learning are not, in fact, inherent in the capacities of learners, but instead arise in learners’ interactions with inflexible educational goals, materials, methods, and assessments.”
Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age, p. vi

Instead of trying to “fix” the student, UDL is trying to “fix” the curriculum so all students have access.

Principles of UDL

- Multiple means of representation, to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge
- Multiple means of action and expression, to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know
- Multiple means of engagement, to tap into learners' interests.

The Research Base of UDL

Multiple Intelligences theory (Gardner, 1993), one of several theories, is consistent with what we are now discovering about the learning brain – namely that students do not have one global learning capacity, but many multifaceted learning capacities, and that a disability or challenge in one area may be countered by extraordinary ability in another. There are three main areas in the UDL research: the **recognition**, **strategic**, and the **affective** networks.

Recognition - enabling individuals to identify and understand information, ideas and concepts.

Strategic – enabling individuals to plan, execute, and monitor actions and skills.

Affective – enabling individuals to engage with tasks, learning and with the world.
Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age, p. vi

The Essence of UDL

Every student is addressed as an individual with unique needs, interests, and abilities.

Why is it important for students? When we create varied and multiple pathways for students to follow to a learning outcome, it is more likely that most students will get to the destination.

Universal Design for Learning - A curriculum designed approach to increase flexibility in teaching and decrease the barriers that frequently limit student access to materials and learning in classrooms (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

Differentiated instruction - Applies an approach to teaching and learning that gives students multiple options for taking in information and making sense of ideas. Differentiated instruction is a teaching theory based on the premise that instructional approaches should vary and be adapted in relation to individual and diverse students in classrooms (Tomlinson, 2001).

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