

UDL Online - Audio Transcript

NARRATOR:

Today we're going to be talking about UDL and how it can be implemented online.

To start, what is UDL?

UDL stands for Universal Design for Learning. It's an educational framework that helps guide educators through the development of effective and flexible learning environments that can accommodate learners regardless of their individual learning differences.

Okay, so that sounds good and all, but what does it really mean?

Well, let's say you have 20 students that you're responsible for teaching. Each one of these students enters your class under different circumstances with a different learning preference, a different skill set, and a different base of knowledge. And because of this, each student will respond differently to what's being taught depending on the method of teaching that's used.

One method might work great for some students, but that same method might be completely ineffective on others.

Now, each method of teaching is valid, but focusing on only one method will often leave some students behind. By designing content so that it can be taught in multiple ways, it'll improve the experience for all students regardless of ability or disability.

UDL is all about designing content in a way that eliminates barriers and gives each and every student the best possible chance to succeed. It's about being proactive when it comes to teaching, rather than reactive.

So now that we know what Universal Design for Learning is, let's talk about how to develop content with UDL in mind.

UDL can be achieved by following three principles.

The first principle is to provide multiple means of representation – so presenting content in multiple ways.

The reason this is important is because everybody comprehends information differently. For example, some people might excel in receiving information visually, but those same people may struggle when given the exact same information only through written text. Even though they're presented with the same information, the level of comprehension changes depending on how the content is delivered to them.

Some people are visual learners, some are auditory learners, others prefer to learn through reading or writing, and then some people have disabilities that can make it difficult to process information through one or more of those types of learning. In order for every person to have the best possible chance of success, they need to be able to interact with the content in a way that promotes their own personal comprehension.

The second principle is to provide multiple means of action and expression.

Not everybody interacts with learning environments in the same way. For example, some learners may be great at communicating through writing, but they might really struggle when it comes to communicating those same ideas verbally, and vice-versa. Some individuals may have physical or cognitive impairments that prevent them from engaging in certain methods of learning and in these cases it's very important to provide opportunities for expression that will work for everyone. By ensuring everyone can participate by making the content as accessible as possible, you provide learners with the best possible chance to succeed.

The third principle is to provide multiple means of engagement. This principle is all about motivating students to engage in their own learning. Learner motivation can be dependent on many factors and can vary greatly from learner to learner. For example, some learners thrive in group settings whereas others are terrified of the prospect and would much

rather work alone. Some love the opportunity to be creative whereas others prefer strict rules and guidelines.

One of the most effective ways to motivate and engage learners is to provide them with options – giving them agency and choice in how they learn. When they're in charge of their own learning, they're much more likely to succeed.

So now that we've talked about what UDL is and how it can be achieved in the classroom, let's talk about how it can be incorporated into an online setting.

Online learning is becoming increasingly popular as high-speed internet becomes accessible to more and more people. This has created many new opportunities for teaching and learning, but it's also presented a lot of new challenges when trying to meet the needs of each individual learner. This is because you don't have the same level of interaction that you might have in a traditional classroom setting.

Online learning environments allow students to access the content from anywhere at anytime and this can be very beneficial, but it makes it very difficult for teachers to incorporate UDL elements that could typically be used in a traditional classroom.

Now, I'm a web developer and I work specifically on creating online courses so I need to keep the online environment in mind when I'm trying to incorporate UDL principles into my work.

Here are a few strategies I use to implement UDL into my online courses.

First off, I always try to design with accessibility in mind – and I do this by paying close attention to things like text size, colors, contrast, alternative text for images, and writing content in a way that's optimized for screen readers for those students that might require them.

Another thing I try and do is offer users a choice in how they can view the content. So this means instead of just offering a text version of the content, I'll also try and incorporate a video or a podcast option so that

every single type of learner can interact with that content in a way that's most beneficial to them.

Another thing I try to do is provide interactive activities as well as resources for additional learning whenever I can. This helps keep the students engaged and offers them something that they wouldn't be able to get in a traditional classroom setting.

Just like any good teacher, I want to be able to deliver content in a way that's memorable, meaningful, and beneficial to all learners. These UDL based strategies allow me to do that.

Additional Resources

http://www.udlcenter.org/resource_library (Library of UDL Resources - UDL Center)

http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines_theorypractice (UDL Guidelines - UDL Center)

<http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl/3principles> (UDL Principles - UDL Center)