

## CAST: UDL at a Glance Transcript

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So, let's say you're a teacher who needs to reach a curriculum goal, and you've got a diverse group of students. Well, so does this teacher and this one - most do. In fact, research shows that the way people learn is as unique as their fingerprints. What does this mean for teachers today? Classrooms are highly diverse and curriculum needs to be designed from the start to meet this diversity.

Universal Design for Learning is an approach to curriculum that minimizes barriers and maximizes learning for all students. For a better understanding, let's unpack the term Universal Design for Learning. First is the word universal, by universal we mean curriculum that can be used and understood by everyone. Each learner in the classroom brings his or her own background, strengths, needs, and interests. Curriculum should provide genuine learning opportunities for each and every student.

Now let's think of the word learning. Learning is not one thing. Neuroscience tells us that our brains have three broad networks, one for recognition, the “**What**” of learning, one for skills and strategies, the “**How**” of learning, and one for caring and prioritizing, the “**Why**” of learning. Students need to gain knowledge skills and enthusiasm for learning, and a curriculum needs to help them do all three. But, every learner is unique, and one size does not fit all. So, how do we make a curriculum that challenges and engages diverse learners? This is where the word design comes in.

A universally designed building is planned to be flexible and accommodate for all kinds of users with and without disabilities. It turns out that if you design for those in the margins, your building turns out better for everyone; curb cuts and ramps are used by people in wheelchairs, people with strollers, and people on bikes. Captioning on TV serves people who are deaf, people learning English, people in gyms, and spouses who get to sleep at different times.

UDL takes this idea and applies it to the design of flexible curriculum. UDL goes beyond access because we need to build in support and challenge. So, how do we use the UDL framework to make learning goals methods materials and assessments that work for everyone? First, ask yourself what is my goal; what do I want my students to know, do, and care about? Then, ask what barriers in the classroom might interfere with my diverse students' ability to reach these goals.

To eliminate the barriers, use these three UDL principles to create flexible paths to learning so that each student can progress. Number one, provide multiple means of representation - present content and information in multiple media and provide varied supports. Use graphics and animation, highlight the critical features, activate background knowledge, and support vocabulary so students acquire the knowledge

being taught. Number two, provide multiple means for action and expression - give students plenty of options for expressing what they know and provide models, feedback, and supports for their different levels of proficiency. Number three, provide multiple means of engagement - what fires up one student won't fire up another. Give students choices to fuel their interest and autonomy; help them risk mistakes and learn from them. If they love learning, they'll persist through challenges and remember always keep in mind the learning goal. Get rid of barriers caused by the curriculum and instead keep the challenge where it belongs, and that's it!

Okay, quick recap - show the information in different ways, allow your students to approach learning tasks and demonstrate what they learn in different ways, and offer options that engage students and keep their interest. Universal Design for Learning equals learning opportunities for all. For more information about UDL, go to [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org).

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