A New Lens for Learning

By James McKenna, Ed.D., Assistant Director, Professional Learning and Leadership Development, CCEE

As we continue to reimagine what education will look like in 2021 and beyond, we have the singular opportunity to leverage our lessons learned and increased technical capacity to ensure that every student feels like they belong in class, and the classroom and learning experience has been designed specifically around their needs. The feeling of exclusion, that one does not belong, stimulates a neurological response akin to physical pain. Many of our students are likely hurting, and as they return to school, they need to know that their school is designed with their needs in mind and is a place where everyone is welcome, respected, and valued. We can't have one-size-fits-all Tier One instruction and expect to use interventions to support every learner left out of that initial model. To do that, we need to be flexible to reimagine the role of scaffolds, options, and student autonomy.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a flexible framework that leverages decades of research and evidence to address learner variability, the individuality of every student. Prior to joining the CCEE, my primary mission was supporting through the implementation of UDL that all students could thrive in their general education classrooms. Over the years, I’ve found it very helpful to lay out some foundational pieces to prevent any misconceptions about what UDL is and is not.

UDL is a lens, not a checklist. Practitioners of UDL set clear, challenging goals for all students and then, based on their knowledge of the goal, their design constraints, and their students, anticipate barriers to learning and then develop options and supports to mitigate or eliminate those barriers. The UDL Guidelines are a tool that informs our work, not a strict checklist or plug-and-play mechanism.

UDL is a marathon, not a sprint. UDL shifts the center of instruction from the teacher to the student, empowering students to take ownership of their learning. This transformation takes time, for both teachers and students. No one should expect UDL to be implemented overnight. Do not expect that of yourself or anyone else.

Without a high quality instructional framework, such as UDL, schools will continue to risk having a significant number of students fail to meet the full array of educational opportunities and outcomes that hard working educators desire to achieve. As a former Superintendent of a district that implemented UDL, I can attest that UDL provided our district a common language, common framework, and common way to collaborate and communicate about how we design and implement universally accessible instruction for all students. - Matt Navo, CCEE Governing Board Chair

Resources to Support UDL

→ Open Access: UDL Resource Flipkit
→ Creating Re-entry Plans that Maximize Accessibility for Diverse Learners

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→ Producing Students Who Are Good at Learning and Good at Life with Michael Fullan, O.C. (Keynote)
→ COMING SOON: Speaker Series on Summer/Expanded Learning

LOOKING AHEAD

→ CCEE Newsletter (May 2021) - Summer/Expanded Learning
→ 4/13: The Critical Role of Curriculum & Learning Progressions in Balancing Assessment Systems
→ 4/14: Strengthening Student-to-Student Discussions
→ 4/15: SCOPE Facilitator Training
→ 4/20: The Components of a Balanced Assessment System
→ 4/21: English Learners & Assessment Learning Strategies

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

→ What Educators & School Leaders Can Do NOW to Accelerate Learning
→ Student Data Privacy Webinar
→ Introduction to Balanced Systems of Assessment

A New Lens for Learning
Connecting New Learning to Implementation

By Kristin Brooks, Ed.D., Executive Director, Supporting Inclusive Practices (SIP)

A year with COVID-19 has taught us many lessons and surfaced many challenges, including the way we have approached professional learning. Gone are the days of one-and-done professional learning events. We now know that providing educators with a list of workshops to choose from simply based on “what sounds good” can lead to disconnected, single event learning opportunities with little impact on the school organization’s targeted key results for student success.

The Supporting Inclusive Practices (SIP) project, a collaborative statewide effort between Riverside COE and El Dorado COE, provides, in part, technical assistance rooted in the intentional re/design of systems and supports at all levels to connect new learning to direct implementation. The most requested support involves the implementation of a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to create flexible learning environments that maximize choice, so that each and every student can learn in the way they learn best.

California’s educators are moving beyond one-off workshops after seeing sustained, measurable outcomes for all students with ongoing coaching and scaling of UDL over time. It is this work that is the heart of SIP! Learn more about UDL on the SIP website, which offers access to archived resources and free professional learning events.

Click here to read Kristin’s full article.

CA UDL Coalition

The California UDL Coalition is a collaborative organization whose mission is to support the design of expert and future-ready learning that is accessible, equitable, and relevant for all learners.

Through collaboration across all stakeholders, the CA UDL Coalition seeks to build capacity of regional and district systems to implement Universal Design for Learning. The Coalition is anchored in the research-based principles of the UDL Guidelines to align and develop a continuum of support for every learner, every experience, every day!

Want to find out more? Attend a virtual CA UDL Network meeting to join a growing network of UDL practitioners who meet several times a year to share updates, resources, and best practices, and to solicit input from the field. You can also join the contact list or email the CA UDL Coalition at caudlcoalition@gmail.com.

ABOUT THE CCEE

CCEE is a statewide agency designed to help deliver on California’s promise of a quality, equitable Education for every student.

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Click here to read Kristin’s full article.

Click here to read Elise’s full article.