



# Universal Design Learning

Midterm

Universal Design Learning (UDL) is an effort to create curriculum, products, environments and buildings that accommodate a wide range of learners. The pedagogy of UDL is rooted in means of representing information, expression of knowledge and engagement of learning. Teachers who create a curriculum with multiple ways of expressing information in mind, for example a slideshow, text, video, and digital eBook (where the colors can be changed or text can be enlarged) create more access for a wider range of users. Educational barriers can be reduced when students/teachers can modify visual, audio and sound features. Also, when vocabulary and terms can be defined within a digital text (Amazon's Kindle and Apple iOS have a built in dictionary) to help children with difficult texts. Options for checkpoints can help students stay on task and check for comprehension. Apple's iOS has many different assistive features for users with hearing, vision, physical, motor skills, cognitive or learning disabilities. These features make education more inclusive for many different types of learners. UDL demands a well-designed lesson plan that offers many different "options- in both challenges and supports – so that all of its learners will be successful" (Rose, Gravel & Domings, 2009, p.4).

A great example of UDL, comes from the article "*Technology and Learning: Meeting Special Students' Needs*" (2008), where the authors explain the history of closed captioning for television. When closed captioning was first implemented it was costly and focused for individuals with hearing problems. But now, we see closed captioning in all televisions and closed captioning is used at the gym, airports, sports bars, and restaurants. Closed captioning is not just for the hearing impaired, many "individuals working on their language skills, and couples who go to sleep at different times" (Rose & Gravel, 2008, p.3) use this Assistive Technology (AT). AT calibrates with UDL creating "unique, personal, customized and dedicated" (Rose, Hasselbring, Stahl, & Zabala, 2005, p.509) technology that increases or

improves the capabilities of students with disabilities. Some of the AT features that Apple iOS uses on the iPhone, iPad and iPod are braille display for blind users, inverted colors on the screen, in an effort to help students see what is on the screen in higher contrast. Closed Caption and Dictation are also a feature on all Apple devices. You can use Siri, Apple's personal assistant feature, where you can ask her questions or give commands, like "text mom, I will be home after school." Siri can assist in helping students stay more organized with just the sound of your voice by setting reminders, adding items to your calendar, schedule meetings and setting an alarm. My sister is learning disabled, and being able to talk a text or email helps her function in her daily life. The dictation feature on the iOS helps her talk where you would type.

UDL works to include a variety of different learners, using a pedagogy based in many different fields of study to reduce barriers in education. Technology and well-designed curriculum are at the heart of successful implection. Although, not all UDL needs digital technology, high AT can assist in providing equal opportunities to all students.

## References

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