


Chapter 5

Empowering Instructors and Learners by Integrating UDL in Online PD and Teaching Practices


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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the importance of both implementing universal design for learning (UDL) in online professional development and teaching UDL through modeling. Contextualizing applications for classroom use for instructors within professional training leads to deeper learning and enhances possibilities for integration following the training. This chapter also illustrates how the rise of online learning options and the many new(er) tools we have to interact and to engage support UDL options for learners thereby promoting equity and accessible learning environments. Teaching in the classroom and in professional development spaces through seamless integration of online learning promotes essential skills needed for quality daily living as well as for rewarding employment opportunities for learners.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the importance of both implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in online professional development (PD) and teaching UDL through modeling. The examples provided are from the field of adult education. Contextualizing applications of UDL for classroom use for instructors within professional training leads to deeper learning and enhances possibilities for integration of UDL following the training. This chapter will also illustrate how the rise of online learning options and the many new(er) tools we must interact and to engage support UDL options for learners, thereby promoting equity and accessible learning environments. Teaching in the classroom and in PD spaces through seamless integration of online learning promotes essential skills needed for quality daily living, as well as for rewarding employment opportunities for learners.

To frame this chapter, please look at UDL through a different lens. The typical perspective when one views the UDL framework is to think vertically using the three core principles: Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression. But the true goal of UDL is found along the bottom *horizontal* row of the UDL framework. Ultimately, as David Rose, founder of CAST (the creator of the UDL framework), explains, “this is where we want to end up” Rose, D., (2012, November 10). But when we consider the basic premise of UDL - that barriers to learning occur in the interaction with curriculum - we see the goal of UDL is not simply to facilitate the mastery of content knowledge, but rather to support the *mastery of the process of learning itself*, so that learners more fully develop into expert learners. This provides motivation to encourage the horizontal perspective of the UDL framework.

Using this horizontal lens in viewing the UDL framework, the top rows prepare learners, through access and building of skills, to internalize and apply content as they become expert learners. Moving horizontally across the top of the guidelines is “access.” Of course, everyone needs to be able to *access* the learning. This top layer of the guidelines is the educator’s responsibility. The teacher must design the learning environment so all learners can access it and show what they know. In the next row down, moving horizontally, are recommendations for *building* understanding. Learners build their learning skills through understanding the learning goal, the vocabulary, and through expression and communication of what they have learned. It is, however, the final layer - the *internalize* layer - where the learning truly happens. Looking across the bottom of the framework, deep learning occurs (a) when learners can make good plans, set their goals, and monitor their own progress (executive function), (b) when they can understand the information and know what to do with it (comprehension), and (c) when they are able to drive their own learning (self-regulation).

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