

Perspectives From an In-Service Teacher UDL Action Research Project

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Including universal design for learning in graduate programs for in-service teachers is crucial to increasing the application of the framework in practice. This chapter will introduce an action research assignment within an American UDL graduate course and its impact on teacher practice and student learning. Eight case studies across disciplines and levels will be shared. During this process, teachers identified a classroom challenge, developed a UDL intervention, analyzed student data, and shared implications. In-service teacher reflections will be shared on the continued use of a UDL approach beyond their course work and its impact on their teaching practice. The chapter will begin with an introduction to the context of the implementation, investigation questions, methodology, case study presentation, discussion, and conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Within an American university's special education and curriculum and instruction and regular graduate programs, all students take a course titled *Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to Access Curriculum*. For the majority of students, it is the first course in their graduate program. The course was designed to model universal design for learning throughout its hybrid delivery while teaching about the framework. The goal is to provide substantial background on UDL while modeling its

implementation for teachers to apply in their subsequent courses and to learn content they can immediately implement in their classrooms. A key assignment focuses on a mini-action research paper focusing on UDL. These papers were utilized as the foundation of the eight UDL implementation case studies shared within this chapter. Before the teachers were asked to implement UDL practices, they learned about the framework in UDL designed learning experiences.

KEY ELEMENTS IN THE LITERATURE

UDL Based Course Delivery

Before expecting teachers to implement UDL in their practice, the instructor consistently modeled UDL within the content delivery. The hybrid course modeled universal design for learning throughout the 8-week semester with the goal of enhancing the learning experience of graduate students (Cumming & Rose, 2022; Polly et al., 2020) while simultaneously modeling UDL implementation (Engleman & Schmidt, 2007; Evmenova, 2018). The course embedded learner choice, deadline flexibility, multiple methods to engage with content, and options to express learning, which can all enhance learner access to content (Cumming & Rose, 2022). The instructor explicitly highlighted some of these UDL components during the course and others were simply embedded. At the culmination of the semester, each graduate student completed a “UDL Scavenger Hunt” to reflect on the various design and instructional choices aligned with UDL. They were asked to provide specific examples of each component integrated within the class. Table 1 provides examples of the course evidence graduate students supplied for each UDL component.

Table 1. Examples of UDL within graduate course

| UDL Component | Course Example Provided by Graduate Students |
|------------------------------|--|
| Multiple Means of Engagement | “Would activate background knowledge by having us think about our own classroom environments and what we are ALREADY doing that might be UDL.” “Notes available online and on board in class, could have online materials read-aloud, consistent activation of background knowledge, regular connections/relationships drawn between UDL and other topics discussed, certainly maximized transfer and generalization with numerous assignments and discussions (observation, UDLify lesson, action research).” “UDL course content was age appropriate for graduate students, it aligned with specific standards and goals, it was well organized and the content was valuable and authentic.” |

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