

Building a Skill Set to Support Universal Design for Learning

The Ask: A UDL-driven resource focused on what an educator must possess to successfully engage in UDL for students. To look at this another way, what capacities does an educator need to have/be able to do to remove barriers to learning when designing Tier 1 instruction that is inclusive and equitable?

The Outcome: To create this tool, we first looked at the [UDL 3.0 Guidelines](#), which identify predictable barriers that may prevent all learners from reaching high expectations in inclusive classrooms. Next, we examined the evidence-based research on best practices, frameworks, and strategies for eliminating those barriers. Finally, we linked resources to learn more about the skill set so you can consider how multiple evidence-based strategies can be used to universally design instruction for all learners.

Note that this tool is focused on first, best instruction. To meet the needs of all learners, it is critical that the system supplements targeted intervention and enrichment, so students move seamlessly between tiers academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally. When these services are necessary, it is essential that the support supplements and does not supplant Tier 1 instruction.



How You Can Use This Tool

1. Share the tool in an upcoming faculty meeting or professional development session. You can encourage colleagues to use the tool as a self-assessment. Educators can consider areas where they can identify relative efficacy and where they would benefit from collaboration, feedback, and support.
2. Use the tool to vet your current professional development offerings. Are you providing ongoing support for all learners to implement barriers that may interfere with learning? If not, how could you begin to share or model strategies as you work as a team to scale inclusive practices in your school or district?
3. Use as a tool to inspire action-oriented feedback within informal or formal observations. When you identify that students may face barriers, you may want to share some of the following resources to support educator practice.





UDL Skill Set

Predictable Barrier	Skills
Students may not be interested in content or may not know why content is important	- Building meaningful relationships with students to learn more about their interests and needs as learners is critical to ensure that some options align with their interests and needs. - Given the wealth of diversity in our schools, culturally responsive teaching is necessary to create a comfortable and academically enriching environment for all students. - Ability to articulate essential standards and why they are important.
Students may lack the motivation to continue to persist when there is a significant challenge	Hold students to high expectations and foster a growth mindset. - Understand what executive function is and how to support learners who may need support. - If students are struggling, it is critical to offer them action-oriented feedback or concrete suggestions about how to get back on track.
Students may struggle with self-regulation and expected behaviors	- Understand the functions of behavior. - Implement a robust tiered behavioral system (i.e., PBIS) so there are clear behavioral expectations in every learning environment that are consistently modeled and reinforced. - Facilitate social-emotional learning in all aspects of the curriculum and teaching. Be trauma-informed. - Understand restorative practices and how they can minimize threats and distractions for learners. - Develop learner agency by scaffolding student self-reflection and incorporating some pivotal questions.
Students may not be able to comprehend instruction if only a single modality is used (overreliance on lecture, or text, for example)	- Support learners in accessing and using multiple representations of the same information (i.e., podcasts, videos with captions, and text). - Provide explicit and direct comprehension instruction.
Students may struggle to comprehend the language or symbols used in the learning environment	- Provide explicit vocabulary instruction and use visual resources to clarify vocabulary. - Implement sheltered-English immersion strategies and translanguaging to support English language learners in accessing rigorous content.



Students may struggle to express what they know if given a single modality without adequate scaffolding

- It is important to [universally design assessments](#) to ensure that the assessment is reflective of what the student has learned, rather than being reflective of a barrier they are experiencing.
- Understand the [3 types of scaffolding](#) (linguistic, conceptual, and socio-cultural) and how to universally design instruction with the scaffolds embedded.



Discussion Questions

1. What are the areas where you feel that your colleagues have strong efficacy? Why? Discuss the support that was provided to build competency.
2. What is one skill that you want to focus your attention on to better meet the needs of all learners?
3. How does this tool help you integrate multiple focus areas as you focus on UDL and inclusive practice?

