



## Guidance for Designing a UDL Lesson

### Setting the Stage (Advance Work)

Before you design your lesson, consider barriers that may be present in the learning environment. For example, if UDL is to be effective, students will have to understand how to self-regulate, collaborate effectively, and use scaffolds available to them. You may need to design lessons so students understand how to collaborate, for example, before you can offer options for collaboration. Table 1 may help to identify common barriers you may want to proactively address when examining your learning environment.

**Table 1: Advance Considerations**

- ❑ Does your classroom offer flexible spaces for students to work (i.e., standing desks, clusters to collaborate or spaces for students to access resources if they need them)?
- ❑ Do you consistently offer reminders, models, and tools, to assist learners in managing and directing their emotional responses. For example, do you offer options for stress release such as fidget tools, mindfulness breaks like the Pomodoro Technique, allowing students to listen to music, chew gum, etc.?
- ❑ If you expect student collaboration, do you provide roles, use protocols, or design specific lessons about collaboration before providing students with the choice to work with partners?

**Reminder:** This Teacher's Guide includes resources, planning tools, and inspiration for lesson design, pacing, and assessment. The core components of a UDL curriculum includes goals, methods, materials, and assessments. Each section of this guide provides concrete tips for planning considerations for each component.

**Collaboration tip:** Instead of asking students to work together or just "think-pair-share," take time to learn about multiple collaboration strategies. For example, look up the following: Stump Your Partner, Tea Party and Philosophical Chairs!

### Goal-Setting Warm-Up

At the beginning of every lesson, heighten the salience of goals and objectives by sharing the goal or standard with the students. Make it crystal clear. "When this lesson or unit is over, you will all know, or be able to do [insert goal]. If you have essential questions, it is important to share them as well. In order to foster self-assessment and reflection, it is important to provide time for students to consider what they already know about the goal or essential question. Table 2 includes some warm-up ideas to activate student background knowledge.

**Reminder:** Be sure to share the goal in multiple ways. Say it orally, write it on the board or include on handouts, assessments, etc... If anyone walks into the room, every student should be able to answer the question, "What are you doing today and why?"



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**Table 2: Activate prior knowledge to support goal setting**

- ❑ Hate writing standards on the board every day? Assign a standard to each student - for homework or classwork, have them work with peers, families, etc... to research why the skill/content is important and have them write an opinion/argument piece about it to share with class when standard comes up - encourage creativity, voice, and satire in higher grades.
- ❑ Consider giving a diagnostic assessment before you teach the lesson. This will allow you to see how much students already know. This can be done quickly using Google Forms or Kahoot if you have technology available or you can provide more time for students to grapple with contents under study so you have a better idea of the variability in the class.
- ❑ Google or Doodle: Provide 5 minutes for students to work alone or with partners to list everything they already know about the topic under study. If they don't know anything, provide them with a resource (i.e, a Chromebook with Google), images, or text to at least give them some background.
- ❑ Use a KWL chart that students use to reflect on upcoming lesson. They can work alone or with partners or create a class brainstorm.
- ❑ Image brainstorm. Project an image that relates to the content under study and ask students to tell you everything they can about the visual. They can discuss or respond with words or pictures.

**Tip:** If you have an adopted curriculum program, there are likely warm-up activities already. Consider if they create barriers for students. If they do, provide some of the options in Table 2 before the warm-up so more students can participate.

## Mini-Lesson (~10-15 minutes)

A mini-lesson is a period of direct, explicit instruction. Although the specifics of a mini lesson vary, many education experts agree that a mini lesson should last no more than 10-15 minutes, and should contain four basic components: connection, teaching, active engagement, and link.

### Connection

It is important to share from the beginning how the goal is relevant, authentic, and meaningful to students. Explain why the lesson will be important.

### Teaching

Here is a period of direct instruction. Teacher-directed instruction is critical in a universally designed lesson. Use it as a foundation before encouraging students to personalize next steps to challenge and support themselves. Try not to rely on a single representation. For example, if you lecture, use visuals or

**Tip:** If you're comfortable, consider recording the teaching component of your mini-lesson so you can immediately post it on Google Classroom for students to access again, share with parents, or provide to students who were absent.



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a multimedia presentation to support. If you project a video, be sure to use closed captions.

## Active Engagement

Provide a short period of time for students to do something, as a form of informal, formative assessment. For example, if you modeled two math problems, ask them to complete their own. Other short and sweet ideas for active engagement are in Table 3.

**Table 3: Short and sweet options for active engagement**

- Turn and talk, “think, pair, share,” or numbered heads together
- Mini-white boards
- Hand signals like “Fist to five” or “thumbs up, thumbs down.”
- Quick writes or completing short formative assessment
- Concept mapping
- Previewing a chapter or selection
- Note-taking
- Completing outline/graphic organizer

## Link

Be clear about linking back to the goal and then directing students to applied practice or more independent work. For example, you may say, “Now that you understand the goal of the lesson today, you will have an opportunity to make a choice about how to better understand the topic...” Consider taking time for them to create a goal of what they still need to learn or work on.

## Self-Differentiated Learning (~20+ minutes)

This is the magic of UDL, where you have to consider how to create a “buffet” of methods and materials so students can choose how to learn. This is challenging as you have to ensure each student is challenged and supported. You may set this up as stations, in a hyperlink document, or by simply sharing with the students what options they have. The key here is to focus on the goals. If all students need to learn content (i.e, animal adaptation, photosynthesis, characterization, proper stretching, etc...) consider the possible

**Tip:** After the mini-lesson, have students create personal goals for how they will learn the content, express the content, and challenge themselves throughout the process.



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representations that would allow them to build that knowledge. Table 4 lists some possible options and choices to provide to students so they can build knowledge. If every student has to “do” something (i.e, write an argument or solve an equation, you may provide different options and tools).

## Table 4: Methods for students to build knowledge

**Read from a text** (textbook, primary source document, article, audiobook etc..)

- ❑ Can you provide the text or allow students to choose their own text from a classroom library, an online site like Newsela, or they can find their own resources online to build knowledge?
- ❑ If they choose the same text, can you provide options to read to self or to read to a partner?
- ❑ With English learners, can you provide them with options to translate the text?

### Watch a video

- ❑ If students have devices, they can watch videos with headphones. If not all students have devices, you can set up a station with one device and a video

### Teacher direct instruction

- ❑ Consider hosting a small group. Note: Sometimes when given the option, a large number of students choose direct instruction. If that is the case, the small group may be students working independently while you continue to work with the majority of the class. Alternatively, if students need additional practice or remediation, you may decide to pull a small group of students for Tier 2 intervention during this self-differentiated learning section.

**Tip:** When you first begin to implement UDL, you don't have to provide them all at once. Start with more than one, and as students become better at making choices, you can add more.

**Tip:** If students struggle with making choices, you can create all the options and provide a prompt like, “Choose two of the following four resources to learn about the Civil War...” and there may be rigorous primary source documents, summary documents, videos, and/ or a podcasts.

## Self-Differentiated Assessment (~20+ minutes)

Assessments are an expression of student learning. When designing assessments, it's critical to consider exactly what students need to know and do and then strip away any specific methods that have been tied to the goal. Essentially, when reviewing your standards, you will ask yourself, “How will students provide evidence that they met the goal? Can they have choices?” Try to move away from requiring all students to use the same materials to learn and express what they know. Because of variability, they will not all need the same supports and they should be empowered to know themselves as learners and choose what they need. It is still possible to do this with adopted curriculum by using the considerations in Table 5 and asking yourself the following questions:

**Tip:** One great way to determine instructional and assessment options is to conduct a student survey and then make instructional decisions based on areas of interest.



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- ❑ Is it possible to include choice in how my assessment is represented, how my learners can show what they know, or how my learners engage in the assessment process?
- ❑ How do the flexible options still support the intended learning objectives that need to be measured?

## Table 5: Assessment tips for UDL

- ❑ Start with just your traditional assessment, and ask students to propose other ways of showing that they met the standard or additional resources they need to complete it. Assignment choice slip must be approved before beginning assessment.
- ❑ For content, consider what opportunities would work for all content standards and just make a single handout (laminated!) that you can use throughout the year (sonnet, screenplay, blog, vlog, essay, multimedia presentation, etc...)
- ❑ Even if every student receives the same assessment, you can provide options and choices for the tools they use. Consider providing access to graphic organizers, exemplars, accessibility devices (Google Read and Write), math reference sheets, their notes, etc...
- ❑ Encourage revisions and retakes after students reflect and explore additional resources to encourage perseverance.

**Optional time savers:**  
**DON'T GRADE EVERYTHING.** If assessments are done well, they will show mastery of standards. If you must grade, encourage peer-review (once a student has mastered a concept, they become a feedback master!) or self-assessment. Most importantly, always use the same rubric if students are working on multiple projects. Remember you are measuring the standards - not the product!