



Graduate School of Education Penn GSE

PLN 41B: Implementing Universal Design for Learning in Today's Classrooms

September 16, 2025 - December 17, 2025

Live Sessions: To be announced

1.13 Course Units = 4.5 Continuing Education Graduate Credits

Instructor: Dr. Katie Novak
[View Bio](#)



COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce the key concepts of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and give you the knowledge you need to approach planning through the lens of UDL, regardless of your learning environment, with the help of AI. Whether you teach students, adult learners, or are in higher education, the principles of UDL will support the development of learning experiences that allow all learners to access high-quality teaching and learning that is empowering, innovative, culturally sustaining, and linguistically appropriate.

Whether you teach face-to-face, in a hybrid environment, or remotely, proactively identifying barriers and eliminating them through design will help to create more equitable learning environments for all learners. Each module will include a variety of resources to increase options for representation and increase engagement throughout the course. Additionally, there will be numerous options for action and expression so all course assignments are relevant, authentic, and meaningful.

The Four Lenses of Learning framework reflects a comprehensive perspective on language, literacy, and learning. These lenses identify teaching and learning as:

- Meaning-centered - Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is focused on activating

the affective network of the brain - which seeks meaning and engagement. A consistent focus of this course is helping participants take evidence-based strategies and connect them to the design and delivery of meaningful, empowering teaching and learning.

- Social - In Universal Design for Learning (UDL), it is critical to foster collaboration and community to build engagement. The power of social relationships, both in-person and online are critical pillars for building effective learning communities.
- Language-based - we learn through speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This course offers numerous opportunities for rich literacy experiences as participants grow as learners and consistently engage in the **five reading, writing, and talking processes**.
- Human - at the core of leading and learning are relationships. This course will focus on making meaningful connections among leaders, educators, and the communities they serve to ensure that all learning experiences create equal opportunities for learners to meet rigorous goals, create personalized learning experiences, and embody the Innovator's Mindset.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, participants will:

- Understand the core components of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and how they can apply to all design work to foster equity and inclusion.
- Learn why UDL is critical to ensure all learners have equitable access, opportunity, expectations, and feelings of belonging.
- Understand what UDL is, and what it is not, and how to apply the principles, guidelines, and checkpoints to your practice.
- Design learning experiences that cultivate learner agency and innovation and ensure that all learners have pathways that both challenge and support them to reach rigorous and meaningful goals.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is important for creating an equitable, inclusive, innovative learning environment.
- Each of the characteristics of the Innovator's Mindset and the core components of social-emotional learning can be fostered through the implementation of Universal

Design for Learning.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

The final course grade is based on the following criteria:

- Active participation in online class discussion boards in each module
- Comprehensive & quality completion of the final project

READINGS AND RESOURCES

Elevating Educational Design with AI: Making Learning Accessible, Inclusive, and Equitable – Katie Novak, Catlin R Tucker (Required)

All other materials are available within the course portal on Canvas.

EXAMPLE COURSE AGENDA

Module availability and live lecture dates to be shared in the final agenda within the course.

- **Module 1:** The Case for UDL – Advancing Outcomes, Building Learner Agency, and Shifting Mindsets
- **Module 2:** What UDL Really Is (and Isn't) – Addressing Common Misconceptions
- **Module 3:** The UDL Unlearning Cycle – Rethinking Practices to Embrace Variability
- **Module 4:** The UDL Framework in Action – Connecting Engagement, Representation, and Expression
- **Module 5:** Building Learner Agency Through Routines and Feedback
- **Module 6:** UDL with High-Quality Instructional Materials and Standardized Assessments
- **Module 7:** Universally Designed Leadership and Professional Learning
- **Module 8:** Leveraging Reflection for Growth and Scaling UDL

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Attendance:** Attendance and participation are vital to success in this course as networking is a key component of innovation. Each participant is expected to be an active learner and participant in every online module and online discussion.
- **Participation:** Central to the course is the sharing of ideas among participants. In addition to commenting about the course resources through discussion posts, participants will participate in “mini-risks” in each module to stretch universally designed practices and innovation.

Certificate

This course is part 2 of 2 courses required to earn a certificate in Universal Design for Learning from The Penn Literacy Network of The University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education. The certificate program is structured to be taken in sequence, with PLN41A preceding PLN41B. To register for Part 1, [click here](#).

In these courses, we'll share the power and promise of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the Innovator's Mindset and provide learners with options, choices, and opportunities to reflect, create, connect, and innovate. This certificate program consists of 2 courses, each worth 1.13 Course Units = 4.5 Continuing Education Graduate Credits. Courses are provided in cooperation with The Penn Literacy Network of The University of Pennsylvania's GSE, Katie Novak, Novak Education, and George Couros.

In order to receive your graduate certificate, you have to successfully pass PLN41A and PLN41B.

Course Drop & Incomplete Policy

Drop Deadline: After the due date for Module 1, you will no longer be able to drop this course. If you choose to drop the class after this point, your transcript will reflect a "W" (withdrawal).

Incomplete Grades: If you are unable to complete the required work for this course, you may be assigned an "I" (incomplete). Please note that incomplete grades are only given to students who plan to complete the course requirements. Incomplete grades must be resolved within three months; otherwise, they will become permanent.