




# Universally Designing PLCs

10 continuing education hours

Course Designer	
 Magdalena Gacias, Ed. D	<p><b>Magdalena Gacias, Ed.D.</b> is a passionate educator, leader, and advocate for creating flexible and nurturing learning environments for both students and teachers. She currently serves as the Manager of Curriculum &amp; Professional Learning K-12 for the Worcester Public Schools in Worcester, Massachusetts but also has worked as a classroom teacher in various urban districts, as a department head, and as a school-based administrator. In her current role, Dr. Gacias supports instructional coaches with implementing best practices for leading teachers district-wide, heads the Advanced Placement program, guides curriculum liaisons, and facilitates universally designed professional learning sessions.</p>

## Course Description

Professional learning communities (PLCs) help educators build community with one another, work towards shared goals, and problem-solve with each other when challenges arise. PLCs, using the principles of UDL as the foundation, have the potential to increase expert teaching and learning. By optimizing expert learning and focusing on eliminating the barriers that prevent all students from learning, groups of educators can foster their own growth and continuous improvement. The UDL PLC structure promotes a continued professional learning opportunity for teachers to plan standards-based units of instruction, incorporate student engagement and choice, discuss applied practices, review student work/data, and offer each other feedback. Even the most experienced teachers can sometimes struggle with universally designing learning experiences which is why the PLC structure can optimize community and a shared responsibility for implementing the UDL framework.

## Course Text

There are no required texts for the course.

Recommended Reading: [PLC+: Better Decisions and Greater Impact by Design 1st Edition](#) by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, John T. Almarode, Karen T. Flories, Dave Nagel



## Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes

- Participants will explore the foundation of a UDL PLC's, characteristics that make them effective, collaborative, & results-oriented
- Participants will connect to the UDL framework at a deeper level, including an emphasis on becoming an expert learner in the context of the PLC
- Participants will examine ways to plan and facilitate effective UDL PLCs virtually
- Participants will understand the structures and processes of a UDL PLC, including the PLC the teaching & learning cycle, specifically examining student learning, through the UDL lens
- Participants will have an opportunity to use indicator rubrics and continuums to monitor implementation and reflection of a UDL PLC and gather evidence as data

## Graduate Credits

You have the option to receive 1 continuing education graduate credit with the course. Register for the course + graduate credits or add on the graduate credit section at any time. Upon successful completion of the course and graduate final project, you will receive 1 accredited continuing education graduate credit from your choice of one of our university partners ([University of Massachusetts Global](#) or [Teachers College of San Joaquin](#)) and a completion certificate for 5 additional continuing education hours (in addition to the 10 hours you received for the course).

# Course Modules

MODULE	Topics
	<p><b>Module 1: A UDL PLC Foundation</b></p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Explore the structures of PLC's &amp; the characteristics that make them effective &amp; collaborative</li><li>● Consider how effective PLCs require educators to be learners</li></ul> <p><b>Essential Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What drives an effective PLC?</li><li>● How do we use PLC's to build the capacity of educators?</li></ul> <p><b>Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Explore at least 2-3 resources to deepen your knowledge</li><li>● Participate in the Discussion/Self-Reflect (Optional)</li><li>● Self-assessment</li></ul>
	<p><b>Module 2: UDL PLC Structures &amp; Process</b></p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Plan, prepare and facilitate an effective UDL PLC meeting that is targeted to your PLC goal</li><li>● Examine tools and supports to outline and facilitate effective UDL PLCs virtually</li></ul> <p><b>Essential Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● How do school leaders maintain coherence and clarity in effective UDL PLC's?</li><li>● To what extent can school leaders support teacher innovation and improved student outcomes?</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How do UDL PLCs support the notion, “the fundamental purpose of the school is to ensure high levels of learning for all students?”</li> </ul> <p><b>Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore at least 2-3 resources to deepen your knowledge</li> <li>● Participate in the Discussion/Self-Reflect (Optional)</li> <li>● Self-assessment</li> </ul>
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	<p><b>Module 3: UDL PLC Implementation &amp; Reflection</b></p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To support PLC’s as a leadership group within an organization as working towards a shift in culture and UDL implementation</li> <li>● Participants will have an opportunity to use, design, and share protocols and tools that support an effective PLC structure</li> </ul> <p><b>Essential Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In what ways can we engage team members to engage deeply and offer support &amp; feedback to peers?</li> <li>● In what ways can PLC team members hold each other accountable for improved learning for students and continuous job-embedded learning for educators?</li> <li>● In what ways might the UDL framework and PLC structures join to create an optimal educational setting to foster learning and collaboration?</li> </ul> <p><b>Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore at least 2-3 resources to deepen your knowledge</li> <li>● Participate in the Discussion (Optional)</li> <li>● Self-Reflection</li> </ul>
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# Final Project

The overarching goal of the final project is to share your learning and understanding of how to implement a UDL PLC.

When submitting your final project, be sure to outline specific examples of practices connected to the PLC indicator, to make a specific connection to at least one of the UDL indicators, and to include the indicator in the description.

For example, *in reflection on the PLC indicator of shared mission and vision, my practice is..... An example of this is..... My practice connects to the UDL indicator(s) (list indicators) because....*

## The Guidelines:

Learners should complete a reflection after each of the 3 modules (3 total) as well as a final reflection for the course.

Final Project Options for Submission:

- Share a document with a written response
- Write a Blog
- Design a series of slides
- Create a podcast
- Record a video

## Final Project Rubric

We will provide feedback on a holistic rubric. Learn more about [universally designed rubrics here](#). The rubric below highlights project requirements. All projects need to “meet expectations”. Worry not - you are welcome to resubmit as many times as it takes to be successful.

Not There Yet	Met Expectations	Exceeded Expectations
	<p><b>Practical Understandings and Implementations</b> Your “product” is an original creation that models an understanding of a Universally Designed Professional Learning Community.</p> <p>You have outlined specific examples of practices that connect the PLC and UDL Indicators (1 per module - 3 total).</p> <p>(3 points)</p>	

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reflection</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">You have reflected on your time in this course and provided an analysis of the core concepts and ideas in relation to your practice.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(2 points)</p>	
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**5 Points**

Meeting the standard, or going above and beyond, will earn you the full point value for the assignment.