Resist the temptation to throw this book out the window or up against a wall. Hear us out. This unlearning process has been such a transformative experience for us, even as so-called UDL experts, that we want to invite you on this journey. This journey will take you along a route to design learning experiences that not only are accessible for students but that challenge them to become more autonomous and self-directed in their learning. We have seen student agency increase and engagement skyrocket when UDL is implemented. We have observed teachers transformed by UDL who celebrated their learning journeys along the way. But this isn't just a book about UDL. It is a book that recognizes the fact that we know we aren't meeting the needs of all students and we know that we can.

The process of unlearning as part of the learning process has been well documented. What is unique about this book is that we will support the process of unlearning using UDL. UDL is a tool that guides the design of learning environments to support the anticipated variability of our students, to help us be goal-directed and to prioritize engagement, and to ensure that every individual knows how to be an expert learner who is motivated, knowledgeable, and strategic. We will use this process to guide educators to unlearn some of their tried-and-true techniques in order to support the wide range of students in our classrooms.

If our classrooms and systems were working for every single student, we wouldn't need to unlearn and change our current practices. However, as both research and our own personal experience suggest, the system is not working for too many. We knew this before we learned about UDL, but it didn't feel like there was much we could do about it. When we recognized the barriers inherent in our classrooms, there was an overwhelming sense of urgency to make changes. We recognized that it was up to us to eliminate barriers and to engage every student. We even started to wonder about many of our students who seemed successful in school—how many were just compliant with the routines and not fully invested in learning? And what could we do? To be honest, it felt overwhelming at times. As much as we believed and wanted each student to thrive in our classrooms, we each had moments where we felt like it would be a lot easier to give up. And at times, we did give up, sat in the teachers' room, and felt like we were going to cry.

We hear the problems teachers face around the country, which range from students who don't care about school, parents who don't support learning, or mental illnesses we aren't qualified to address. We sometimes blame the system and lament

the lack of resources, professional development, and administrative support. These are real barriers. We know you face them. And we see you. But it's important to know that, despite the barriers, we can still inspire and motivate students and leave them better than when they met us. That is our calling, and we must keep that at the center of everything we do. Once you unlearn ineffective practices, we contend that you will be closer to the teacher you want to be—the one who connects with students, is intentional about instructional moves, and inspires students to become architects of their own learning. This transformation, however, is not so much a result of learning about UDL as of unlearning ineffective traditional practices.

Interestingly, the greatest barrier to unlearning can be the education that we received through our own school experiences, through college and teacher preparation programs, in graduate school, and through our professional development. From these experiences, we know plenty about teaching and learning—but some of it is no longer relevant. For example, through our own graduate education and professional training, we both learned a "tried-and-true" writing technique—the five-paragraph essay.

First, to be clear, there is such a thing as a five-paragraph essay, but there are also four-paragraph, 17-paragraph, and 22-paragraph essays. Advanced, confident writers understand that the number of paragraphs isn't as important as whether the writing is organized appropriately for the task. However, as educators we are often still taught to use this method as a best practice, a "tried-and-true" formula for teaching students to learn how to write.

And yet, college- and career-ready standards require us to move away from counting paragraphs and, instead, teach students to focus on the task, the intended audience, and the purpose of writing. Sometimes it is appropriate to address a prompt using five paragraphs, but there is no rule that essays have to be bound to a scripted format or paragraph count. But, hey, we are both guilty of assigning many a five-paragraph essay because that is supposed to be a best practice.

What if we were to think about teaching writing like cooking. It is valuable to start with a recipe, or writing instruction, that outlines predictable formulas, but then provide scaffolding to move students away from those templates. Great writers don't follow formulas, just as great chefs don't follow recipes. They may keep a recipe in the back of their mind, but then they use their own style to make magic. Yet many teachers don't move away from teaching the five-paragraph essay (it took us both a while) even though not all students seem to benefit from this approach.

In short, if we want to learn how to teach all of our students today, we have to unlearn many of those teaching practices that are no longer effective. We do not mean you need to ditch all your best practices—but you will likely come away from this book thinking about how you teach, why you teach, and what you can teach in a new way.

In this book, we articulate the transformation that can take place in order to develop student-driven, engaging, rigorous learning experiences, and UDL can be a tool to support your journey to achieve that (See Appendix A for resources to teach you more about UDL.) The Unlearning Cycle can be used to adjust some of the habits and routines that may not be working for student learning. We have developed the Unlearning Cycle to support educators seeking to implement UDL in their practice. It is important to note that these do not necessarily occur in a linear progression, but include the following essential elements:
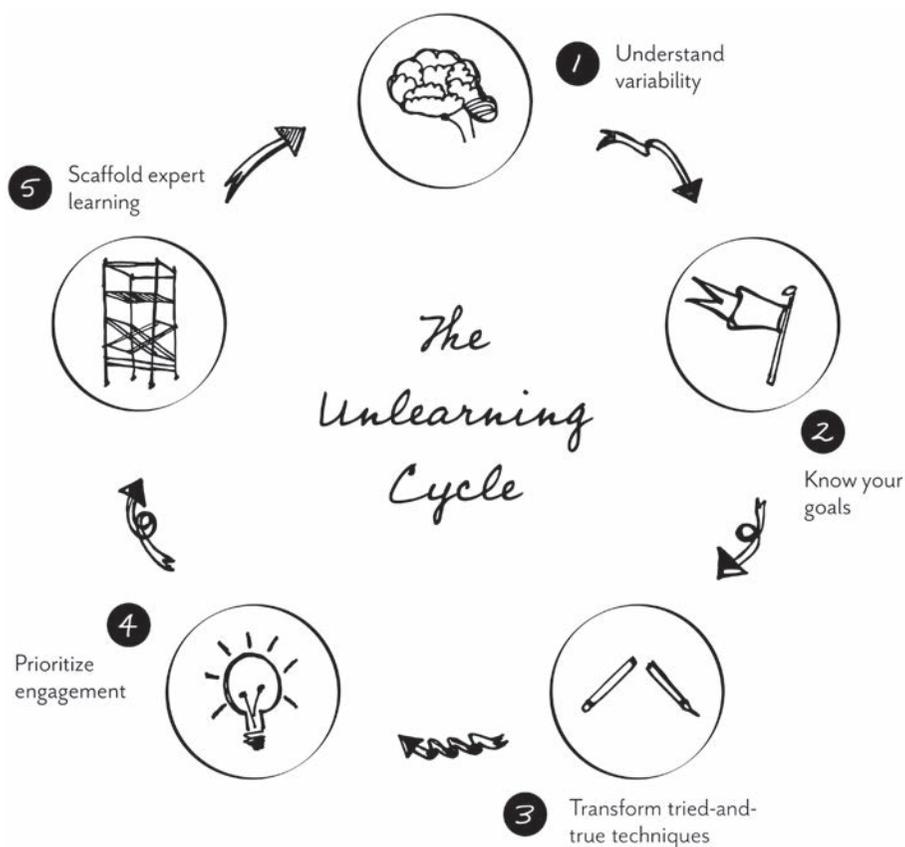
The Unlearning Cycle

1. Understand variability
2. Know your goals
3. Transform tried-and-true techniques
4. Prioritize engagement
5. Scaffold expert learning

We present a new mindset for teaching that aligns with what we currently know about the learning brain and that integrates new tools and techniques to help support your Unlearning Cycle. This book is for teachers and the professionals who support them. It is for educators who are interested in UDL but have not been able to transform practice to increase the outcomes of all learners.

As an educator, you can go through the process individually, with a team in a professional learning community, or as a school or district. We recognize that you are bombarded with professional development requirements and we hope that this book will offer you an easy, efficient, yet deeply thoughtful way to transform your practice not only to reach all your learners but to intentionally design for meaningful, challenging learning.

In this book, we will take you through the Unlearning Cycle in two ways. The first invites you to think about yourself and your teaching practices. This self-assessment and reflection is critical to understanding the process of unlearning as it is not only applicable to your classroom instruction but can be generalized to parenting, cooking,

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exercising, leadership, and more—you name it. It is tempting to pick up a professional book and want concrete steps for action you can implement tomorrow. Don't worry—those are coming. But first we must take the time to think about all we have learned about teaching and learning, and then unlearn it. Taking time for self-assessment and reflection is critical for learning and personalized goal-setting. Beginning with you, the reader, is critical to this process. Through this process, you will gain an understanding of the power of unlearning, will better understand why change is challenging; and, most importantly, you will have all the tools to adopt the mindset you need to transform your practice.

Once we have taken you through a reflective process, you will be ready for action! We will get to strategies and to necessary steps for UDL implementation. We will discuss how to design lessons that reduce barriers that often prevent students from succeeding. We will offer strategies for how to partner with students to foster expert learning. As tempting as it may be, starting with application won't result in the

outcomes you are hoping for. We must first transform ourselves in order to transform our systems. We have to unravel old practices so we have the capacity to create more effective ones. The unlearning process is one of reflection, destruction, and change, but it is also one of learning and growth.

As you read this book, consider pondering the questions provided for reflection, discussing its ideas with peers in a professional learning group, or writing a blog to share with educators across the world (don't forget #UDLchat and #UDLUnlearning). By jotting down Sketchnotes or thoughts in a journal or in the space at the end of each chapter, you can also ask your own questions about your teaching practices. Think of this book as your interactive guide to unlearning and to your UDL transformation.

Thank you for taking this journey with us. Our students are absolutely worth our efforts.

Before you dive into this book, think for a moment about a time when you experienced something in a new way. For example, consider the first time you used Lyft or Uber, tried Siri, or saw a Fitbit or Apple watch.

- What was your initial experience/impression of this new way of doing things?
- What were the trade-offs/benefits of that change?
- What parts of the old experience do you still want to hold onto?