



## Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A PEATC  
Do You Know  
Factsheet for Virginia's Parents

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is an approach to curriculum design that can help teachers customize curriculum to serve all learners, regardless of ability, disability, age, gender, or cultural and linguistic background.

UDL provides a blueprint for designing strategies, materials, assessments, and tools to reach and teach students with diverse needs.

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# Do You Know

## Universal Design for Learning (UDL) & the ESSA

The Every Child Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), signed into law on December 15, 2015, replaces the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. ESSA endorses Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is an approach to teaching that aims to meet the needs of all students, including those with learning and attention issues, and encourages personalized learning for students. This is a change from NCLB, which did not include UDL or personalized learning.

UDL is a set of principles for designing curriculum that provides all individuals with equal opportunities to learn. UDL helps meet the challenges of diversity by recommending the use of flexible instructional materials, techniques, and strategies that empower educators to meet students' diverse needs.

UDL is different from other approaches to curriculum design in that educators begin the design process expecting the curriculum to be used by a diverse set of students with varying skills and abilities.

The UDL framework is grounded in research of learner differences and effective instructional settings; its principles call for varied, flexible, and multiple means of:

- **Representation:** using a variety of methods to present and access information, concepts, and ideas; the "what" of learning,
- **Action and Expression:** providing learners with alternative ways to plan and execute learning tasks that will enable them to act skillfully and demonstrate what they know; the "how" of learning, and
- **Engagement:** tapping into learners' interests by offering choices of content and tools; motivating learners by offering adjustable levels of challenge that keeps them motivated by learning; the "why" of learning.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008 defines the term "universal design for learning" as meaning:

*"a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that (A) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (B) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient."*

(20 U.S.C. § 1003(24))

## UDL AT SCHOOL

UDL in the school setting has been around for several years; this design is not in conflict with other methods and practices; rather, it incorporates and supports many current research-based approaches to teaching and learning, such as the following:

- **Cooperative learning/group work:** Mutual interdependence, face-to-face interaction, and individual accountability
- **Differentiated instruction:** Instruction that takes into consideration the diversity and varied levels of readiness, interests, and learning profiles of learner
- **Performance-based assessment:** A student's demonstration of their competency in a content area by applying knowledge, skills, and practices by producing a product, researching a complex question, or determining a relationship
- **Project-based learning:** Provides flexibility to students through strategies such as online and blended learning, dual enrollment, and credit recovery to demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning
- **Multisensory teaching:** Promotes active student engagement by simultaneously or alternatively conveying information through sight, sound, movement, and/or touch.
- **Theory of multiple intelligences:** Provides opportunities for student success through instruction that allows for interaction with lesson content in ways that fit individual learning styles and strengths
- **Principles of student-centered learning:** A combination of individual learners' experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs with teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): <http://www.ed.gov/ESSA>

Federal Programs - Every Student Succeeds Act:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/federal\\_programs/esea/essa/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/federal_programs/esea/essa/index.shtml)

National Center on Universal Design for Learning: <http://www.udlcenter.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/UDLCenter>

Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy (TEAL) Center Fact Sheet No. 2: Universal Design for Learning

[https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2\\_TEAL\\_UDL.pdf](https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2_TEAL_UDL.pdf)

VDOE Training and Technical Assistance Center @ Virginia Commonwealth University

<http://www.ttacnews.vcu.edu/2010/09/expanding-the-growing-reach-of-universal-design-for-learning/>

Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) - About Universal Design for Learning

<http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/UDLCAST/>



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