Planning Professional Development Using a UDL Lens

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Intended Purpose of this Tool

Review the tables below to help you design professional learning experiences using the mindset of a UDL Practitioner. First, consider any barriers participants might face within the three UDL networks: Affective, Recognition, and Strategic. Then, figure out how you can reduce or remove those barriers through offering options for participants in each area. Providing options and planning for variability allows learners to use their strengths and be self-directed, motivated, and resourceful.

Affective Network

Provide Multiple Means of Engagement

What barriers will your participants face as they engage? How can you plan to reduce these barriers?

> ### Why is this important?
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> Engagement is at the root of all learning, whether you are a student or an adult learner. As you are developing learning experiences, consider how you are making explicit connections to the "why" of the content and give participants many options and opportunities for making these connections themselves. Expect participants to arrive at your session in a variety of places. Some will be excited and eager to participate, others may be upset or preoccupied, and some may be there because they are required to attend. As the presenter, you want to plan ahead for all of these possibilities and provide options for recruiting interest, sustaining effort, and self-regulating.

Potential Barriers	UDL Strategies	What would this look like in practice?
Lack of relevance	• As a UDL practitioner, anticipate variability in your audience. Make sure to optimize voice and provide time for questions, feedback, and multiple ways for participants to make authentic connections to the content. • Embrace cultural variability and provide a space for learners to provide feedback if they experience any cultural barriers.	• Carve out time throughout the presentation for feedback, questions, and meaning making (i.e, Polls in Zoom, Thumbs-up, Thumbs-down, Exit Tickets, Stop and Jot, Talk with a Partner, text a colleague, etc... are good options to provide time for voice and reflection).

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Distraction	• Distraction and attention are a part of variability. It is important to allow learners to reflect and determine how they can best stay focused. • Create an agenda with breaks and stick to it so everyone knows when they can unplug, check phones, etc.	• Provide options for learners to reflect on what they need to do to stay focused and ask them to create goals for themselves (i.e, "I will not check my phone while the presenter is talking; I will commit to taking notes to stay focused.").
Disinterest	• Recruit participant interest through time for reflection, opportunities to expand thinking,and encouraging participants to name their needs and make connections to their roles.	• Use a welcoming ritual to elicit participant temperature towards goals of PD (rating scale, mood meter, Zoom poll). • Encourage participants to reflect throughout: "When I first came in today I thought….now I think."
Stressed out or overwhelmed	• Acknowledge and embrace feelings. Change is hard and education is changing at an incredible pace. Be sure to provide numerous options for self-reflection and self-regulation.	• Consider providing an option for mindfulness at the beginning of a session. Remember - this is an option. Those people who choose not to participate could have the option to read quietly, reflect on a tool, etc. • Develop norms that acknowledge discomfort and nonclosure.
Goals of presentation aren't clear	• At the beginning and throughout the session, be clear about what everyone should know or be able to do at the end of the session. • Be prepared with language you can use if participants veer from overall goals (i.e, "That is an amazing question about standards and we definitely need to revisit that, but let's select a single standard now so we can continue to learn about how to universally design an assessment.")	• Design an activity around the goals of the session where everyone reflects on what they currently know and what they want to know. For example, when looking at the objectives write a statement, draw a picture, or share with someone how you feel about learning. • Use the concept of Backward Design and develop your Exit Ticket as soon as you outline your objectives to ensure your own clarity and focus for planning.

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Recognition Network

Provide Multiple Means of Representation

What barriers will your participants face with the way content is presented? How can you plan to reduce these barriers?

> ### Why is this important?
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> Consider how all educators, regardless of how much background information they have, can be challenged and supported as they meet objectives. Some educators will have strong background knowledge, understand acronyms and vocabulary, and be able to organize their own learning. Other learners will need options and choices to build understanding of concepts, activate background knowledge and will need succinct explanations and exemplars of content under study. Having pathways for all individuals through design is critical.

Potential Barriers	UDL Strategies	What would this look like in practice?
Provide too much information at once	• Build a clear agenda with clear transitions. • Provide optional time for diagnostic assessments and reflection to help activate background knowledge. • Provide numerous tools and resources so learners can self-differentiate their learning.	• Start the session with a KWL chart that learners can fill out in hard copy or digitally, and ask everyone to reflect on what they already know. At intervals throughout the session, provide time for learners to process and reflect on the objectives, explore resources in a hyperlink, discuss, and continue to fill out their charts.
Some learners will not have strong background knowledge of content under study	• Provide tools with specific language and acronyms unpacked (i.e, MTSS, UDL, RTI, SDI).	• Provide options for participants to engage in pre-study to build background knowledge. • Link a resource with FAQ/ Vocabulary Document.
Over reliance on printed text	• Ensure that in every presentation, in addition to text which is important for some learners, there are visuals, charts, multimedia tools, etc.	• When sharing resources, don't only provide printed text. Consider videos, podcasts, charts, infographics, etc… when sharing resources.

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Over-reliance on technology or clunky use of technology	• Determine the appropriate tools to use for the purpose and objectives you want to accomplish. • Spend time familiarizing participants with tools before asking them to engage with them. • Limit the number of tools you ask participants to engage with.	• Ensure all participants have access to required online materials before the session begins (set up logins, open PowerPoints, etc). • Collaborate with digital learning specialists to find the best tool for your objectives.
A single mode of presentation won't allow all learners to build comprehension	• Explicit instruction is great, but it's not the only tool for learning. The same goes for watching videos, reading articles, having discussions, and/or exploring tools. In UDL, variety is not the same as choice. Build in time for self-differentiated learning where participants can decide how they will learn.	• You may carve out 15-20 minutes for participants to attend a presentation (on Zoom or in person), read an article OR watch a video. Note that no one is required to do all 3.

Strategic Network

Provide Multiple Means of Action & Expression

What barriers will your participants face with how you ask them to process the content and demonstrate their thinking? How can you plan to reduce these barriers?

Why is this important?

Just as it is important to consider the multiple means of engagement and representation, you must also plan for how they will interact with, make sense of, and demonstrate their thinking about the content you share. There is variety in how people process the information they are taking in. Some prefer discussion, drawing, reflecting silently, designing a flow chart, using a laptop, pen and paper, etc. Consider how you can offer multiple means of expression through different methods and tools for responding, and set intentional opportunities for adults to manage their learning trajectory.

Potential Barriers	UDL Strategies	What would this look like in practice?
Not enough time for deep reflection, expression or creation	• We have to recognize that different learners will vary in how long it takes to complete a task. As presenters, we must be flexible and empower learners to create their own strategies and timelines for completing any required work.	• Provide options for participants to select their next steps and due dates. • Complete the tasks you are asking participants to engage in to see how long the task may require.

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There are not clear expectations of how participants are to take action	• Scaffold any/all opportunities for discussion, reflection, expression, etc... by providing the same tools that would be valuable in a classroom setting.	• Provide exemplars or samples for types of interaction and expression (ie; Sentence frames, group roles, model conversations or illustrations, model meaning making, model difficult conversations).
Session is largely passive - with little movement and people may go stir crazy.	• Provide frequent options for movement where participants can get up out of their seats, take breaks, and interact with materials in different spaces.	• Don't over-correct on this one. Requiring everyone to join an activity where they get up and move around could be a barrier for some. Provide the option for activity but always have another option (i.e, four corners, jigsaw, carousel brainstorm, etc.).
Only providing one modality for expression	• Provide options for how participants share their thinking, learning, and ideas. Asking everyone to use a Padlet, or write answers on Post-its, may present barriers for some.	• Let individuals or teams decide how they want to share (explain to others, create a visual, design a table, etc.).
Over reliance on discussion	• Collaboration is key - but there are more ways to collaborate than turning and talking to a small group. • Articulate the goal and determine potential pathways for meeting the goal.	• The goal of a breakout room or table conversation is not to be in that space, but rather to reflect and collaborate. This can be done via email, text, Twitter chat, and/or the Breakout Room/Table Talk.
There aren't norms around interaction and expression, which leads to discomfort, favoring independent work over collaboration, or lack of progress within the group.	• Connection and collaboration mean different things to different people. If providing options for discussion, provide norms that are culturally sustaining and honor the identities of everyone within the group.	• While we might invite participants to share, we also offer language around declining or passing. • When we design opportunities for task completion, we need to honor non-closure to ensure that all learners can take the time they need.

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