Universal Design for Learning Example Ideas

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework based on scientific insights into how individuals learn. The UDL Principles and Guidelines support educators in applying the framework to practice. The guidelines can be applied to any content area and ensure that all learners—including multilingual learners and those with learning disabilities—can participate in meaningful and challenging learning opportunities. The following chart includes a link to each consideration within the UDL Guidelines and highlights example ideas that are especially relevant for supporting multilingual learners.

Principle 1: Design Multiple Means of Engagement

AFFECTIVE NETWORKS:
THE **WHY** OF LEARNING

Provide options that engage students and keep their interest.

Welcoming Interests and Identities

Consideration	Example Ideas
Optimize choice and autonomy.	Embed choices that align with the learning goal, such as the content to explore, the tools used for exploration or production, the type of rewards or recognition available, the opportunities for practicing and assessing learning, the design or graphics of layouts, and the sequence or timing for completion of tasks.
Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity.	Design activities so learning outcomes are authentic, communicate to real audiences, and reflect a purpose that is clear to the participants. Provide tasks that allow for active participation, exploration, and experimentation.
Nurture joy and play	Create space for learners to take pride in their accomplishments and to find joy through connections to their identities, sense of self, and communities (e.g., by incorporating storytelling in your instruction).
Address biases, threats, and distractions.	Create an accepting and supportive learning culture by exploring how educator and learner biases can impact the learning environment; creating space and ways for learners to share the biases, threats, and distractions they may be experiencing; and nurturing a culture where mistakes are a part of the learning process.

Sustaining Effort and Persistence

Consideration	Example Ideas
Clarify the meaning and purpose of goals.	Explicitly formulate or restate the goal and use prompts or scaffolds to imagine desired outcomes.
Optimize challenge and support.	Emphasize process, effort, and progress in meeting standards as alternatives to external evaluation and competition, and offer options for tools and scaffolds that align with the learning goal and promote agency.
Foster collaboration, interdependence, and collective learning.	Encourage and support opportunities for peer interactions and supports (e.g., peer tutors), and use prompts that guide learners in when and how to ask for help.
Foster belonging and community.	Create opportunities for learners to share their perspectives on what belonging and community can feel and look like, and examine when or how bias may be creating barriers to learners' sense of belonging.
Offer action-oriented feedback.	Offer feedback that is frequent, timely, and specific and emphasizes effort, improvement, and achievement of a goal rather than relative performance.

Emotional Capacity

Consideration	Example Ideas
Recognize expectations, beliefs, and motivations.	Use prompts, reminders, guides, rubrics, and checklists that focus on setting regulatory goals (e.g., managing anxiety in response to challenge), increasing the length of on-task orientation in the face of distractions, and elevating the frequency of self-reflection.
Develop awareness of self and others.	Use differentiated models, scaffolds, and feedback for managing frustration, seeking external emotional support, developing internal controls and coping skills, and appropriately handling subject-specific phobias and judgments of "natural" aptitude (e.g., "How can I improve in the areas I struggle with?" rather than "I am not good at math.")
Promote individual and collective reflection.	Use activities that provide learners with feedback and access to alternative scaffolds (e.g., charts, templates, feedback displays) that allow them to clearly track and recognize their progress in a timely manner.
Cultivate empathy and restorative practices.	Institute protocols such as a "buddy bench" or an accountability partner to foster communal responsibility for the learning community and encourage learners to take care of one another by sharing coping strategies or coping needs.

Principle 2: Design Multiple Means of Representation

Show information in different ways.

RECOGNITION NETWORKS:
THE **WHAT** OF LEARNING

Perception

Consideration	Example Ideas
Support opportunities to customize the display of information.	Offer information in accessible formats that allow the following perceptual features to be customized: • Font, size of text, character and line spacing, character width, background color, and text colors • Size of images, graphs, tables, and other visual content • Contrast between background and images • Color used for information or emphasis • Volume or rate of speech or sound • Speed or timing of video, animation, sound, simulations, etc. • Layout of visual or other elements
Support multiple ways to perceive information.	To ensure all learners have access to learning, consider offering the following alternatives for any information, including emphasis, presented aurally: • Text equivalents in the form of captions or automated speech–to–text (voice recognition) for spoken language • Visual diagrams, charts, or notations of music or sound • Written transcripts for videos or auditory clips • Sign languages for spoken communication • Visual analogues to represent emphasis and prosody (e.g., emoticons, symbols, or images) • Visual or tactile equivalents (e.g., vibrations) for sound effects or alerts • Visual and/or emotional descriptions for musical interpretation
Represent a diversity of perspectives and identities in authentic ways.	Attend to the ways in which people and cultures are being portrayed; seek authentic, complex portrayals of people, cultures, histories, and world views; and facilitate opportunities to hear from diverse perspectives.

Language and Symbols

Consideration	Example Ideas
Clarify vocabulary, symbols, and language structures.	Clarify unfamiliar syntax or underlying structure through alternatives that emphasize structural relations, make explicit the relationship between elements (e.g., by highlighting the transition words in an essay or linking between ideas in a concept map), and make connections to previously learned structures.
Support decoding of text, mathematical, notation, and symbols.	Allow the use of text-to-speech and offer clarification of notation through lists of key terms.
Cultivate understanding and respect across languages and dialects.	Define domain-specific vocabulary (e.g., "map key" in social studies) using both domain-specific and common terms; incorporate electronic translation tools or links to online multilingual glossaries; and support translanguaging, the ability to move fluidly between languages, as an approach that encourages learners to use their full linguistic capital.
Address biases in the use of language and symbols.	Recognize that the goal of learning standard languages is not assimilation or monolingualism.
Illustrate through multiple media.	Present key concepts, such as an expository text or a math equation, in multiple formats (e.g., via an illustration, dance or movement, diagram, table, model, video, comic strip, storyboard, photograph, animation, or physical or virtual manipulative).

Building Knowledge

Consideration	Example Ideas
Connect prior knowledge to new learning.	Anchor instruction by linking to and activating relevant prior knowledge (e.g., using visual imagery, concept anchoring, or concept mastery routines), using advanced organizers (e.g., KWL methods, concept maps), and pre-teaching critical prerequisite concepts through demonstration or models.
Highlight and explore patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships.	Use outlines, graphic organizers, unit organizer routines, concept organizer routines, and concept mastery routines to emphasize key ideas and relationships, and use multiple examples and non-examples to emphasize critical features.
Cultivate multiple ways of knowing and making meaning.	Use explicit prompts for each step in a sequential process to help learners develop a logical flow specific to their level of understanding and create a structure of complex tasks. "Chunk" information into smaller elements to prevent cognitive overload.
Maximize transfer and generalization.	Use scaffolds that connect new information to prior knowledge (e.g., word webs or half-full concept maps), and embed new concepts into familiar ideas and contexts (e.g., through an analogy, metaphor, drama, music, film) to make learning more relatable.

Principle 3: Design Multiple Means of Action and Expression

Allow students to approach learning tasks and demonstrate what they know in different ways.

Interaction

Consideration	Example Ideas
Vary and honor the methods for response, navigation, and movement.	Offer options for physically responding or indicating selections (e.g., alternatives to marking with pen and pencil or alternatives to mouse control).
Optimize access to accessible materials and assistive and accessible technologies and tools.	Ensure navigation and interaction can be performed with a variety of tools, including keyboard, mouse, switch devices, and voice commands.

Expression and Communication

Consideration	Example Ideas
Use multiple media for communication.	Compose in multiple media, such as text, speech, drawing, illustration, comics, storyboards, design, film, music, storytelling, dance/movement, visual art, sculpture, or video.
Use multiple tools for construction, composition, and creativity.	Provide learners with spell checkers, grammar checkers, word prediction software, speech-to-text software, human dictation, and recordings.
Build fluencies with graduated support for practice and performance.	Use scaffolds that can be gradually released with increasing independence and skills (e.g., scaffolds embedded into digital reading and writing software).
Address biases related to modes of expression and communication.	Communicate in multiple ways how modes of expression aligned with the goal are equally valued.

Strategy Development

Consideration	Example Ideas
Set meaningful goals.	Use models or examples of the process and product of goal setting, and use prompts and scaffolds to estimate effort, resources, and difficulty.
Anticipate and plan for challenges.	Use checklists and project planning templates to better understand the goal and establish the priorities, sequences, and steps necessary to reach it.
Organize information and resources.	Use graphic organizers and templates for data collection and organizing information, and use checklists and guides for note-taking.
Enhance capacity for monitoring progress.	Use prompts and templates to guide self-monitoring and reflection on the quality and completeness of learners' work.
Challenge exclusionary practices.	Work as individuals and as communities to name, explore, and address exclusionary practices.

Adapted from Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST).

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON