

While you wait, do you have two, 8.5x11 pieces of paper?

Learning Effectiveness Program
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Universal Design for Learning Workshop for ACS

November 3, 2026

Meg Davis & De Nair Clark, University of Denver



MEG DAVIS
Associate Director, LEP

Background: K-12, nonprofits, arts, co-facilitate the NDI at DU, 5th year with DU

How does UDL benefit you?

- I am neurodivergent
- My engagement with different topics looks different
- Thrive with clear expectations and options!



DE NAIR CLARK
Assistant Director, LEP

Learning Effectiveness Program
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Background: Marketing, Storytelling, Elementary Education, Ph.D Student in Higher Education at DU

How does UDL benefit you?

- It gives me the freedom to think …. how I think
  - UDL allows me to use my brain at its full capacity rather than feeling like I have to shrink my thinking to fit a predetermined mold of what learning, understanding, or the "right" answer should look like.

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Objectives

Understand the work of the Learning Effectiveness Program

Review the historical and social justice context of UDL

Describe the three main principles of UDL

Explore how UDL relates to your work through data

Experience learning with UDL

Apply UDL learning to scenarios

Got a Question?

Use the Glossary!



If you have a question related to LOGISTICS (Zoom, tech, etc.)...

- **Use the Zoom chat**
- ACS will be monitoring the chat

If you have a question related to CONTENT...

- **Add it to our Padlet**
- Dependent on time and relevance, we will:
  - Answer questions in the moment
  - Save questions for the end
  - Follow up after the webinar
- Also use for Connections, Brainstorming, Scenarios!

https://bit.ly/4sn51V2

Please pause the recording



Zoom Whiteboard

Identity Introductions

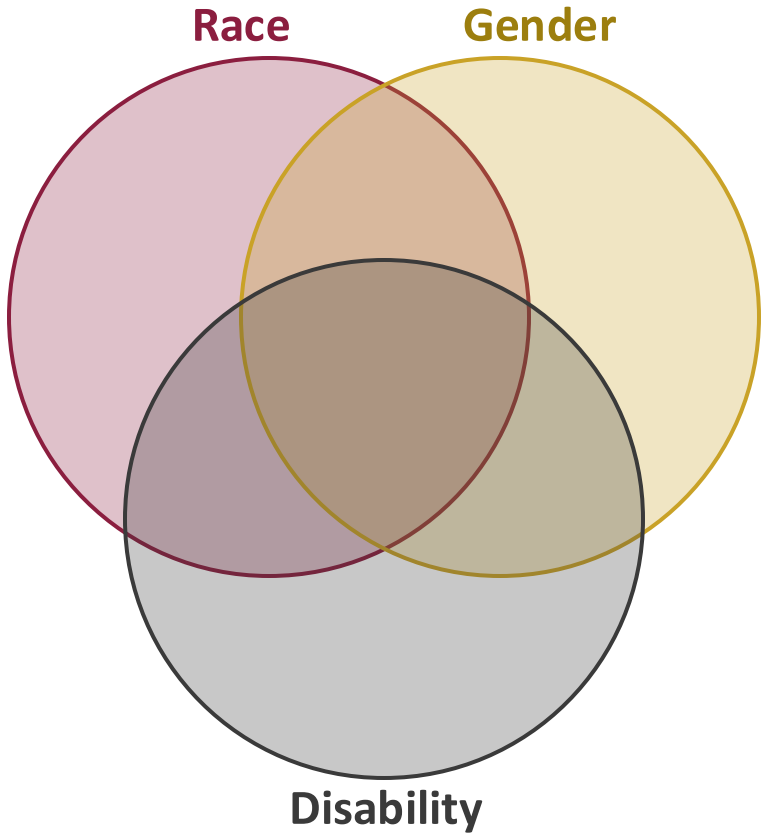


GETTING STARTED · 1 MIN

Identity Is Intersectional

Race × gender × disability × more — our identities don’t operate one at a time.

Today we start by noticing our own identities — and how they travel into our work with students, staff, and colleagues.



STEP 1 · SOLO

Whiteboard Reflection

4 MIN

- Add a sticky note
  - ➢ Write your name and role at the top
  - ➢ List 3 identities that shape how you show up in your work
    - For each identity, write down that identity using the terminology you use (e.g., Catholic, Filipina, Female)
- **Bold** the one you think about most
- Star ⭐ the one you think others notice first

NEED IDEAS? IDENTITY CATEGORIES

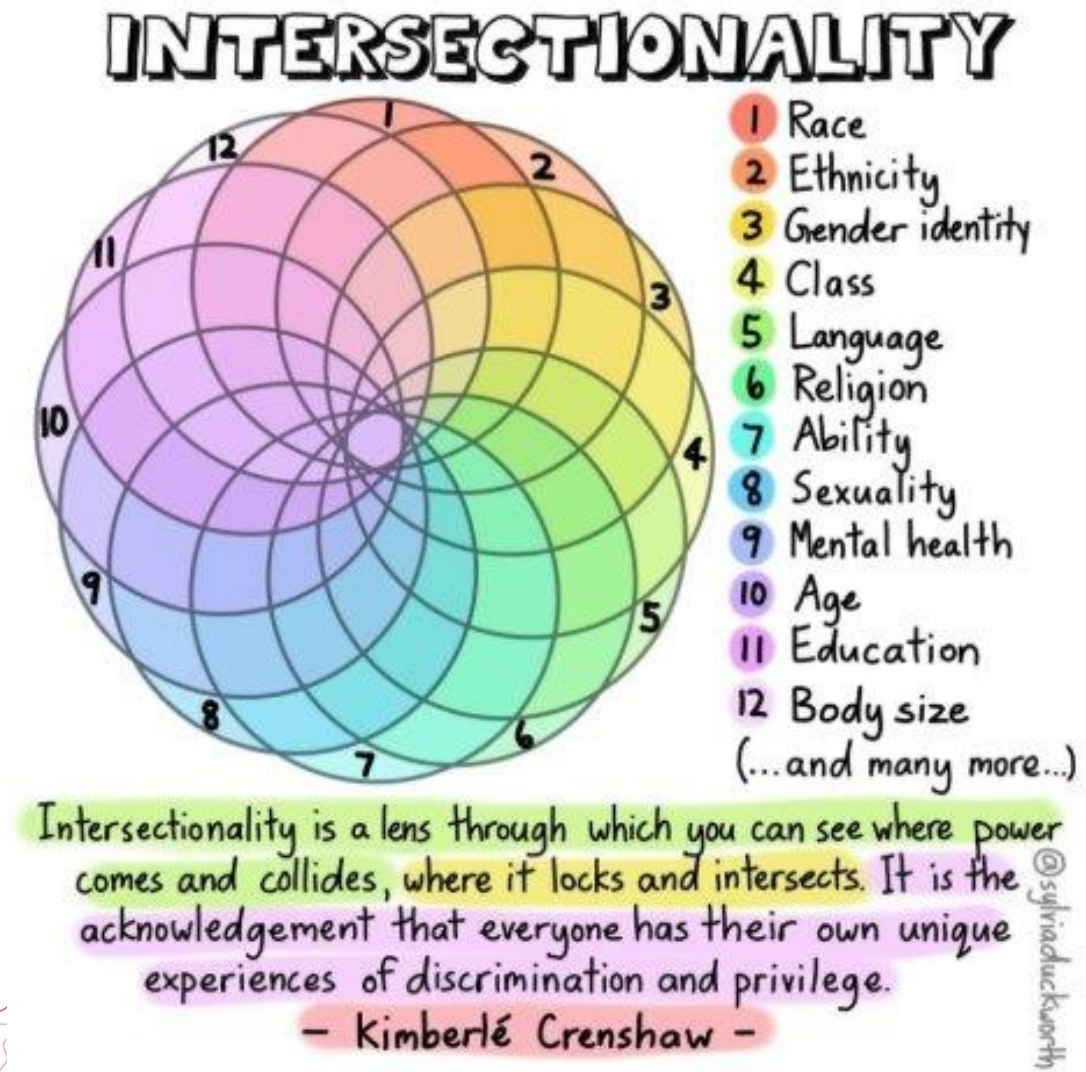
- Race / Ethnicity
- Gender identity & expression
- Disability / Ability
- Sexual orientation
- Religion / Spirituality
- Socioeconomic background
- First-generation status
- Caregiver / Parental status
- National origin
- Generation / Age

STEP 2: WHOLE GROUP

Whole Group Visual Moment

4 MIN

- Look at the sticky notes — notice the range of identities on display
- Reflection on intersectionality
  *Kimberlee Crenshaw (came out of the Black feminist movement!)
- I like to think of intersectionality and intersecting identities in terms of pizza toppings



STEP 3: Connections

Making Connections

1MIN

Place a "Heart" by an identity you connect with.

STEP 4 · WHOLE GROUP

5 MIN

Debrief – Raise your hand to share or pop your thoughts into the chat

“

How does the identity you starred show up in how you're perceived by students or staff?

“

Which identity are you centering when you think about disability and neurodiversity in your own work?

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What is the Learning Effectiveness Program?





What is the LEP?

A student-driven academic home for neurodiverse learners and students with learning differences.

- Founded in 1982
- Mission: to support learning and neurodiversity by providing students opportunities and resources for personal growth, academic skill building, and connection.
- Student Affairs
- 400+ students

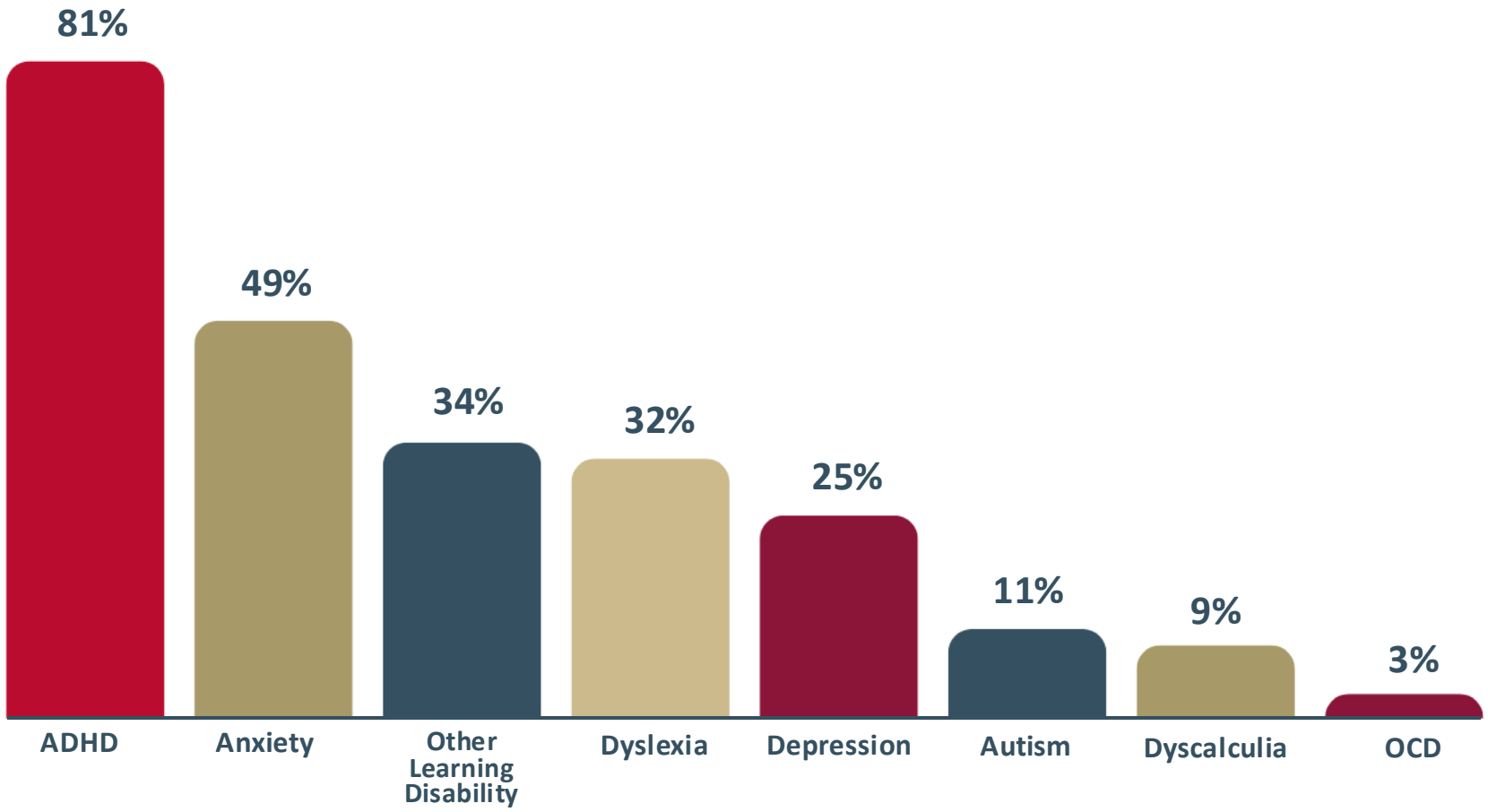
LEP understands your learning differences.

These are the learning differences we support every day, and most LEP students bring more than one.

80%

of LEP students have more than one learning difference.

Few students fit a single label — so our support never treats them like one.



L.E.P. Services

- Academic Counseling
- Executive Functioning Coaching
- Tutoring
- Social Skills Building & Events
- Transition Support

We're going to make paper airplanes

Now, follow along...



In the chat...

How did you do?
What made it difficult?

UDL and you!

Research shows that students with disabilities

- Graduate at lower rates than students without disabilities.
- Are less likely to be employed full-time after graduation.
- Experience barriers related to access, belonging, and support in and outside of the learning environment

Of the students who do not persist / graduate college, departure was rarely caused by academic ability alone.

Persistence in college can be influenced by:

- Sense of belonging
- Faculty relationships
- Accessibility
- Financial stress
- Mental health
- Institutional support

Mata, R.A. & Borrego, M. (2024). Disabled Students in U.S. Postsecondary Education. National Disability Center for Student Success, The University of Texas at Austin. Funded by IES Cooperative Agreement #R324C230008.

The Majority of College Students with Disabilities Do Not Inform School

The National Disability Center for Student Success reports that there are more than **3 million students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary education**, and only about **half disclose their disability to their institution's disability services office**

In a classroom of 30 students, national data suggest about 6 students may have a disability.

The most common disability-related challenges in college involve:

- Concentration
- Memory
- Decision-making
- Mental health conditions
- ADHD and executive functioning difficulties rather than visible physical disabilities.

From the National Center for Education Statistics - https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/4_26_2022.asp

Many students with invisible disabilities feel the need to hide them.

A 2022 study by Kline and Davidson examined 237 college students with invisible illnesses and disabilities.

- 64.1% of participants felt the need to hide their disability while attending college.
- Participants described the influence of stressful situations and judgmental comments on their decisions to conceal their disabilities.

Think about the implications of that finding.

- A student may struggle with executive functioning but not disclose to you that they have ADHD.
- A student may experience significant reading difficulties but never request accommodations.
- A student may have difficulty processing verbal instructions but feel uncomfortable asking for clarification.
- A student may experience anxiety around participation in class because of processing speed but never communicate that to an instructor.

A Question to consider is : Are our learning environments supportive of students who do not ask for help?

Kline, B., & Davidson, D. L. (2022). College students with invisible illnesses and disabilities: Disclosure, hiding, and support. College Student Affairs Journal, 40(2), 121–135. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1366582.pdf

Learning differences are not distributed evenly across the educational experience.

A 2026 study by Morgan and Hu examined more than 1.6 million fourth-grade students across the United States between 2003 and 2022.

The researchers found persistent racial and ethnic disparities in the identification of learning disabilities.

After accounting for academic achievement, English learner status, family economic background, and school context:

- Black students had approximately 31–50% lower adjusted odds of being identified with a learning disability than comparable White students.
- Hispanic students had approximately 17–55% lower adjusted odds.
- English learners had approximately 41–68% lower adjusted odds.

For our participants that support Black, Hispanic, and English learners, what happens when a student enters college having experienced years of learning challenges without having those challenges identified?

Morgan, P. L., & Hu, E. H. (2026). Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Learning Disabilities Identification in U.S. Elementary Schools. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *59*(5), 271-285. https://doi.org/10.1177/00222194261453914

UDL in practice

- How can we create learning environments that do not require students to have to explain or justify their learning needs?
- Are we designing support around how students actually learn, or around how we expect them to learn?
- What would change if accessibility were considered a starting point rather than an accommodation?

Questions to consider

UDL

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

Universal Design

Universal Design (UD) is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.





What is UDL?

Universal Design for Learning

The Center for Applied Science and Technology (CAST), a non-profit educational research and development organization, received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 1994 and developed guidelines and principles for UDL (Rose, p. 136).

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Framework is an inclusive model for teaching that centers the needs of students with disabilities, with the overall goal of creating a learning environment that is accessible by all students without the need for accommodations.

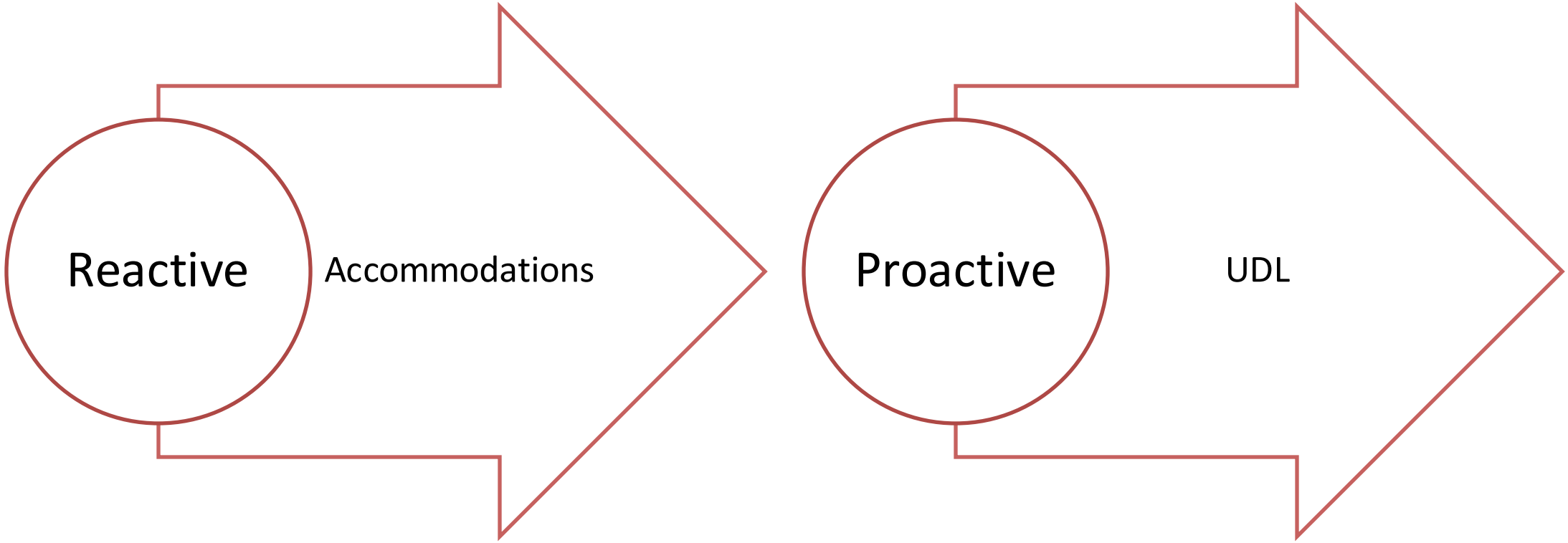
Reality to Inclusion

While we fully support and are willing to discuss academic accommodations, the focus of this training is a **proactive approach** to **reducing access barriers** in the classroom for **neurodivergent students**.



Reality	Equality	Equity	Impartial	Inclusion
Some gets more than is needed, while others get less than is needed	The assumption is that everyone benefits from the same support	Everyone gets the support they need, which produces 'equity'	Causes of inequity addressed. Systemic barrier has been removed	Everyone is included and involved

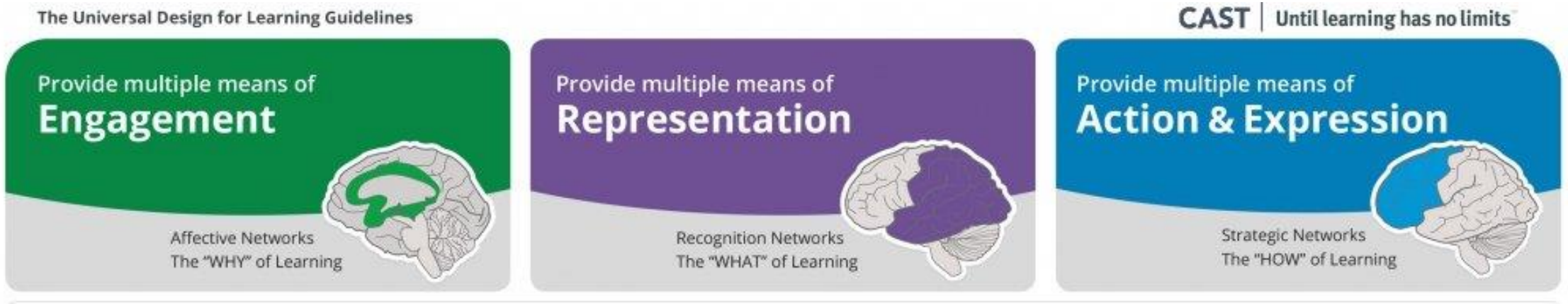
https://www.futureinstitute.edu.au/equality-article/



Caption: There is a circle that says “reactive” and next to it is an arrow with the word “accommodations” in the arrow. Next to this picture is another circle that says “proactive” and next to it is an arrow with the word “UDL”. This diagram shows that the reactive response to learning needs is using accommodations. Using UDL is proactive in that you are taking into account students’ various learning needs in how you teach and interact with them.

UDL – Multiple Means

When using UDL, we provide multiple means of Engagement, Representation and Action & Expression



Engagement

- **Provide multiple means of engagement** to tap individual learners' interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn.
- Self-Regulation
- Sustaining Effort & Persistence
- Recruiting Interest





UDL Strategies for Faculty

ENGAGEMENT

- Offer meaningful choices in topics, activities, or project formats.
- Connect content to real-world issues, careers, or students' interests.
- Use structured peer collaboration/discussion.
- Break large assignments into smaller milestones with checkpoints.
- Provide multiple ways for students to participate (discussion, chat, polls, written responses).

Representation

- **Learners differ in the ways that they perceive and comprehend information that is presented to them.**
- For example, those with sensory disabilities (e.g., blindness or deafness); learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia); language or cultural differences, and so forth may all require different ways of approaching content. Others may simply grasp information quicker or more efficiently through visual or auditory means rather than printed text. Also, learning, and transfer of learning, occurs when multiple representations are used, because they allow students to make connections within, as well as between, concepts.



UDL Strategies for Faculty

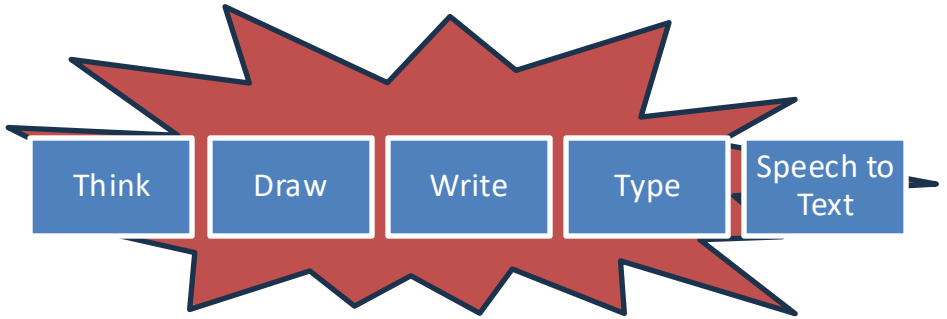
REPRESENTATION

- Present content through multiple formats (text, visuals, audio, demonstrations).
- Provide both written and verbal instructions.
- Caption videos and share transcripts or lecture recordings.
- Highlight key concepts, learning objectives, and takeaways.
- Define discipline-specific vocabulary and provide examples.

Action & Expression

- **Learners differ in the ways that they can navigate a learning environment and express what they know.**
- Multiple means of assessment, outcomes, deliverables, and measuring learning
- For example, individuals with significant movement impairments (e.g., cerebral palsy), those who struggle with strategic and organizational abilities (executive function disorders), those who have language barriers, and so forth approach learning tasks very differently. Some may be able to express themselves well in written text but not speech, and vice versa.





UDL Strategies for Faculty

ACTION & EXPRESSION

- Allow multiple ways to demonstrate learning (papers, presentations, videos, podcasts, etc.).
- Use clear rubrics and assignment exemplars.
- Break complex projects into smaller stages with feedback.
- Incorporate low-stakes practice and formative assessments.
- Provide opportunities for revision based on feedback.

UDL Principles

Provide Multiple Means of Representation	• Options for Perception • Options for Language/Symbols • Options for Comprehension
Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression	• Options for Physical Action • Options for Expressive Skills/Fluency • Options for Executive Functions
Provide Multiple Means of Engagement	• Options for Recruiting Interest • Options for Sustaining Effort/Persistence • Options for Self-Regulation

http://www.cast.org

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In Summary, UDL...

is providing learners various ways to access and engage with materials and information





Let's try that again!

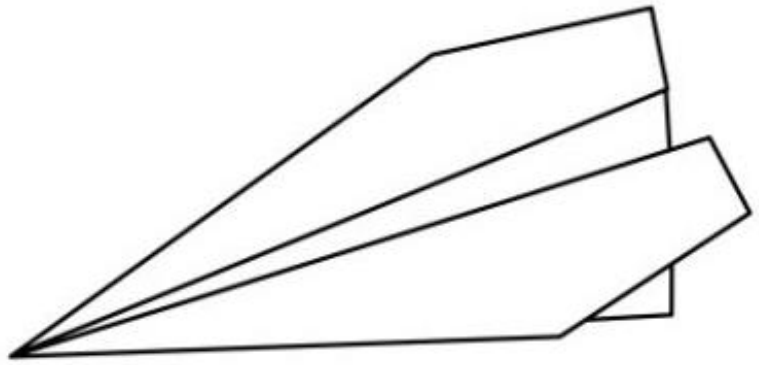
Objective

- By the end of this lesson, you will have created a paper airplane and be able to explain how applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles made the process more effective for both learning and completing the task.

Why this matters:

- To give you a firsthand experience of how the UDL approach can enhance engagement, accessibility, and understanding – even in a simple task like making a paper airplane.

You'll Know You've Got It When...

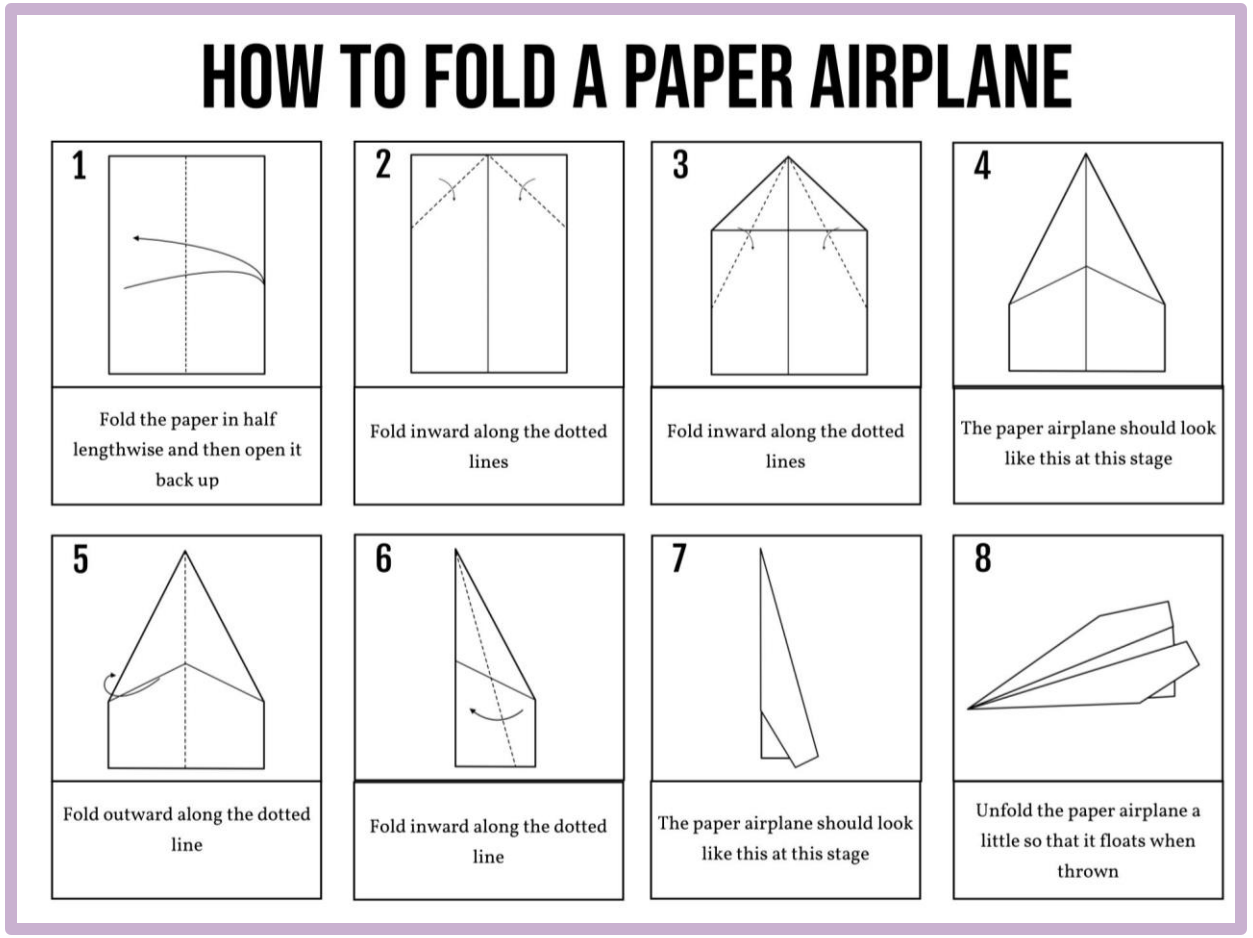


- You've built a paper airplane like the image to the left or this tactile model
- Your paper airplane is able to fly

I'm making explicit what the criteria for success are

Resources & Opportunities

Video snippets <<



I'm providing additional support and resources here

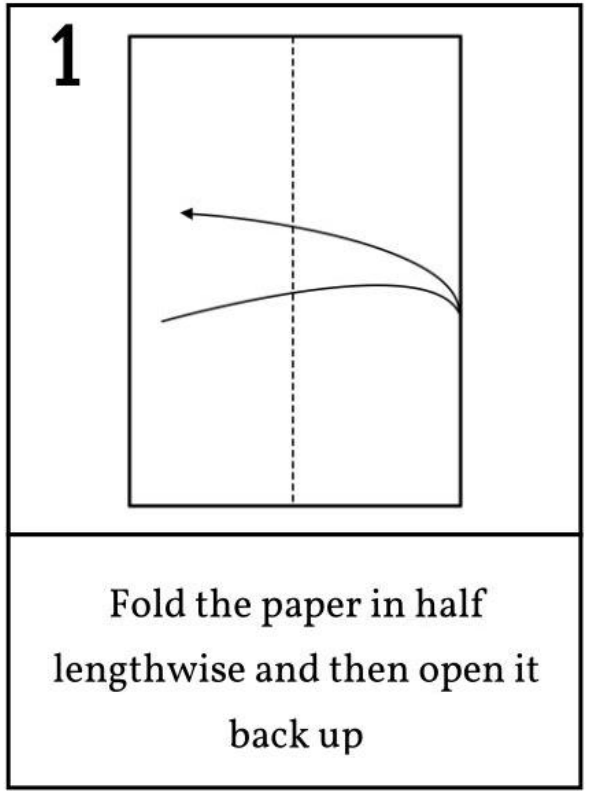
You can also make your own type of paper airplane or use a different kind of supplies!

This website gives you many options of types of paper airplanes: https://www.foldnfly.com/#/1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-2

Available after class for help & support! These resources are also on Canvas.

Step 1

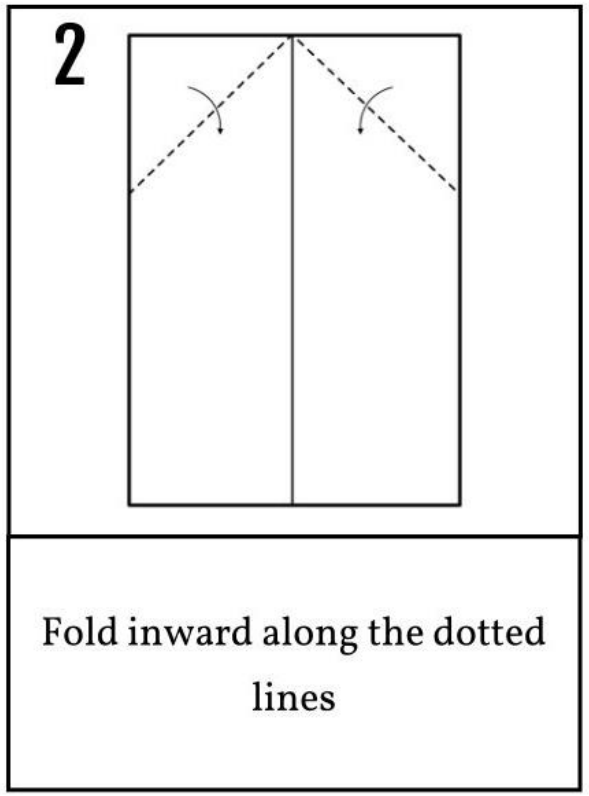
- Fold the paper in half lengthwise and then open it back up



There's written text, a visual diagram and my oral/auditory description. You are able to do the activity along with me using paper.

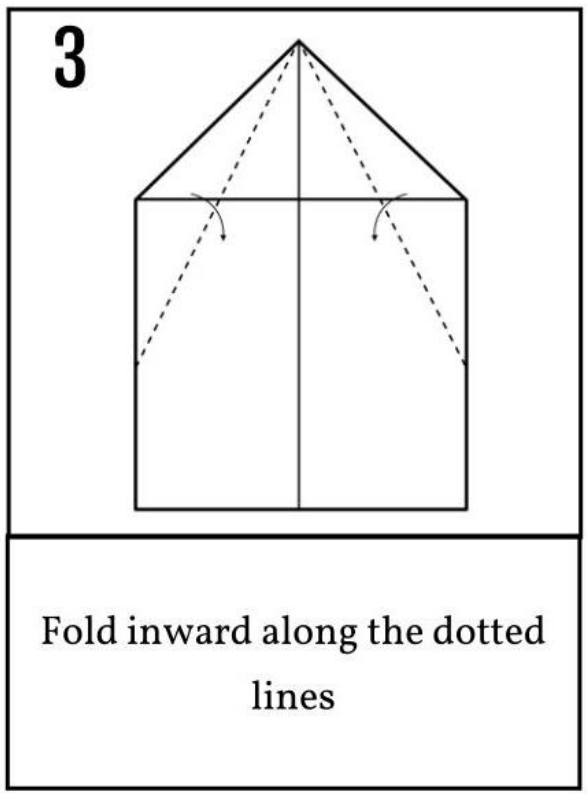
Step 2

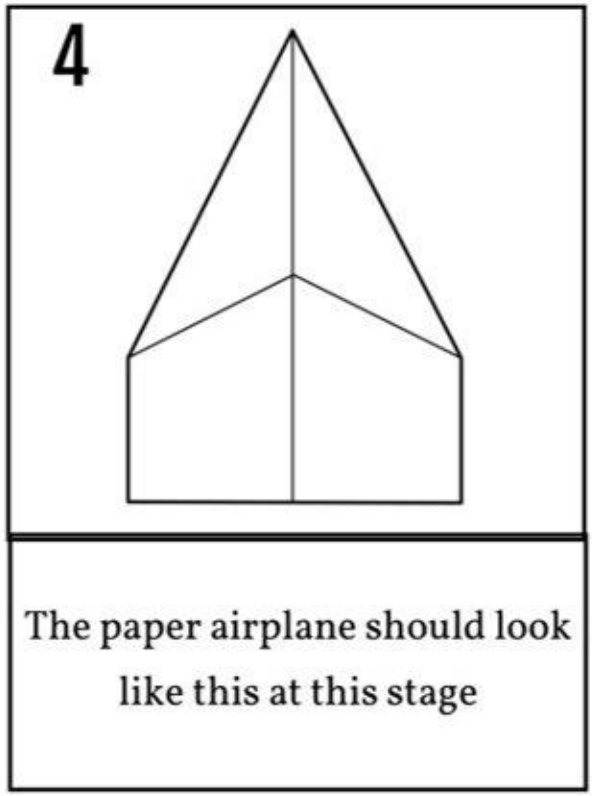
- Holding the paper lengthwise, fold the top two corners inward towards the center
- Keep them folded in – it will look like a house



Steps 3 & 4

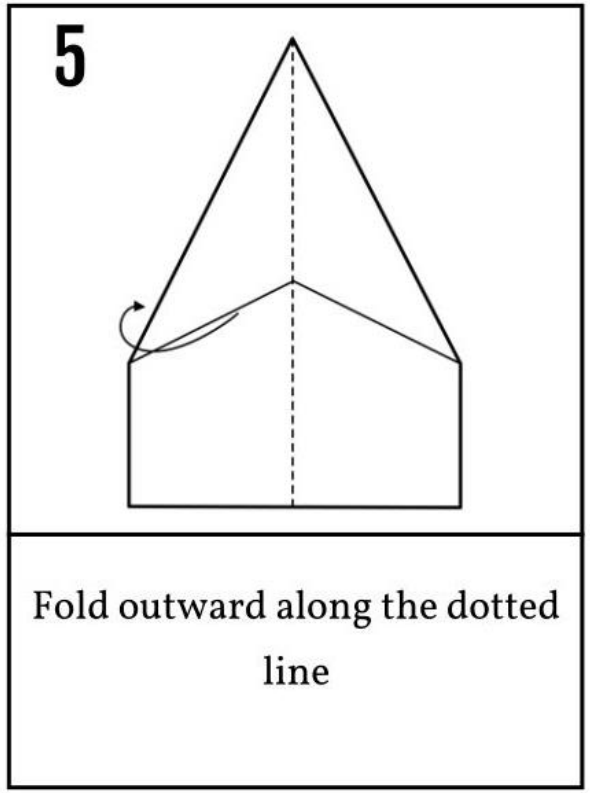
- Fold the two corners where the roof meets the walls in towards the center
- The angle of the roof will be much smaller!





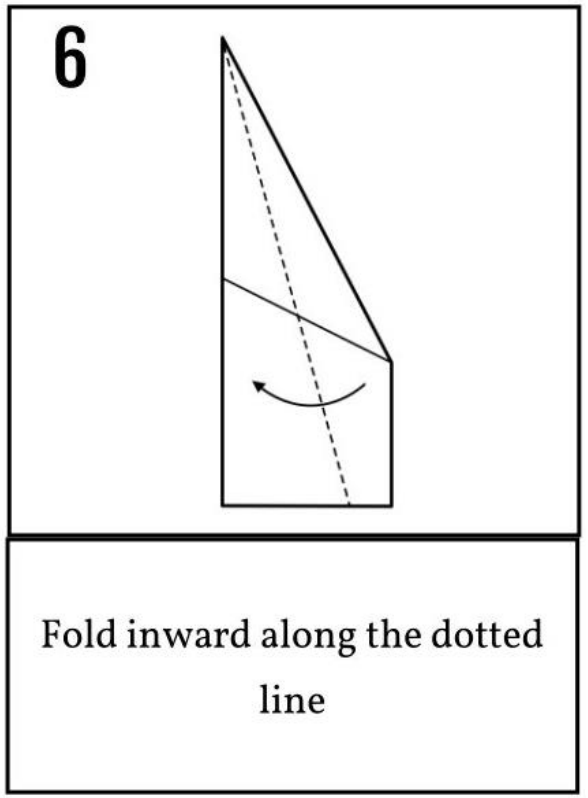
Step 5

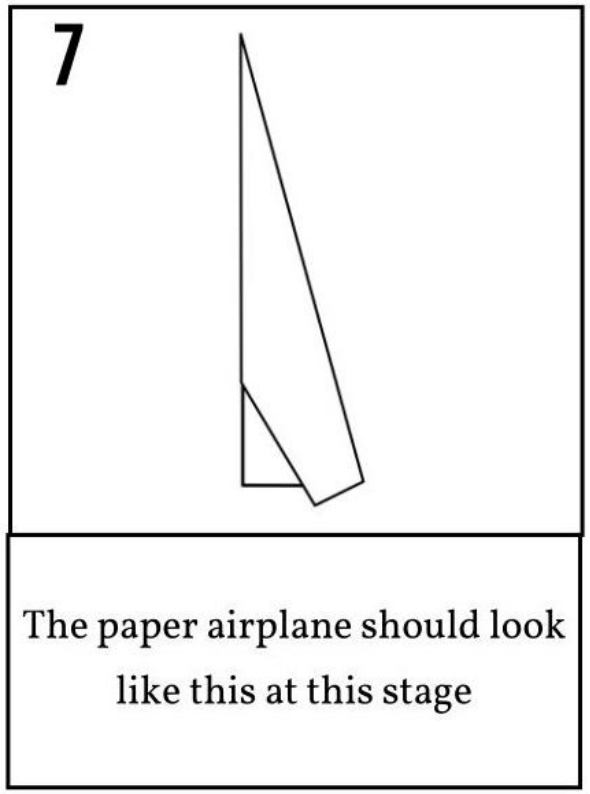
- Fold the airplane backwards along the center seam



Step 6 & 7

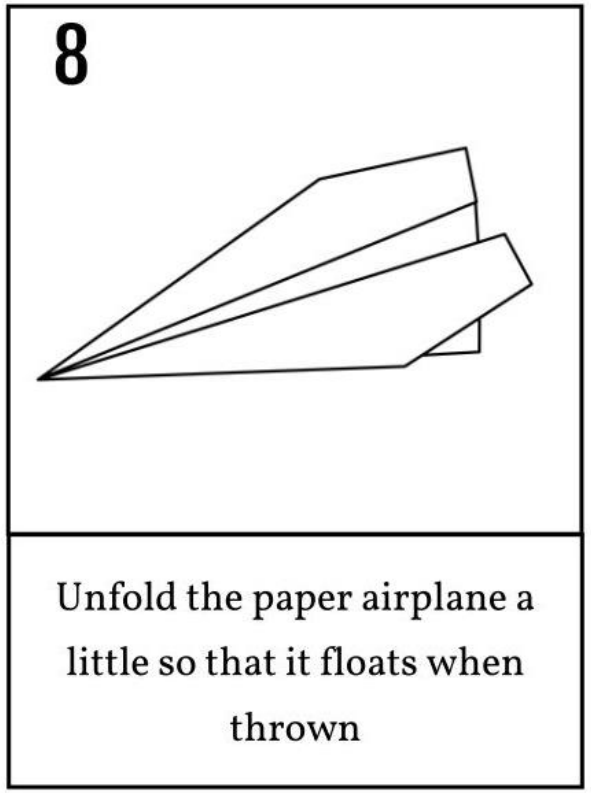
- Fold the "wing" of the airplane towards the bottom (center line) so that the plane now looks like a pointy dart.





Step 8

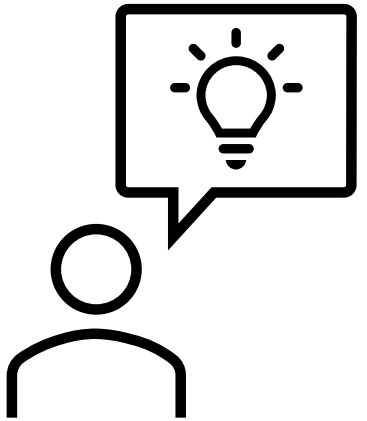
- Loosen the folds of the airplane just a bit. This will allow the plane to float rather than act like a dart.



How was your second learning experience different than the first?

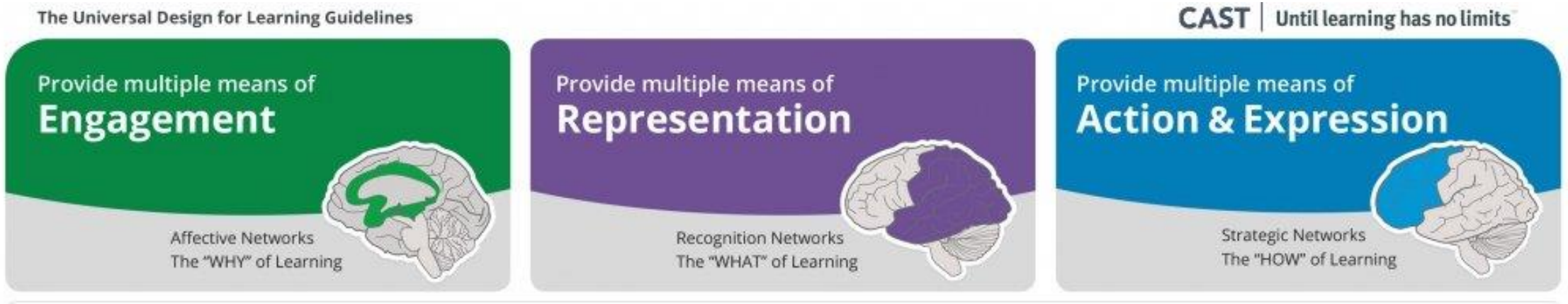
What could you take away from this experience and apply to your own work?

What UDL strategies did you notice?

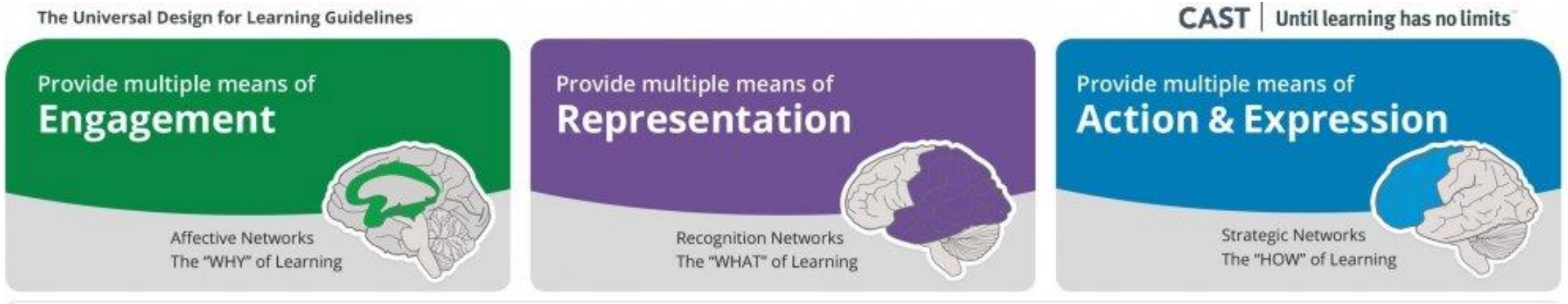


In the chat…

What UDL strategies did you notice?



What UDL strategies could you apply?



Scenarios

Meg will introduce each scenario

ACS will add you to a breakout room

Use Padlet to record your responses

Share out with the full group!

https://bit.ly/4sn51V2

Scenario 1: Dense Content

Rooms 1 & 2

You need to teach complex, information-heavy content that students consistently struggle to understand and retain. You provide scans of physical textbook pages to students, and some students are unable to read them due to needing to use a screen reader. Students have diverse backgrounds, varying levels of preparation, and different learning preferences.

Challenge: How will you apply UDL principles to make this content accessible and comprehensible for all learners?

Scenario 2: The Assessment Authenticity Challenge
Rooms 3 & 4

You want students to demonstrate deep understanding of course concepts, but traditional exams do not capture the full range of what students know and can do. You are concerned that your current assessment methods may disadvantage some students. It seems that a significant portion of your class seems disengaged and is just going through the motions.

Challenge: How will you apply UDL principles to design assessments that allow students to authentically demonstrate their learning?

Scenario 3: The Big Assignment
Rooms 5 & 6

Students in your class earn their grade through one large paper/project/exam(pick one that relates to your work) at the end of the term. In the middle of the quarter, it seems that most students haven't started working on it yet.

Challenge: How will you apply UDL principles in the moment to help students get started? What barriers might students be facing to starting the work? How could you proactively design a course to include checkpoints?

Scenario 4: Sharing Airtime
Rooms 7 & 8

During class discussions, one student frequently dominates sharing opportunities by providing lengthy or off-topic responses, limiting time for other students to participate. You also notice that peers often do not include this student in partner or small-group activities. While the student regularly attends office hours, they tend to monopolize those conversations as well.

Challenge: How will you apply UDL principles to support your classroom of learners?

Scenarios: What are the challenges faced by the student? By the faculty? What UDL strategies could you apply in the moment and proactively for next time?

1 (Rooms 1 & 2): You need to teach complex, information-heavy content that students consistently struggle to understand and retain. You provide scans of physical textbook pages to students, and some students are unable to read them due to needing to use a screen reader. Students have diverse backgrounds, varying levels of preparation, and different learning preferences.

2 (Rooms 3 & 4): You want students to demonstrate deep understanding of course concepts, but traditional exams do not capture the full range of what students know and can do. You are concerned that your current assessment methods may disadvantage some students. It seems that a significant portion of your class seems disengaged and is just going through the motions.

3 (Rooms 5 & 6): Students in your class earn their grade through one large paper/project/exam(pick one that relates to your work) at the end of the term. In the middle of the quarter, it seems that most students haven't started working on it yet.

4 (Rooms 7 & 8): During class discussions, one student frequently dominates sharing opportunities by providing lengthy or off-topic responses, limiting time for other students to participate. You also notice that peers often do not include this student in partner or small-group activities. While the student regularly attends office hours, they tend to monopolize those conversations as well.

ONE THING

What's one change I will make?

- Ex: Add options for my final assessment

What is my first step?

- Review the content students need to show knowledge or mastery of.

Who else might I need involve to make this change?

- Ex: Dean



UDL in Action Workshop
Evaluation Survey

Thank you for your participation in the workshop!

Please scan the QR code or use the link below to take the workshop evaluation survey.

https://links.asu.edu/UDLEvalSurvey

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time. Responses are anonymous.

This session is part of a broader ACS initiative to support neurodivergent learners, made possible through generous support from the ECMC Foundation.


UNIVERSITY OF DENVER | Learning Effectiveness Program
THANK YOU
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