In this toolkit, Hanover Research and ULEAD explore strategies and resources that current and aspiring teachers can utilize to meet Standard 2: Learning Differences of the Utah Effective Teaching Standards and Indicators.
# APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN STUDENT NEEDS AND IDENTITIES TOOLKIT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN STUDENT NEEDS AND IDENTITIES TOOLKIT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit provides guidance and resources to assist current and aspiring Utah teachers in developing their ability to support the growth and learning of all students via effective pedagogies and a commitment to students, families, schools, and the broader mission of education. In particular, Utah teachers should constantly strive to align their daily work, skills development, and professional dispositions to the ten standards and related indicators of the Utah Effective Teaching Standards (located here). Commitment to achieving these standards will allow teachers to support the mission of public education to "ensur[e] literacy and numeracy for all Utah children, provid[e] high quality instruction for all Utah children, [establish] curriculum with high standards and relevance to all Utah children, and require[e] effective assessment to inform high quality instruction and accountability."¹ Specifically, this toolkit provides teachers with tips, strategies, and resources to support their professional work and development around Standard 2: Learning Differences.

Utah Effective Teaching Standard 5: Assessment

Instructional Practice
Teaching begins with the learner. To ensure that each student learns new knowledge and skills, teachers must understand that learning and developmental patterns vary among individuals, that learners bring unique individual differences to the learning process, and that learners need supportive and safe learning environments to thrive.

Standard 2: Learning Differences
The teacher understands individual learner differences and cultural and linguistic diversity. The teacher:

- Understands individual learner differences and holds high expectations of students;
- Designs, adapts, and delivers instruction to address each student’s diverse learning strengths and needs;
- Allows students different ways to demonstrate learning sensitive to multiple experiences and diversity;
- Creates a learning culture that encourages individual learners to persevere and advance; and
- Incorporates tools of language development into planning and instruction for English language learners and supports development of English proficiency.

Source: Utah State Board of Education²
Research shows that teachers are the most influential and impactful element of the formal school system in promoting student achievement. In fact, research estimates that teachers “have two to three times the effect of any other school factor, including services, facilities, and even leadership.”\(^3\) As the immediate organizers and supervisors of students’ educational experiences, teachers exert tremendous influence on student outcomes across multiple areas.\(^4\) These effects extend across dynamics such as academic achievement, attendance, social-emotional learning, behavior, future earnings, and college attendance.\(^5\)

Consequently, teachers should strive to maximize their effectiveness in all facets of their daily work, from planning and delivering instruction to establishing a safe and secure learning environment to acting like a consummate professional.\(^7\) This requires an awareness of learners’ needs, of systemic expectations, and of one’s own strengths and weaknesses as they relate to professional practices and pedagogies.\(^8\) It also requires teachers taking concerted action to expand their content knowledge, strengthen their instructional skills, and maintain a professional and positive mindset with students, families, and colleagues.\(^9\)

This *Appreciating Diversity in Student Needs and Identities Toolkit* and the nine accompanying toolkits in the *Utah Teacher Toolkit Series* support Utah’s current and aspiring teachers in meeting the demands of the Utah Effective Teaching Standards. In particular, this toolkit will help users progress toward those indicators aligned with high-effectiveness for Standard 2: Learning Differences.

### Indicators of High-Effectiveness for Standard 2: Learning Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The highly effective teacher:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Develops and maintains a positive and nurturing learning environment that values the contributions of students with all backgrounds and abilities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Uses learner differences as an asset in designing effective instruction for all students;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Scaffolds support for diverse learners in the classroom and matches resources and strategies to individual student needs;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Encourages students to demonstrate learning based on understanding of individual learning characteristics;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Bridges school and community cultures by connecting multiple perspectives and encouraging students to learn from each other;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Incorporates knowledge of English language development and English learners’ strengths and assessed needs into English language and content instruction; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Engages English learners in assessment of their progress in English language development and in meeting content standards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Utah State Board of Education\(^\text{10}\)
OVERVIEW

This toolkit:

✓ Explores the importance of focusing on the assets that students possess and communicating high expectations for students while simultaneously acknowledging challenges that students may encounter in their learning;

✓ Suggests strategies, tools, and procedures to make instruction accessible to as many students as possible, with the ultimate aspiration to provide universal access within the base curriculum; and

✓ Reviews effective practices to support English learners (ELs) in developing strong content knowledge and English language skills.

AUDIENCE

This toolkit is designed to support current and aspiring K-12 teachers in the state of Utah in meeting the indicators and expectations outlined in the Utah Effective Teaching Standards, particularly Standard 2: Learning Differences.
APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN STUDENT NEEDS AND IDENTITIES TOOLKIT: FOCUS ON ASSETS AND HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS

FOCUS ON ASSETS AND SET HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Teachers who promote equity and commit to providing a high-quality education for all students emphasize the assets inherent in students’ cognitive, cultural, and personal identities. ¹¹ Such teachers focus on the idea that students will “do well if they can” and that students are able to do well when given the necessary tools, supports, and instruction. ¹² Such a mindset concentrates on existing capabilities and potential capabilities with differentiated supports—and how schools, families, and communities can provide those supports. ¹³

Focusing on assets necessitates that teachers minimize their thinking about what deficits, gaps, or problems students carry with them into the classroom. ¹⁵ Such an approach reorients perceptions around students’ diverse abilities, backgrounds, and identities as simply variation, rather than as a “pathology” in need of treatment or a “problem” in need of a solution. ¹⁶ Thus, teachers should self-reflect on their own mindsets and actions and consider ways in which they can actively “view the diversity that students bring to the classroom, including culture, language, disability, socio-economic status, immigration status, and sexuality as characteristics that add value and strength to classrooms and communities.” ¹⁷ Focusing on strengths allows teachers to promote high expectations of students and deliver positive learning experiences, whereas deficits-based orientations incubate lowered expectations, negative labels, and adverse learning experiences. ¹⁸

Differences Between Assets-Based and Deficits-Based Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS-BASED APPROACH</th>
<th>DEFICITS-BASED APPROACH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implemented practices, resources, and procedures are driven by student strengths.</td>
<td>Implemented practices, resources, and procedures are driven by student needs or deficits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers, students, and others focus on available opportunities.</td>
<td>Teachers, students, and others focus on the problems facing students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers, students, and others build on skills and knowledge that students already possess.</td>
<td>Teachers, students, and others correct gaps or weaknesses in students’ skills and knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers, students, and others acknowledge and appreciate supports and resources currently available through families, schools, and the community.</td>
<td>Teachers, students, and other stakeholders highlight gaps or limitations in family, school, and community supports and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers, students, and others build on past successes and aspire to common goals.</td>
<td>Teachers, students, and others dwell on past failures and seek to rectify those failures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: University of Memphis and California Teachers Association Institute for Teaching ¹⁹
As a foundational step to practicing an assets-based approach, teachers should consider their biases about particular groups of students and evaluate any ingrained perceptions they have about why certain demographics of students cannot do certain things. Indeed, teachers must consider even slight nuances in their expectations of students as influenced by characteristics such as socioeconomic, disability, and language status, gender, or race and ethnicity and from their past experiences or accumulated professional beliefs about working with specific “types” of students. While teachers may not actively magnify students’ challenges in their perceptions or lower their expectations of students based on any particular aspect of their identities and background, teachers should be willing to examine their beliefs, thought patterns, and actions to identify any implicit biases that may be impacting their ability to provide a high-quality education to all students. Only then can teachers effectively explore such biases, determine strategies to mitigate the influence of those biases, and hopefully eliminate them with time.

Recognizing and addressing implicit biases in one’s thinking reduces the likelihood that teachers will label a student as more or less likely to succeed based on their demographics or aspects of their personal identities. As such, teachers should seek to expand their knowledge of different sub-groups of students through research on personal identities and how that influences students’ expression of specific skills, knowledge, or interests. This will allow teachers—and by extension students and families—to understand how to leverage students’ existing talents and provide additional resources, as necessary, to utilize those skills and knowledge points to support success, even if challenges do arise.

### Deviating Impacts of Assets- and Deficits-Based Approaches on Bias

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ASSETS-BASED APPROACHES</strong></th>
<th><strong>DEFICITS-BASED APPROACHES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Such approaches help reduce the impacts of biases by:</td>
<td>Such approaches may increase the impacts of biases by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recognizing disconnects between home and school cultures and addressing them equitably;</td>
<td>- Privileging academic culture and viewing inconsistencies between home and school culture as student deficiencies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Expanding teachers’ views of how students learn and achieve success; and</td>
<td>- Narrowing teachers’ views of who can and cannot learn based on the dominant cultural stereotypes; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Broadening teachers’ knowledge of how to motivate and challenge all students based on their unique strengths and traits.</td>
<td>- Devaluing alternative ways to engage or challenge students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California*
APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN STUDENT NEEDS AND IDENTITIES TOOLKIT: FOCUS ON ASSETS AND HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS

From there, teachers should actively communicate high expectations for student outcomes and guide students in identifying and using their strengths and assets to meet those expectations. Essentially, teachers should anticipate that all students will meet or exceed the outlined learning standards for their content area and grade level and communicate these expectations via their conversations and interactions with students. First, teachers should explicitly and repeatedly state their expectations for student achievement and behavior—verbally and in writing—so that students are consciously aware of and have tangible evidence for those expectations. In addition, teachers should “[c]reate an environment in which there is genuine respect for students and a belief in their capability,” as indicated by dynamics such as:

- Productive expenditure of instructional time;
- Promotion of active participation by all students;
- Planning of rigorous tasks that stretch students beyond their comfort zones;
- Accountability measures for students to complete tasks and receive feedback;
- Organized and aesthetically pleasing classrooms; and
- Cordial and professional social interactions between staff and students.

These strategies inherently involve learning about the strengths and interests that students possess and would like to develop further. It also requires using these strengths and interests to guide curricular content and instructional planning and delivery. By doing this, teachers can frame goals and expectations in a way that acknowledges established learning standards while identifying pathways for students to achieve those standards that build from their existing strengths and knowledge base. Furthermore, teachers can motivate students and promote greater student confidence levels as they strive toward high expectations.

Mindsets and Actions of Teachers with High-Expectations vs. Low-Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers with High-Expectations</th>
<th>Teachers with Low-Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the learning intentions and success criteria for instructional activities</td>
<td>Focus on the details and steps of instructional activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask more open-ended questions to extend or enhance students’ thinking</td>
<td>Ask predominantly closed-ended questions grounded in fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage behavior positively and proactively</td>
<td>Manage behavior negatively and reactively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make more positive statements about student performance and behavior</td>
<td>Make more negative statements about student performance and behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set specific goals with students that are regularly reviewed and used for teaching and learning</td>
<td>Set universal goals for learning without student input to guide instructional planning and delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a facilitative role during instruction</td>
<td>Take a directive role during instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide multiple opportunities for student choice</td>
<td>Provide little opportunity for student choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link achievement to motivation, effort, and goals</td>
<td>Link achievement to ability and past performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage students to work with a variety of peers for positive peer modeling</td>
<td>Use ability groupings and design different learning activities for each achievement group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Teachers with High-Expectations
(continued)

- Allow all learners to engage in advanced activities with appropriate supports
- Undertake more assessment and monitoring so that learning strategies can be adjusted when necessary
- Divide time equitably with all learners based on need for additional support or further enrichment
- Give specific feedback about students’ achievement and progress in relation to learning goals
- Respond to incorrect answers by exploring the wrong answer, rephrasing explanations, or scaffolding the student to the correct answer
- Use student interests and drive for motivation

### Teachers with Low-Expectations
(continued)

- Repeat lower-level activities for low-ability children, and advanced activities for high-ability learners
- Break learning down into inflexible incremental steps and organize learning in a static linear fashion
- Spend more time with low-achievers, and give high achievers time to work independently
- Give broad praise or criticism focused on accuracy and correctness
- Respond to incorrect answers by telling the student they are wrong, providing no or a single explanation, or asking another student to respond
- Use incentives and rewards for motivation

Source: The Education Hub

The **Assets-Based Practices and Perceptions Self-Assessment** on the next page can help teachers reflect on their current ability to implement the assets- or strengths-based practices presented in the preceding pages. Listed items allow teachers to determine the degree to which their professional beliefs and actions align with assets- or strengths-based approaches to teaching and learning.

In addition, the **Reflective Questions to Promote Assets-Based Practices** on p. 11 can help teachers investigate students’ existing assets. Specifically, this tool asks teachers to consider students’ strengths and the conditions under which students learn best—per their own observations and students’ self-perceptions. Furthermore, it facilitates investigation into how instructional strategies, curricula, and learning materials can best leverage those strengths to help students meet learning standards and high expectations.
Directions: Use this self-assessment survey to determine the degree to which your professional beliefs and actions align with assets- or strengths-based approaches to teaching and learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every student has the potential to be successful.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every student has the desire to be successful.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every student wants to find something to be good at.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every student’s capacity to learn can be mobilized with the right supports.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ strengths and talents define who they are.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ limitations and challenges do not define who they are.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a teacher chooses to focus on about a student helps determine that student’s reality.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I focus on students’ existing strengths and abilities in my daily work and interactions.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I focus on students’ existing weaknesses and challenges in my daily work and interactions.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I engage my students in respectful and meaningful ways.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A teacher's job is to enhance students' existing and emerging strengths.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to student learning represent an opportunity rather than a difficulty.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take time to learn about my students' identities, aspirations, and experiences.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use what I know about students to plan and deliver effective instruction.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to begin instruction with topics or skills students already know.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing new skills and knowledge is both a process and a goal.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to value differences.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork and collaboration are important to achieving goals.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand assets-based principles of practice.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I apply assets-based principles of practice in my professional work.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Resiliency Initiatives

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APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN STUDENT NEEDS AND IDENTITIES TOOLKIT: FOCUS ON ASSETS AND HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Reflective Questions to Promote Assets-Based Practices

Directions: Use the questions listed in this handout to help identify individual students’ existing strengths and the assets that accompany their diverse identities. By finding answers to these questions, you will better understand how to plan and deliver instruction that best utilizes students’ existing knowledge and skills.

Under what conditions (i.e., when, where, how, and with whom) does this student learn best based on my observations and data from families and other staff?

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

What strengths does this student consider themselves as having? What are their preferred learning styles?

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

What instructional strategies, curriculum materials, and supplemental supports are available to me to build on these strengths and address these learning styles?

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, State of Victoria

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Research and policy guidance increasingly highlight the problematic nature of “one-size-fits-all” instruction, considering the increasing share of U.S. students from diverse populations. As such, teachers must embrace the reality that learner variability is the norm and that even students from the same sub-groups will be diverse. 

By extension, teachers should intentionally plan and deliver instruction to leverage a variety of student strengths and provide flexibility for further modification and differentiation of content, processes, and assessments beyond foundational design.

Teachers should, therefore, adopt and apply the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a framework to plan and implement instruction that proactively and preemptively accounts for diversity in student cognition, cultural assets, and personal identities. UDL builds on the theory that “the design and composition of an environment [should allow it to] be accessed, understood[,] and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability[,] or disability” without retrofitting. To accomplish this, UDL embeds multiple supports and pathways into curricula and instruction from the outset to minimize the need for further differentiation, accommodations, and modifications beyond those resulting from UDL—though strategies are still possible to implement in tandem with UDL. Specifically, UDL principles focus on teachers providing multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement via “a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities.”

The Three Main Facets of UDL

**Provide Multiple Means of Representation**

Learners differ in how they perceive and comprehend information presented to them. For example, those with sensory disabilities, learning disabilities, language or cultural differences, and so forth may require different ways of approaching content. Others may simply grasp information more quickly or more efficiently through visual or auditory means rather than printed text. Learning, and transfer of learning, occurs when multiple representations are used because they allow students to make connections within and between concepts.

**Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression**

Learners differ in how they navigate a learning environment and express knowledge. For example, individuals with significant movement impairments, those who struggle with strategic and organizational abilities, those who have language barriers, and so forth approach learning tasks very differently. Some may be able to express themselves well in writing but not speech and vice versa. It should also be recognized that action and expression require a great deal of strategy, practice, and organization—another area in which learners can differ.
Affect represents a crucial element to learning, and students differ markedly in the ways in which they can be engaged or motivated to learn. There are a variety of sources that can influence individual variation in affect including neurology, culture, personal relevance, subjectivity, and background knowledge. Some learners are highly engaged by spontaneity and novelty while others are disengaged, even frightened, by those aspects and prefer strict routine. Some learners might like to work alone, while others prefer to work with their peers.

**Provide Multiple Means of Engagement**

Teachers should consider various obstacles to learning and potential differences in student interest levels, skills, aptitudes, learning styles, and prior knowledge from the earliest stages of planning through final delivery of a given unit of instruction. Moreover, teachers should know and strive to adhere to those characteristics of curricula, instructional practice, and classroom climate that associate with greater flexibility in students acquiring and practicing new knowledge and skills. They should also maintain high expectations for all students while leveraging multiple instructional strategies, communication methods, and assessment techniques to:

- Present content and model skills to students so that they can more easily access information, concepts, and ideas (the “what” of learning);
- Plan and execute learning tasks that avoid a “one-size-fits-all” pathway that inhibits students who require flexibility (the “how” of learning); and
- Engage students—and keep them engaged—in learning tasks focused on a specific set of content standards (the “why” of learning).

**Characteristics of Effective UDL Implementation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equitable Use</th>
<th>Flexibility in Use</th>
<th>Simple and Intuitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction is accessible by students with diverse abilities and provides different ways to acquire and show knowledge.</td>
<td>Instruction accommodates a wide range of abilities and creates freedom to revamp approaches and provide many options for students.</td>
<td>Instructional methods and goals are straightforward and predictable, regardless of students’ cognitive skills, experience, or knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptible Information</th>
<th>Tolerance for Error</th>
<th>Low Physical Effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction shares knowledge in multiple ways and communicates well, regardless of students’ sensory abilities or ambient conditions.</td>
<td>Instruction anticipates variation in student learning pace and prerequisite skills. Teachers meet students where they are.</td>
<td>Instruction minimizes nonessential physical effort, seeks to maintain student alertness, and reduces fatigue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size and Space for Approach</th>
<th>A Community of Learners</th>
<th>Instructional Climate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction considers physical space and the potential challenges and benefits it may provide.</td>
<td>Teachers establish an environment and plan tasks to drive interaction with and among students.</td>
<td>Instruction is welcoming and inclusive. High expectations are espoused for all students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Center for Applied Special Technology

Source: National Education Association and Center for Advancement of Learning, Dartmouth College

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Furthermore, teachers should understand how UDL principles penetrate all aspects of the educational experience, including:

- **Goals**: Goals represent the knowledge, concepts, and skills students need to master and are usually aligned to state standards. Goals should be linked explicitly to classroom activities and should be highlighted as what students should strive toward.

- **Methods**: Methods are the instructional strategies used by educators to support student learning. Methods should be evidence-based and supported by an analysis of learner variability. UDL methods are flexible and adjusted through consistent monitoring of student progress.

- **Materials**: Materials include media and manipulatives used to present content and guide learning. UDL materials offer multiple options and include embedded supports.

- **Assessments**: Assessments gather data about student progress using a variety of methods and materials. UDL assessments are particularly concerned with accurately measuring knowledge, skills, and engagement by maintaining construct relevance and reducing or eliminating distracting elements that interfere with assessment validity.

### UDL Guidelines with Sample Strategies for Use Across All Disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GUIDELINE</th>
<th>LINK TO VIDEO EXPLANATION</th>
<th>SAMPLE STRATEGIES</th>
<th>LINK TO ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide Multiple Means of Representation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Options for Perception | 🎬 | • Use multilingual and visual guides for vocabulary  
  • Graph coordinates on the floor | 🎬 |
| Options for Language, Expressions, and Symbols | 🎬 | • Use mnemonic devices to support recall  
  • Support vocabulary with online tools | 🎬 |
| Options for Comprehension | 🎬 | • Bridge content with more accessible texts  
  • Offer “talking point” cards to support discussions | 🎬 |
| **Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression** |
| Options for Physical Action | 🎬 | • Color code materials for each class  
  • Make tasks active | 🎬 |
| Options for Expression and Communication | 🎬 | • Invite writing across languages  
  • Offer choice among readings | 🎬 |
| Options for Executive Function | 🎬 | • Have clear roles for group work  
  • Invite students to develop assessment criteria | 🎬 |
| **Provide Multiple Means of Engagement** |
| Options for Recruiting Interest | 🎬 | • Provide video and visuals to preview content  
  • Create graduated learning objectives | 🎬 |
| Options for Sustaining Effort and Persistence | 🎬 | • Use self-scoring to increase reflection  
  • Increase choice through learning menus | 🎬 |
| Options for Self-Regulation | 🎬 | • Set goals to support students developing agency  
  • Use task-oriented checklists and rubrics | 🎬 |

Source: UDL for Teachers

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APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN STUDENT NEEDS AND IDENTITIES TOOLKIT: DESIGN INSTRUCTION FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESS

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APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN STUDENT NEEDS AND IDENTITIES TOOLKIT: DESIGN INSTRUCTION FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESS

However, even when applying UDL principles to instructional planning and delivery, teachers should recognize that differentiation of instruction to individual students will still be necessary. While UDL may maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of instruction for most students, some students will require more targeted or intensive supports and accommodations or may benefit from further enrichment to extend their skills and knowledge. Therefore, teachers should continuously monitor the developing strengths, learning preferences, and needs of students in their classrooms, especially those who receive accommodations or modifications resulting from an individualized education program (IEP) or other specialized learning plan which must be implemented during instruction.

**Differentiation Versus Universal Design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universal Design for Learning</th>
<th>Differentiation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Improve the Lesson&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Support the Individual&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Plan in anticipation of student diversity</td>
<td>▪ Plan in response to students’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Tools and methods of differentiation built directly into the lesson</td>
<td>▪ Modifications based on prior instruction or individual learning plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Differentiation always occurs prior to instruction</td>
<td>▪ Differentiation occurs before and during a lesson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Meet the varying needs and preferences of students
- Give all students access to the same high-quality content
- Create a supportive and engaging learning environment
- Provide multiple pathways to develop and express knowledge and skills
- Emphasize critical thinking and strategic learning
- Assess student progress and adjust instruction as needed

*Source: New Zealand Ministry of Education*

The Self-Reflection Diagnostic on Universal Design for Learning on the following page can support teachers in determining how well their current views and practices align to components of UDL. Listed items refer to vital dynamics or strategies that are essential for successfully embedding UDL in the classroom.

In addition, the Universal Design for Learning Step-by-Step Planning Tool located on pp. 17-19 provides reflective questions that teachers can use to evaluate how well existing lesson plans conform to UDL principles.
**Self-Reflection Diagnostic on Universal Design for Learning**

**Directions:** Use the following diagnostic survey to help determine your current ability and willingness to begin or continue implementing the key facets of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFLECTION PROMPT</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My lessons provide options for students to reach higher levels of comprehension and understanding.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons provide options to help students understand symbols and expressions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons help students understand precisely what they are meant to learn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons ask students to think and act strategically to learn new content.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons provide multiple pathways for students to express themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons demand that students regulate their own learning to sustain effort and motivation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons are designed to be engaging and interesting to all students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons present new content via multiple formats (e.g., audio, text, visuals, physical manipulatives).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons include differentiated activities to best match student needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons include student choice in the assignments and assessments that they complete.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons leverage technology to appeal to a wide range of student abilities and learning styles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons remain focused on helping students achieve the intended learning objective.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lessons generally meet the needs of all students without much need for modifications.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personal teaching style indicates enthusiasm for the content addressed in my lessons.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personal teaching style reflects an appreciation for the diverse experiences and backgrounds that students bring to the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Center for Applied Special Technology and ACCESS Project, Colorado State University*
Directions: Use the following worksheet to assess an existing or in-progress lesson plan to support integration of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.

Anticipate Variability in Representation

1. What do you anticipate the range of student background experience, vocabulary, and perception will be for this lesson?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. What assets do students currently possess to support their comprehension? Do you anticipate any barriers to student comprehension?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. Do the current lesson design strategies support the range of students’ perception, language and symbol knowledge, and comprehension?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

4. What are one or two design strategies you can add to your lesson to increase options for representation?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
1. What do you anticipate the range of student action and expression will be for this lesson?

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

2. What assets do students currently possess to support their action and expression? What do you anticipate as barriers to students demonstrating what they know?

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Do the current lesson design strategies support the range of students’ physical action, expression and communication, and executive function?

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

4. What are one or two design strategies you can add to your lesson to increase options for action and expression?

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
### Anticipate Variability in Engagement

1. What do you anticipate the range of student interest and effort will be for this lesson?

2. What assets do students currently possess to support their engagement? What do you anticipate as barriers to student engagement?

3. Do the current lesson design strategies support the range of students' interest, effort, or self-regulation?

4. What are one or two design strategies you can add to your lesson to increase engagement?

Source: Understood

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PROVIDE DIRECT SUPPORT TO ENGLISH LEARNERS

Like all students from diverse backgrounds, English learners (ELs) deserve to be held to the same high expectations as other students and to benefit from assets-based practices utilized by their teachers. This means that teachers must actively and explicitly seek to leverage the strengths that ELs possess to drive instruction, rather than focusing on existing “language gaps” as hurdles to be overcome.

Indeed, teachers working with ELs should take time to profile each student’s existing strengths—in terms of their academic knowledge and skills and their language proficiencies—and to plan and deliver scaffolded instruction with built in supports for accessibility, particularly as they relate to bridging linguistic diversity. This means that they should deploy a broad range of strategies to simultaneously nurture ELs’ strengths as they relate to technical skills, content knowledge, and cognitive processes and curiosities while embedding scaffolds to advance language proficiency. Such strategies include:

- Learning about, valuing, and building on the languages, experiences, knowledge, and interests of each student to affirm their identity and to bridge to new learning;
- Using multiple tools and sources of information to continually learn about and observe student performance, using the knowledge gained to inform teaching;
- Involving every student in authentic, challenging, and engaging experiences, including tasks that prompt critical thinking and connections to lived experiences;
- Planning for and developing all four language domains (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) through meaningful, task-based content instruction;
- Involving every student in academic interactions with peers who represent a variety of proficiency levels and with proficient speakers and writers, including the teacher;
- Scaffolding instruction so that every student can participate in challenging, grade-level content instruction while developing academic language and literacy; and
- Engaging and communicating with all stakeholders regarding student success, especially with students’ families and communities.

Educational Programming Elements That Impact English Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPOWERING ELEMENTS</th>
<th>DISABLING ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First language and culture are viewed as assets.</td>
<td>First language and culture are viewed as handicaps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual education, primary language support, or English-language support are offered.</td>
<td>Sink-or-swim instruction with little or no linguistic support is emphasized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a true emphasis on the multicultural.</td>
<td>The primary emphasis is on the culture of the majority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive and experiential methods expand the literacy spectrum (e.g., gradual release).</td>
<td>Teachers rely on the transmission mode (i.e., “talk teaching”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ prior knowledge and experiences are incorporated into the instruction.</td>
<td>Students’ experiences are ignored or excluded during instructional planning and delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students help determine learning goals.</td>
<td>Teachers set all learning goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families and schools are active partners.</td>
<td>Family participation is not valued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic assessment is used to determine appropriate instruction.</td>
<td>Formal paper and pencil testing determine students’ success and failure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Benchmark Education Company

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Importantly, many strategies that benefit all students will benefit ELs and vice versa (e.g., building background, collaboration with peers). However, when working with ELs, teachers must consider the availability of multiple means by which ELs can access and practice new information and skills using the full range of their expressive and receptive language modalities—since both English language proficiency and content mastery are key goals. Likewise, students need appropriate scaffolds and tools to navigate spoken and written English within these multiple means to benefit from teacher-instruction, peer collaborations, and independent engagement with curriculum content and materials. For example, teachers might deploy some of the following strategies based on students’ current level of English proficiency:

- **Recycle new words**: Reintroduce new words in a different context or use recently learned words to reintroduce or expand a concept.
- **Simplify sentence structure**: Avoid complex sentences and passive verbs. For example, instead of saying, “The homework must be completed and handed in by Friday,” it would be better to say, “You must finish the work and give it to me on Friday.”
- **Highlight key ideas and instructions**: Review instructions and concepts periodically with the class to reinforce comprehension. Pause to get students’ attention before making important points, and make sure all students can see you. Use gestures for emphasis, raise pitch and volume slightly, repeat, or rephrase (or ask a student to).
- **Provide notes that highlight key ideas and new words**: Use the chalkboard or post a chart in the classroom for ongoing reference. Provide a summary sheet so that students can refer to it when studying at home.
- **Give clear, explicit instructions**: Number and label the steps in an activity. Reinforce oral instructions for homework and projects with a written outline to help students who may not be able to process oral instructions quickly enough to understand fully.
- **Use many non-verbal cues**: Gestures, facial expressions, and mime help learners grasp the meaning of what you are saying. Be aware that some gestures (e.g., pointing at people) may have negative meanings in some cultures.
- **Make frequent use of a variety of concrete and visual supports**: Regularly use models, toys, manipulatives, pictures, charts, flashcards, lists, visuals, posters, and banners. Demonstrate procedures and provide related hands-on activities.
- **Allow sufficient response time when interacting orally**: Students need time to think in the first language and compose a response in the second.
- **Check often for comprehension**: For example, at frequent intervals say, “Tell me what you have to do next.”

Source: Center for Applied Linguistics and Project EXCELL | University of Missouri-Kansas City and North Kansas City Schools (MO)
Sample Content and Language Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>CONTENT OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Students will order rational numbers.</td>
<td>Students will write number sentences comparing rational numbers using greater than or less than in words and symbols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Students will compare and contrast the themes and structures of mysteries.</td>
<td>Students will write a reflection that explains their thinking about the similarities and differences of the themes and structures of mysteries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Students will trace the flow of energy through a food web.</td>
<td>Students will read and interpret symbols in a food web.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Students will use topographical maps to determine elevation of a place.</td>
<td>Students will verbally explain how topography corresponds to the elevation in a location by using comparative adjectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Connecticut State Department of Education

On the next page, the Content and Language Objectives Composition Worksheet provides formulas and guidance to help teachers write effective objectives. Use of this tool will facilitate greater correspondence between learning standards and instructional foci as they relate to content mastery and language proficiency.
## Directions
Use this worksheet to help you compose strong content and language objectives to guide your own instructional planning and delivery. This tool also provides a listing of sample objective elements for reference to assist you.

### Potential Content Objective Elements
- **Audience**: the population of students being taught
- **Behavior**: what the students will be able to think, know, or do
- **Condition**: the circumstances or context in which learning will occur
- **Degree**: how well or how much the behavior must be performed

### Potential Language Objective Elements
- **Language modality**: the use case of written or spoken language
- **Grammatical structures**: the targeted elements of language (e.g., word types, verb tenses, punctuation)
- **Vocabulary**: the terms students will learn and apply
- **Supports**: any additional tools provided beyond the condition

### Content Standard | Corresponding Content Objective | Corresponding Language Objective
--- | --- | ---
**Example**
Analyze and interpret data from fossils to provide evidence of the organisms and the environments in which they lived long ago. – Next Generation Science Standards

**Example**
Students will use a magnifying glass to make and record four observations about the fossilized organism’s body.

**Example**
Students will write a descriptive paragraph in their lab report template explaining how they made their observations.

**Example**
Solve real-world and mathematical problems involving volume of cylinders, cones, and spheres. – Common Core State Standards for Math

**Example**
Students will accurately calculate volume for three cylindrical, conical, or spherical objects found in the classroom.

**Example**
Students will verbally explain to a peer how they completed their calculations.

**Source**: Multiple

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APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN STUDENT NEEDS AND IDENTITIES TOOLKIT:
ENDNOTES


2 Figure contents quoted verbatim, with minor adaptations, from: "Utah Effective Teaching Standards and Indicators." Utah State Board of Education, 2013. pp. 1–3. https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/7313cfe5-5e68-41ef-9de4-03e5a9d395d8


7 Ibid.


APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN STUDENT NEEDS AND IDENTITIES TOOLKIT: ENDNOTES


10 Figure contents quoted verbatim, with minor adaptations, from: “Utah Effective Teaching Standards,” Op. cit., pp. 8–9.


14 Figure contents quoted verbatim, with minor adaptations, from: Zacarian, D., L. Alvarez-Ortiz, and J. Haynes. “Teaching to Strengths, Chapter 1. The Urgent Need for a Strengths-Based Approach.” Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, September 2017.
http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/117035/chapters/The_Urgent_Need_for_a_Strengths-Based-Approach.aspx


https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/assetbasedpedagogies.asp


http://www.teachdrivenchange.org/deficit-strength-difference


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51 “Universal Design in Education.” Center for the Advancement of Learning, Dartmouth College. https://dcal.dartmouth.edu/resources/teaching-learning-foundations/universal-design-education
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https://lnics.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2_TEAL_UDL.pdf


59 Figure contents quoted verbatim, with minor adaptations, from: “UDL and Differentiation and How They Are Connected.” New Zealand Ministry of Education. https://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/universal-design-for-learning/udl-and-differentiation-and-how-they-are-connected


APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN STUDENT NEEDS AND IDENTITIES TOOLKIT: ENDNOTES


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