



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

December 2021

---

# Universal Design for Learning

[Resources](#)[Paraprofessional](#)

---

[Teacher](#)

---

[Universal Design for Learning](#)

---

[SESA Library Materials](#)

---

## Letter from the Editor

Cama-i (hello in Central Yup'ik),

Winter greetings from SESA. We hope this newsletter finds you in good health as we approach the winter months here in Alaska.

When we hear the phrase “Universal Design for Learning” we may recognize the term, but not know exactly what it is or what it looks like in a learning environment. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework, based on educational research and scientific insights into how humans learn, “to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people”. The UDL Guidelines can be applied to any learning environment, with students at any ability level, in any content area. These principles include:

- Engagement- the **why** of learning
- Representation - the **what** of learning
- Action- the **how** of learning

You may not even realize that you are already applying some of the principles to your current practice. The hope is that the articles and resources provided can help guide self-reflection of your practice incorporating Universal Design Guidelines in the role of teacher, paraprofessional, family member, or another role.

Wishing you and your family a safe and happy holiday season.

Sincerely,  
**Amy Topmiller**  
Multiple Disabilities Specialist and Newsletter Editor

Resources: "About Universal Design for Learning." CAST, 20 Apr. 2021, <https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl>.

## Universal Design for Learning for Students with Visual Impairments

by Angel Black, M.S.Ed., TSVI, COMS  
Vision Specialist & Project Coordinator for the Alaska Deafblind Project

All students bring to the classroom different abilities, interests, and learning styles. This is also true for students with visual impairments. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) allows educators to modify their instructional practices to meet the needs of visually impaired/blind students regardless of how they learn. There are three basic principles of UDL. They Include:

1. Provide multiple means of representation.
2. Provide multiple means of action and expression.
3. Provide multiple means of engagement.

[Read More](#)



### Paraprofessional Spotlight

Meet Patricia! Also known as "Upup". She is such a fantastic paraprofessional because she...

- Goes above and beyond to make things accessible for the student
- Is learning Braille while teaching it to the student
- Always willing to try new things and expand her skill set with a smile
- Regularly communicates with specialist and asks clarifying questions
- Promotes student success in education and independence skills

Thank you, Upup, for all you do!

## UDL Through the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Lens: One Size Has Never and Will Never Fit All

Kelsey E Koenigs, EdM, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Specialist

Michael Allen Nesmith, a Deaf creative designer for Amazon, said it best during his TedXTalk, *Why We Need Universal Design*, and that is because "disability drives innovation." This is because it encourages out-of-the-box thinking but often the new solutions benefit the majority as a result. The same holds true when that line of thought is applied to the classroom. This is known as Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

In rural Alaska, school teams are familiar with the need to innovate, be it limited resources, staffing, or a global pandemic, they are often faced with getting creative to reach and meet their students' needs. Because hearing loss does not

interfere with cognitive ability but is an issue of access, this is often my initial concern when I arrive at site.

[Read More](#)

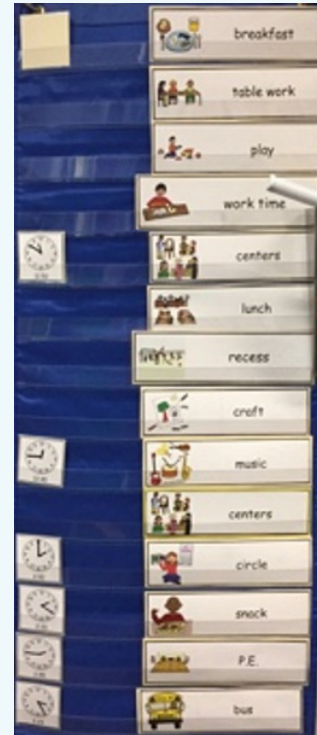
## UDL: Classroom Considerations

Brian Babcock, Education Specialist - Autism

The automatic door is an example of universal design that makes our built environment more accessible. Door knobs are problematic whether you are pushing a stroller, using a wheel chair or carrying a box. Eliminating door knobs is a solution from which we all benefit.

Similarly, Universal Design for Learning makes learning environments more accessible for all students. I was recently asked why a student needed his own schedule when there was one written on the board. Visual schedules ease transitions and support students when communication challenges persist. Including pictures on your daily schedule is a simple way to support a variety of students without requiring special accommodations. Take it a step further and identify a “calendar helper” to remove each word/icon when the corresponding activity is finished.

[Read More](#)



## Universal Designed Learning- Multiple and Complex Needs

Meriah Cory, Multiple Disabilities Specialist

UDL is a framework that guides the shift from designing learning environments and lessons with potential barriers to designing barrier-free, instructionally rich learning environments and lessons providing access to all students (Nelson, 2021). However, when working with students who have multiple and complex needs, it is often extremely challenging to make a standard environment completely barrier free. By creating flexible paths with multiple ways to show engagement, representation, action and expression, the learning environment allows for a student with complex needs to have personalized adaptations that naturally blend in within the context of the environment.

[Read More](#)

## Setting Up Learners for Success using the UDL Framework

Jessica Williams

Emotional Disabilities Specialist

Creating a learning environment that is inclusive for all learners is a critical component of ensuring each learner experiences academic success. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a scientific research-based framework which enables learners, including those with emotional disabilities, increased “access to participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities.” For students with emotional disabilities, traditional teaching strategies may not be successful and the primary focus of their educational program can quickly

[Join Us!](#)

**ALASKA  
STATEWIDE  
SPECIAL  
EDUCATION  
CONFERENCE 2022**  
FEBRUARY 5 – 9, 2022  
HILTON ANCHORAGE HOTEL



become behavior interventions and supports. The UDL framework utilizes three principles: engagement, representation, and action and expression. UDL creates opportunities for students with emotional disabilities to develop prosocial skills, generalize learning experiences, and practice metacognitive strategies.

Registration is now **OPEN!**

The Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC) is committed to providing high quality professional development relevant to the cultural, rural, and remote characteristics of our great state. ASSEC has provided ongoing professional development to Alaskan special educators, administrators, paraprofessionals, and families for more than 20 years. By inviting nationally recognized speakers, as well as knowledgeable local experts in the areas of disabilities and education, ASSEC has become a highly anticipated event within the field of special education in Alaska. By supporting Alaskan special education professionals and paraprofessionals, ASSEC also provides an indirect but great benefit to Alaskan students with special needs and their families.

[Read More](#)



Special Education Service Agency | 3501 Denali Street, Suite 101, Anchorage, AK 99503

[Unsubscribe tech@sesa.org](mailto:tech@sesa.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [About Constant Contact](#)

Sent by [sesa@sesa.org](mailto:sesa@sesa.org) in collaboration with



Try email marketing for free today!