

UDL Implementation Fidelity – Seeking Wisdom from the Crowd

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Abstract

Although educators overwhelmingly embrace the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the field continues to lack a shared understanding of what UDL looks like in everyday instruction in K-12 classrooms and what it means to implement UDL with fidelity. This interactive session seeks wisdom from UDL researchers, professional development providers, and implementers (educators) on the topics of UDL implementation fidelity and measurement, and explores a tool designed to measure UDL implementation fidelity in the context of everyday instruction in K-12 inclusive classrooms.

Keywords

Implementation Fidelity; K-12 Instruction, Inclusive Learning Environments

INTRODUCTION

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 mandated that schools use principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to increase students' access to rigorous learning experiences. This sparked school initiatives to help teachers move away from the traditional "teach to the middle" model of instruction and toward innovative, individualized/personalized models of instruction. Although teachers embrace the concept of UDL, the field lacks a shared understanding of what UDL looks like in everyday instruction in K-12 classrooms and what it means to implement UDL with fidelity. Without a tool for measuring UDL implementation fidelity, we cannot connect student outcomes to UDL with confidence. Thus, a tool was developed to measure UDL implementation fidelity in K-12 everyday instruction. The research study discussed in this session was designed to examine the content validity of this tool.

SEEKING WISDOM FROM THE CROWD

Because UDL is complex and the principles of UDL are used in many different ways, it is imperative that we, "#UDLrockstars", share our ideas and experiences with each other (Johnson 2017) in order to reach agreement or at least similar understanding of UDL implementation fidelity in some discrete areas (e.g., everyday instruction in K-12 classrooms, online learning environments, or state assessments).

UDL Implementation Fidelity in K-12 Classrooms

This session seeks the wisdom of the crowd as it explores UDL implementation fidelity in the specific environment of K-12 inclusive classrooms. Some questions we need to wrestle with include:

- What does UDL look like in the context of everyday instruction in K-12 classrooms?
- Do some instructional design elements align with the spirit of UDL while other do not?
- Do some instructional techniques and activities represent UDL while others do not?
- Is there a certain *degree* or *level* of UDL that means UDL is being implemented with fidelity?
- How can we measure student outcomes related to UDL if we do not have a tool that measures whether UDL is happening?

A UDL Measurement Tool

Wisdom from the crowd is needed as we consider the question of *what do we want to see in a tool that measures UDL implementation fidelity?* UDL experts (Basham & Gardner, 2010; Edyburn, 2010; Ok, Rao, Bryant, & McDougall, 2016) have indicated that the following attributes are needed in a tool to measure UDL:

- The use of UDL-specific tools such as CAST's UDL guidelines and checkpoints.
- The use of technology as a means to make materials accessible, flexible, and customizable for individual learners.
- Proactive planning for accessibility, flexibility, and customizability based in the needs of individual learners.

We need more #UDLrockstars to contribute to this discussion in order to move toward a shared understanding of UDL implementation fidelity.

The UDL-IFT

The Universal Design for Learning-Implementation Fidelity Tool (UDL-IFT) is intended to identify comprehensive UDL implementation in everyday instruction in K-12 inclusive classrooms. The tool is based on the three principles and nine guidelines identified by CAST. Each guideline is broken down into a list of possible indicators (instructional design elements, instructional techniques/strategies). Comprehensive, or *robust*, UDL implementation is determined based on the indicators that are present during a lesson.

How Does It Work?

Teachers complete the UDL-IFT immediately following the completion of a lesson (a lesson might span several

days) by checking the indicators that were present during the lesson.

How Is It Scored?

The UDL-IFT has an accompanying scoring tool that provides explicit directions for scoring each guideline according to the indicators that are marked. For each guideline, a *zero* is scored if the indicators marked suggest a lack of options, flexibility, adjustability, and customizability; a *one* is scored if indicators marked demonstrate movement toward UDL (i.e., some options and flexibility, but no individualization/personalization), and a *two* is scored if indicators marked reveal intentional options for learning that are individually flexible, adjustable, and customizable.

Who Will Use It?

Anyone who wants to measure UDL implementation fidelity in an inclusive K-12 learning environment can use this tool. Teachers can use this tool to guide development of UDL lessons, to evaluate their own UDL implementation fidelity, and to improve their UDL practice. Peer coaches or school administrators can use the tool to evaluate UDL implementation fidelity. Researchers can use the tool to see if UDL is happening in a classroom in order to be able to attribute student outcomes to UDL implementation.

THE UDL-IFT CONTENT VALIDITY STUDY

A survey was developed and sent to UDL researchers, professional development providers, and implementers

(educators who use UDL) asking them to examine the UDL-IFT and answer questions related to individual guidelines and the tool as a whole. Participants at this session will also be invited to complete the survey.

Analyses will be conducted to determine components of the tool that were acceptable and not acceptable, and to determine which groups of participants found the tool to be useful.

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