

Flying High on UDL: What One State Discovered

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Abstract

Throughout the UDL Universe, networking meetings are taking place. But just how productive are they? Do these meetings really have an impact? During this interactive session, participants will take away strategies that could lead to more productive meetings. As a state-wide organization, we have discovered tools and activities you can add to your tool belt to enhance the impact of your collaborative meetings. Discover how white paper lunches, UDL-laced share-outs, and tools from implementation science can add to the productivity of your meetings. Bring your best ideas to share at our session.

Keywords

Ohio State Support Teams, OCALI, Universal Design for Learning, Implementation Science, Terms of Reference, Practice Profile, Glossary of Terms, Building Capacity.

INTRODUCTION

Ohio's UDL Collaborative has evolved over the last three years from a semi-annual gathering of professionals who discussed ideas, to a robust group of dedicated and passionate professionals working to build UDL capacity among educators statewide. By focusing on best practice and keeping current with the latest evidence-based research, the collaborative members are deepening their understanding of UDL practices through the use of: Implementation Science, with a focus on leadership, networking, developing resources, as well as training and providing supports for educators in the field. The Ohio UDL Collaborative is using the resources from Dr. Michelle Duda, a professor at the University of North Carolina, to obtain a clear yet flexible approach to UDL implementation statewide. The literature clearly shows how educational initiatives and change can start strong and then falter during implementation, leaving everyone waiting for the next big initiative. This group has found a way to learn from each other while collaboratively driving implementation, whether face to face or virtually, using a system of support throughout Ohio.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The precepts of implementation science to build a sustainable UDL network statewide, are an integral part of meetings. As the team works through the agenda, the goals

and mission statement serve as the focal point of all activities. An opening icebreaker is delivered by one of the members followed by reflections and feedback about the activity. Edmodo, a common learning management system, is utilized to house meeting information, making it easily accessible to use and share across the state. A working lunch serves as a way to break into groups to discuss choice of UDL topics as they relate to leadership, technology, co-teaching and curriculum, as well as any other related topic based on individual choice or need. The meeting ends with a review of UDL white papers and the creation of next steps written for the upcoming monthly meeting. Collectively, there is a passion for learning and sharing knowledge around UDL with educators, across all levels of support throughout the state of Ohio.

BUILDING CAPACITY

In an effort to actively engage stakeholders statewide and provide relevant and intentional learning, Ohio's UDL Collaborative team implemented "UDL-laced share-outs" and "White Paper Lunches". The purpose behind these activities are to collectively build and deepen an overall understanding of UDL, to generate ideas that work for UDL implementation through collaboration and sharing, and to develop and share regional resources across the state. Using the UDL guidelines as the framework structure for monthly meetings, members volunteer to lead and facilitate icebreaker activities to begin the meeting. Members participate in the activities and provide mastery-oriented feedback to the facilitator of the activity. As a result, the team is able to practice using the UDL guidelines, discuss various ways to implement the activity, and identify variations of the activity that can be implemented in regional trainings. Examples of activities include: marshmallow DNA activity, swan folding, and family engagement sticky notes.

Another practice that is part of the UDL Collaborative meetings are the White Paper Lunches. Various white papers are shared with the group during the lunch hour. Adhering to the UDL Guidelines, team members are given a choice of articles. Approximately 4-5 articles are provided. Depending on the article chosen, team members meet with their group, read the article and engage in professional dialogue. During the small group breakout, members are engaged with the

content by making connections, asking reflective questions, and developing ideas to incorporate in future trainings and discussions.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Science

Educational programs and practices are being created daily to improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps across our nation. These initiatives usually start with an idea, some limited data, and an action plan. A variety of factors, including people, policies and resources, can influence the success or failure of a given practice. Implementation Science strives to understand the critical factors and conditions that ensure effective practices are successfully carried out and sustained. The state of Ohio has partnered with Implementation Scientist, LLC to provide coaching to solve implementation challenges faced by our education system. The focus is to help school teams build on current system strengths while closing the gap between science and service. The overall goal is to help teams achieve and sustain positive outcomes using highly practical and research-based approaches. The UDL Collaborative has utilized the following tools to fully and effectively sustain system-wide implementation of UDL.

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Terms of Reference or ToR, is a written document used in the process to create alignment, structure, and transparency in implementation work. Utilizing and understanding the ToR has helped to create a transparent process supporting both form and function to guide the UDL Collaborative. Also, the UDL Collaborative not only wrote the ToR as a living document, but also reviewed it, and made revisions which guided discussions and kept the group focused on mission and goals pertaining to UDL implementation.

The ToR helped clarify the purpose, objectives and functions of the UDL Collaborative team. It is helpful to think of the ToR as an internal memorandum of understanding among the members of the team. The ToR helped the team to establish a common ground and group expectations. It is a tool that proactively ensures there is agreement on important dimensions of the project or work of the team and helps to clarify the role of the team members. As a result, all voices were able to be heard, honoring diversity of opinions and

ideas utilizing a decision-making process to obtain consensus.

Practice Profile

Ohio's Collaborative worked throughout the year to complete a UDL practice profile. This tool assisted the team in clearly defining the practices necessary to implement UDL while establishing a common language and understanding through organized discussions. Five critical UDL components (or non-negotiables) were defined and described with the key actions associated with each core component. The practice profile enables the UDL framework to be teachable, learnable, and doable across the state of Ohio.

Glossary of Terms

Educational language and the use of acronyms can sometimes interfere with comprehension and clarity during implementation of evidence-based practice. The Glossary of Terms can be used to identify and define vocabulary in advance, removing possible language barriers. Our collaborative generated a glossary of UDL terms and discussed definitions as we began our UDL journey together. This glossary continues to grow as we revisit this tool throughout our meetings.

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APPENDICES

Please go the link below for additional resources.

<http://bit.ly/OhioUDLToR>