

What is meant by the term curriculum? - Purpose of UDL Curriculum

The purpose of UDL curricula is not simply to help students master a specific body of knowledge or a specific set of skills, but to help them master learning itself—in short, to become expert learners. Expert learners have developed three broad characteristics. They are: a) strategic, skilful and goal directed; b) knowledgeable, and c) purposeful and motivated to learn more. Designing curricula using UDL allows teachers to remove potential barriers that could prevent learners from meeting this important goal.

Components of UDL Curriculum

Four highly interrelated components comprise a UDL curriculum: goals, methods, materials, and assessments. Here we explain differences between traditional and UDL definitions of each component.

Goals are often described as learning expectations. They represent the knowledge, concepts, and skills all students should master, and are generally aligned to standards. Within the UDL framework, goals themselves are articulated in a way that acknowledges learner variability and differentiates goals from means. These qualities enable teachers of UDL curricula to offer more options and alternatives—varied pathways, tools, strategies, and scaffolds for reaching mastery. Whereas traditional curricula focus on content or performance goals, a UDL curriculum focuses on developing “expert learners.” This sets higher expectations, reachable by every learner.

Methods are generally defined as the instructional decisions, approaches, procedures, or routines that expert teachers use to accelerate or enhance learning. Expert teachers apply evidence-based methods and differentiate those methods according to the goal of instruction. UDL curricula facilitate further differentiation of methods, based on learner variability in the context of the task, learner’s social/emotional resources, and the classroom climate. Flexible and varied, UDL methods are adjusted based on continual monitoring of learner progress.

Materials are usually seen as the media used to present learning content and what the learner uses to demonstrate knowledge. Within the UDL framework, the hallmark of materials is their variability and flexibility. For conveying conceptual knowledge, UDL materials offer multiple media and embedded, just-in-time supports such as hyperlinked glossaries, background information, and on-screen coaching. For strategic learning and expression of knowledge, UDL materials offer tools and supports needed to access, analyze, organize, synthesize, and demonstrate understanding in varied ways. For engaging with learning, UDL materials offer alternative pathways to success including choice of content where appropriate, varied levels of support and challenge, and options for recruiting and sustaining interest and motivation.

Assessment is described as the process of gathering information about a learner's performance using a variety of methods and materials in order to determine learners' knowledge, skills, and motivation for the purpose of making informed educational decisions. Within the UDL framework, the goal is to improve the accuracy and timeliness of assessments, and to ensure that they are comprehensive and articulate enough to guide instruction – for all learners. This is achieved in part by keen focus on the goal, as distinct from the means, enabling the provision of supports and scaffolds for construct irrelevant items. By broadening means to accommodate learner variability, UDL assessments reduce or remove barriers to accurate measurement of learner knowledge, skills, and engagement.

Adapted from: <http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlcurriculum>

