

Universal Design for Learning: Reaching All Learners in the Digital Age

Participant Workbook (2016)

By

Matt Bergman, M.Ed.

Willing To Be Disturbed

As we work together to restore hope to the future, we need to include a new and strange ally—our willingness to be disturbed. We need to develop a willingness to have our beliefs and ideas challenged by what others think. No one person or perspective can give us the answers we need to the problems of today. Paradoxically, we can only find those answers by admitting we don't know. We have to be willing to let go of our certainty and expect ourselves to be confused for a time.

We weren't trained to admit we don't know. Most of us were taught to sound certain and confident, to state our opinion as if it were true. We haven't been rewarded for being confused. Or for asking more questions rather than giving quick answers, we've also spent many years listening to others mainly to determine whether we agree with them or not. We don't have time or interest to sit and listen to those who think differently than we do.



But the world now is quite perplexing. We no longer live in those sweet, slow days when life felt predictable, when we actually knew what to do next. We live in a complex world, we often don't know what's going on, and we won't be able to understand its complexity unless we spend more time in not knowing.

It is very difficult to give up our certainties—our positions, our beliefs, our explanations. These help define us; they lie at the heart of our personal identity. Yet I believe we will succeed in changing this world only if we can think and work together in new ways. Curiosity is what we need. We don't have to let go of what we believe, but we do need to be curious about what someone else believes. We do need to acknowledge that their way of interpreting the world might be essential to our survival.

We live in a dense and tangled global system. Because we live in different parts of this complexity, and because no two people are physically identical, we each experience life differently. It's impossible for any two people to ever see things exactly the same. You can test this out for yourself. Take any event that you've shared with others (a speech, a movie, a current event, a major problem) and ask your colleagues and friends to describe their interpretation of that event. I think you'll be amazed at how many different explanations you'll hear. Once you get a sense of the diversity, try asking even more colleagues. You'll end up with a rich tapestry of interpretations that are much more interesting than any single one.

To be curious about how someone else interprets things, we have to be willing to admit that we're not capable of figuring things out alone. If our solutions don't work as well as we want them to, if our explanations of why something happened don't feel sufficient, it's time to begin asking others about what they see and think. When so many interpretations are available, I can't understand why we would be satisfied with superficial conversations where we pretend to agree with one another.

There are many ways to sit and listen for the differences. Lately, I've been listening for what surprises me. What did I just hear that startled me? This isn't easy—I'm accustomed to sitting

there nodding my head to those saying things I agree with. But when I notice what surprises me, I'm able to see my own views more clearly, including my beliefs and assumptions.

Noticing what surprises and disturbs me has been a very useful way to see invisible beliefs. If what you say surprises me, I must have been assuming something else was true. If what you say disturbs me, I must believe something contrary to you. My shock at your position exposes my own position. When I hear myself saying, "How could anyone believe something like that?" a light comes on for me to see my own beliefs. These moments are great gifts. If I can see my beliefs and assumptions, I can decide whether I still value them.

I hope you'll begin a conversation, listening for what's new. Listen as best you can for what's different, for what surprises you. See if this practice helps you learn something new. Notice whether you develop a better relationship with the person you're talking with. If you try this with several people, you might find yourself laughing in delight as you realize how many unique ways there are to be human.

We have the opportunity many times a day, everyday, to be the one who listens to others, curious rather than certain, but the greatest benefit of all is that listening moves us closer. When we listen with less judgment, we always develop better relationships with each other. It's not differences that divide us. It's our judgments about each other that do. Curiosity and good listening bring us back together.

Sometimes we hesitate to listen for differences because we don't want to change. We're comfortable with our lives, and if we listened to anyone who raised questions, we'd have to get engaged in changing things. If we don't listen, things can stay as they are and we won't have to expend any energy. But most of us do see things in our life or in the world that we would like to be different. If that's true, we have to listen more, not less. And we have to be willing to move into the very uncomfortable place of uncertainty.

We can't be creative if we refuse to be confused. Change always starts with confusion; cherished interpretations must dissolve to make way for the new. Of course it's scary to give up what we know, but the abyss is where newness lives. Great ideas and inventions miraculously appear in the space of not knowing. If we can move through the fear and enter the abyss, we are rewarded greatly. We rediscover we're creative.

As the world grows more strange and puzzling and difficult, I don't believe most of us want to keep struggling through it alone. I can't know what to do from my own narrow perspective. I know I need a better understanding of what's going on. I want to sit down with you and talk about all the frightening and hopeful things I observe, and listen to what frightens you and gives you hope. I need new ideas and solutions for the problems I care about. I know I need to talk to you to discover those. I need to learn to value your perspective, and I want you to value mine. I expect to be disturbed by what I hear from you. I know we don't have to agree with each other in order to think well together. There is no need for us to be joined at the head. We are joined by our human hearts.

Tea Party Template

	Page and Paragraph	Quotation	My reflections
My Sentence			
My Phrase			
My Word			

4 A's Protocol Template

	Page and Paragraph	Quotation	My reflections
Assumptions (What assumptions does the author of the text hold?)			
Agree (What do you agree with in the text?)			
Argue (What do you want to argue with in the text?)			
Aspire (What parts of the text do you want to aspire to?)			

Universal Design for Learning Teaching Checklist

Do you create a learning environment in which ...?

1. Students can access content in different ways?

- You offer students **digital materials that can be easily customized** to their needs (*i.e. size of font, size of pictures, color coding, volume adjustment, etc.*)
- You offer students **alternatives for auditory information** (*i.e. closed captioning, speech to text, visual diagrams, etc.*)
- You offer students **alternatives for visual information** (*i.e. text or braille descriptions of graphics, tactile graphics, manipulatives, etc.*)
- You **clarify syntax, pre-teach vocabulary and decode symbols** in ways that promote connection to the learners' prior experiences and knowledge
- You help students **make connections across languages** (*i.e. noting similar words and definitions across languages, use of translation tools, etc.*)
- You **present information in multiple formats** (*i.e. lecture, text, graphics, audio, video, hands-on exercises, etc.*)
- You help students **activate prior knowledge** (*i.e. models, simulations, KWL charts, etc.*)
- You often **highlight patterns, make connections** to previous lessons, big ideas, and relationships
- Student **materials contain step-by-step sequential information with scaffolds and supports** for students to get more information, tutorials, etc.
- You post **electronic equivalents of paper handouts and reading assignments** in alternative formats, such as audio and video.
- You provide students with **checklists, organizers, and goal setting materials** to complete assignments

2. Students can demonstrate their understanding in different ways?

- You provide **alternative ways for students to respond and interact** with materials (*i.e. electronic assessment, manipulatives, speech to text, etc.*)
- You encourage students to use **keyboard commands in the place of a mouse** (*i.e. Ctrl + S to Save, Command + P to print, etc.*)
- You encourage students to **demonstrate knowledge and skills** in ways other than traditional tests and examinations (*e.g., written essays, projects, portfolios, journals*).
- You encourage the use of **multiple tools to construct meaning and complete assignments** (*i.e. base-ten blocks, calculators, spelling and grammar checking tools, etc.*)
- You help students **build fluency with graduated levels of support** and scaffolds (*i.e. differentiated models with same outcome, digital reading and writing software*)

that can be gradually released upon independence, etc.)

- You **model and help students develop their own learning goals** on a daily basis
- You intentionally **build opportunities into instruction where students are encouraged to “stop and think”** and develop strategies to solve problems
- You intentionally **help students to manage information and build resources** (*i.e. graphic organizers, bookmarking resources, checklists, etc.*)
- You **provide students with self-reflection and self-monitoring tools** after completing assignments, projects, goals, etc.

3. Students have opportunities to engage with content differently?

- You provide students with opportunities to have **autonomy and individual choice** when learning (*i.e. helping design classroom activities and tasks, goal setting, etc.*)
- You **vary student activities to provide personalized, culturally relevant, and authentic learning** opportunities
- You create an environment where students have opportunities to **explore and experiment without a fear of failure**
- Your classroom contains **daily routines, calendar of events/assignments**, etc.
- Daily classroom **goals are displayed in multiple ways and formats**
- You use **differentiation techniques** to vary the degree of difficulty that core tasks can be completed
- You create an **environment that promotes collaboration and communication** (*i.e. each student in working groups has a task, create prompts on how to ask teacher and other students for help, etc.*)
- You provide students with **prompt and mastery-oriented feedback** (*i.e. feedback that is substantive and informative rather than competitive or comparative, etc.*)
- Your classroom **contains prompts, rubrics, reminders, and guides on increasing self-regulation, focusing on tasks, self-reflection**, etc.
- Your classroom **contains models, techniques, and designated areas** where students can manage frustrations, develop internal controls, coping skills, etc.
- Your classroom contains **rubrics, checklists, and tools to encourage self-reflection**

If you answered YES to most or all of these questions, congratulations! You are reaching more students through the principles of **Universal Design for Learning**.

“TECH-SAVVY TEACHER” BINGO

Directions:

1. Find a partner who identifies with one of the characteristics on the board. Record their name in the correct box. You may only use 2 boxes per person.
2. The first person to completely fill their card is the winner!

B	I	N	G	O
Has students blog for assignments	Has participated in a Twitter Chat	Downloads music from the Internet	Has <u>NEVER</u> used Facebook	Has participated in a “Mystery Skype”
Has students use cell-phones for assignments	Uses Pintrest	Uses Skype or Google Hangouts in the classroom	Uses Social Bookmarking (Diigo, Delicious, etc.)	Uses Google Apps for Education (GAPE)
Prefers using an electronic calendar	Google Classroom User	FREE	Has students use social media for assignments	Uses technology for students to collaborate
Uses a Smart Board for more than just projecting	Has students create or listen to Podcasts	Uses Chromebooks in the classroom	Uses iPad Apps in the classroom	Creates screencasts or videos to “flip” their classroom
Has created a website	Has students use QR Codes	Teaches in a 1:1 learning environment	Teaches in a BYOD learning environment	Uses video clips to enhance a lesson or discussion

FIND SOMEONE WHO LEARNS ACTIVITY

Directions: For each question, find the name of one of your classmates who identifies with one of the statements below. Record their name below. You cannot use the same person twice!

Learning Quality	Name of Classmate
1. Finds it best to remember something by picturing it in their head	
2. Follows oral directions better than written ones.	
3. Would rather listen to a lecture than read the material in a textbook	
4. Constantly fidgeting (e.g. tapping pen, playing with keys in my pocket)	
5. Requires explanations of diagrams, graphs, or maps	
6. Follows written instructions better than oral ones	
7. Frequently sings, hums or whistles to self	
8. Excels at athletics	
9. Take notes during verbal discussions/lectures to review later	
10. Enjoys participating in discussions or classroom debates	
11. Needs to watch a speaker's facial expressions and body language to fully understand what they mean	
12. Needs to actively participate in an activity to learn how to do it	
13. Often talks to self when alone	
14. Frequently touches others as a show of friendship and camaraderie (e.g. hugging)	
15. Learns best when the speaker jokes, tells stories and make verbal analogies to demonstrate a point	

Frayer Model of Universal Design for Learning

Directions: You may use a paper copy of this template, the Microsoft Word template version, PowerPoint, or any one of the presentation tools we have discussed to answer the following questions about UDL. When you are finished, submit your project to your instructor.

What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?	What does UDL look like?
<i>In your own words</i>	<i>Provide a picture</i>
What are the 3 principles of UDL?	How is UDL implemented in the classroom?
<i>Name and define 3 principles of UDL</i>	<i>Provide at least 1 example for each of the 3 principles of UDL</i>

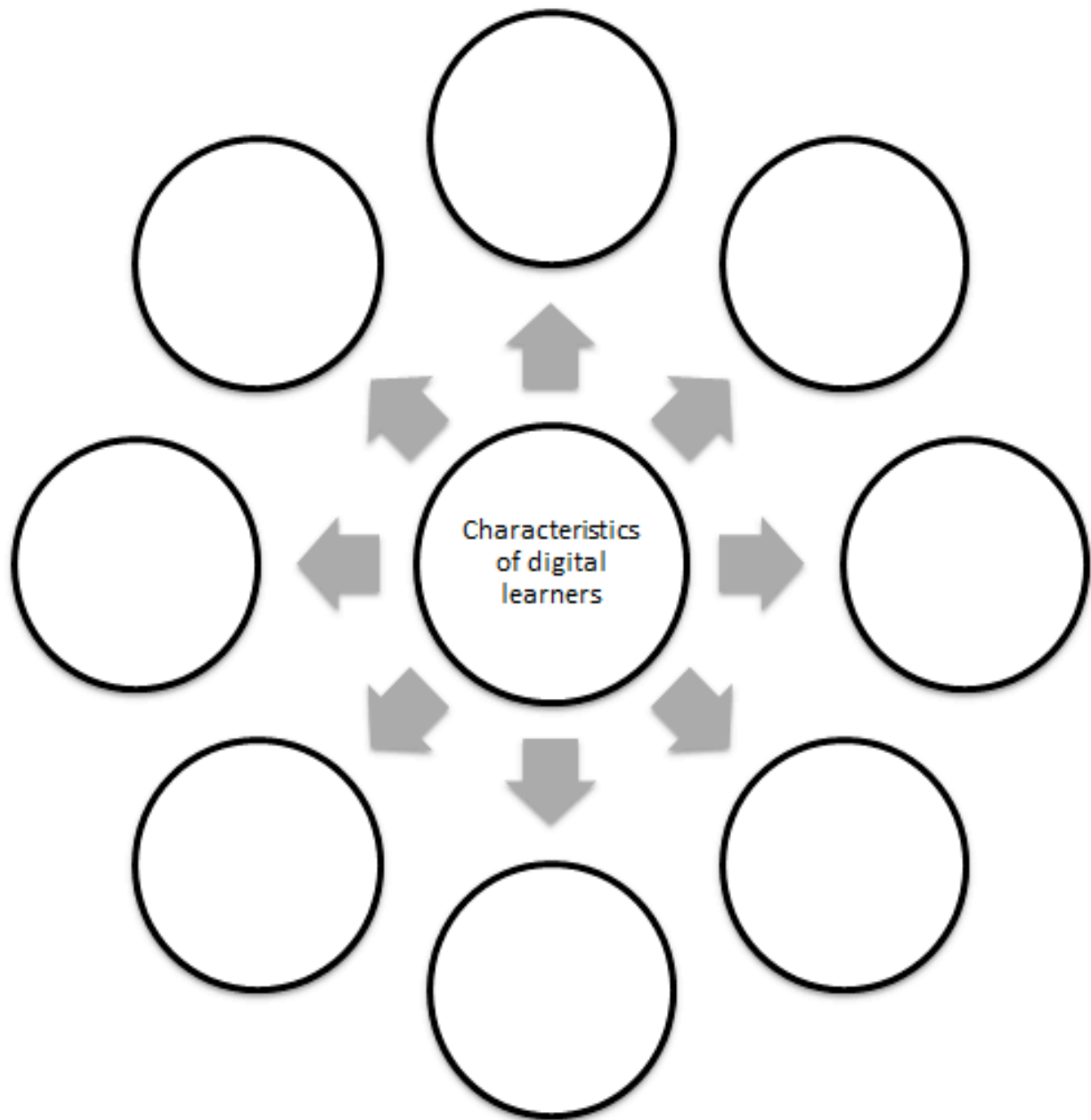
UDL BINGO

B	I	N	G	O
Uses visual diagrams in class	Has students develop websites	Uses video clips to help illustrate concepts	Students can access class materials online	Provides students with choices when completing assignments
Color codes materials or directions	Uses speech-to-text software	Uses screencasts to teach students concepts	Has students create video clips to demonstrate learning	Provides students with sentence starters
Has students use manipulatives	Provides students with resources to answer FAQ's	FREE SPACE	Provides students with checklists for completing assignments	Has students physically act out concepts
Uses Quizlet to help students see, hear, and interact with new vocab	Has students set goals	Differentiates the degree of task difficulty	Uses visual dictionaries	Has students draw or map out concepts
Has students create podcasts to demonstrate learning	Provides students with multiple ways to read an assignment	Has students complete simulations to learn concepts	Uses a behavior management system like Class Dojo	Gives students time to reflect through blogging

CIRCLES OF DIGITAL LEARNING

Directions:

1. Take a few moments to brainstorm 3 – 4 characteristics of a “digital learner” in the circles below. Leave the remaining circles blank.
2. Find a partner whose circle is different than yours. Record their name and answer in one of your blank circles. You may only use 1 answer per person.
3. Sit down when all circles are filled.



UDL Paragraph Organizer

Step 1: Provide basic information below.

My Topic:	
My Title:	
My Name:	

STEP 2: Begin writing below.

Introduction:

Details:

Conclusion:

Venn Diagram

