

# The Benefits of Universal Design for Learning

## What is UDL?

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for every learner by setting clear, **rigorous goals; anticipating barriers;** and **proactively designing** to minimize those barriers. Ultimately, the goal of UDL is to develop **learner agency** that is purposeful and reflective, resourceful and authentic, strategic and action-oriented. UDL can be applied across all ages and learning environments including: workforce, post secondary, k-12, and early childhood.

## What are the UDL Guidelines?

The UDL Guidelines are a tool to support educators, curriculum developers, researchers, parents, and more to **apply the UDL framework to practice**. The guidelines offer a **set of concrete suggestions** that can be applied to any discipline or domain to **ensure that every learner can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities**.

## What are the benefits of UDL?

A growing body of research reveals that **UDL benefits learners of all ages and across learning contexts**. Here are some specific ways that UDL positively influences teaching and learning, with examples of supporting research.



UDL is researched and implemented across the world, and the **evidence base continues to grow** ([bit.ly/UDLEvidence](https://bit.ly/UDLEvidence)). If you have additional examples of supporting research, please share your ideas. **Email us at [udlguidelines@cast.org](mailto:udlguidelines@cast.org)**.

## UDL increases students' academic achievement

- **UDL improves students' literacy outcomes**

(Browder, et al., 2008; Coyne, et al., 2017; Coyne, et al., 2012; Dalton, et al., 2011; Hall, et al., 2015; Marino, 2009; Proctor, et al., 2007; Proctor, et al., 2011)

- **UDL improves students' science content learning**

(King-Sears et al., 2015; King-Sears & Johnson, 2020; Rappolt-Schlichtmann, et al., 2013; Rencüzoğulları & Saka, 2024; Yu, et al., 2021)

- **UDL supports students' learning across various k-12 content areas**

(AlRawi & AlKahtani, 2022; Basham, et al., 2008; CAST, 2024; Craig, et al., 2024; Gravel, 2018; Hitchcock, et al., 2016; Jaciw, et al., 2018; Kennedy, et al., 2014; King-Sears, et al., 2023; Twyman & Tindal, 2006; Van Horn, et al., 2023)

- **UDL improves students' learning in higher education**

(Bracken & Novak, 2019; East Carolina University, 2017; Fovet, 2021; Izzo & Bauer, 2013; Kumar, et al., 2014; Laist, et al., 2022; Street, et al., 2012)

## UDL increases learner engagement

- **UDL increases learner engagement in k-12 settings**

(Abell, et al., 2011; Dymond, et al., 2006; Hall, et al., 2015; Katz, 2013; Kortering, et al., 2008; Marino, et al., 2014; O'Brien & Reale, 2021; Rappolt-Schlichtmann & Daley, 2013; Yu, et al., 2021)

- **UDL improves students with disabilities' experiences and uses of services in transition to postsecondary education and/or career**

(Beck, et al., 2014; Scott, et al., 2022)

- **UDL increases learner engagement in higher education settings**

(Korabik & Palmer, 2004; Nance, 2022; Schreffler, et al., 2019)

- **UDL increases motivation and readiness to pursue STEM career pathways**

(Emerick & Marshall, 2017; Hall & Johnston, 2020; Johnston & Castine, 2019)

## UDL improves educator learning & development

- **UDL improves k-12 educators' capacity to design instruction to meet students' needs**

(Courey, et al., 2013; Dymond, et al., 2006; Lowrey, et al., 2017; Mackey, et al., 2023; Morningstar, et al., 2015; Scott, et al., 2022; Unluol Unal, et al., 2022)

- **UDL improves post-secondary educators' capacity to design instruction to meet students' needs**

(Beck, et al., 2014; Black, et al., 2014; Davies, et al., 2013; Fornauf, et al., 2021; Fornauf, et al., 2023; Izzo, et al., 2008; Schreffler, et al., 2018; Smith, 2011)

- **UDL supports instruction and learning in online environments**

(Evmenova, 2018; Rao & Tanners, 2011)

- **Professional learning in UDL supports implementation**

(Craig, et al., 2024; Rusconi & Squillaci, 2023)



The articles cited here are examples of the **growing number of studies** ([bit.ly/UDLEvidence](https://bit.ly/UDLEvidence)) from around the world that reveal the benefits of UDL. We want your ideas for additional articles to explore. Email us at [udlguidelines@cast.org](mailto:udlguidelines@cast.org).