

Executive Summary

Exploring the Intersections of UDL & Support for Multilingual Learners

Introduction

This project explores how [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) and the [Sobrato Early Academic Language \(SEAL\)](#) approach can be used in complementary ways to support multilingual learners to thrive. During the 2023-24 school year, researchers from CAST and 6 SEAL-trained educators collaborated to examine the connections between [CAST's UDL Guidelines](#) and the SEAL approach and how both approaches might inform and more fully develop one another.



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Methods

Participants included 6 SEAL-trained elementary educators, 12 students from the educators' classes who identified as multilingual learners, and 3 parents. By engaging in iterative design cycles and focus groups with the SEAL educators as well as focus groups with students and parents, the team explored 1) the ways in which **SEAL's approach supports and centralizes multilingual learners**, 2) how the SEAL approach could **inform the update of CAST's UDL Guidelines**, 3) how applying UDL might **reduce barriers and increase access to SEAL strategies**, and 4) how the SEAL approach and UDL could be used in **complementary ways** to design more equitable learning environments for multilingual learners.

Findings

- The SEAL approach offered generative ideas for more fully developing the UDL Guidelines to strengthen the focus on equity and ensuring multilingual learners' assets and needs are centered and led to [several expansions in the updated version](#).
- UDL offered a framework for reducing barriers and increasing access to learning goals. Applying UDL supported SEAL educators to 1) find barriers in the design of the learning environment and 2) break apart and examine learning goals to address potential barriers.
- Bringing a UDL lens to the SEAL approach reinforced and strengthened teachers' understanding of approaches such as 1) the importance of releasing learning over to students and 2) the need to offer choice and to ensure learners are challenged.

Recommendations

- **Recommendations for Practice** include creating an array of professional learning opportunities that explore the intersection of UDL and SEAL and continuing to draw from the SEAL approach when developing future iterations of the UDL Guidelines.
- **Recommendations for CA State Policy** include leveraging school/district systems to ensure the Statewide Systems of Support (SSoS) Initiatives can be maximized through integrating a focus on multilingual learner best practices and UDL and establishing partnerships with local organizations to support multilingual learners and their families.
- **Recommendations for Federal Policy** include expanding appropriations and authorizing legislation to include critical funding and policy initiatives designed to increase and strengthen the education and employment opportunities for multilingual learners through the use of UDL in concert with MLL best practices.