Universal Design

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Introductions and Overview

• Introduction to Wendy and working with interpreters

• Overview of the presentation
  ▫ Presentation about universal design (UD)
    • Foundations of UD
    • What it is
    • Applications to courses
    • Beyond UD...
  ▫ Additional resources
Foundations of UD: Disability Theory

Traditional Medicalized Views of Disability

- The problem is the person with a disability
- Disabilities need to be fixed
- Professionals are the best hope for a cure or reducing barriers
- “Over-coming” and normality are goals
Foundations of UD: Disability Theory

Socio-Political Views of Disability

• Disability is neutral or positive
• Barriers are “socially constructed” and primarily exist in the environment
• Disability is part of the human experience
• Anyone can create change
• Goal is to change environment to reduce barriers
Foundations of UD: Eliminating Ableism

“Ableism is...the devaluation of disability result[ing] in societal attitudes that uncritically assert that it is better . . . . to walk than roll, speak than sign, read print than read Braille, spell independently than use a spell-check, and hang out with [the] nondisabled...

In short, in the eyes of many educators and society, it is preferable for disabled students to do things in the same manner as [the] nondisabled...”

–Hehir (2002)
Foundations of UD: Architecture

Designing from the beginning for the maximum diversity of users
Universal Design in Education

Designing curricula from the beginning for the maximum diversity of learners, including students with disabilities
UD addresses individual learning & experiences

Example:
What do you see on the next slide?
UD: Information can be represented in multiple ways

From Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age
UDL Principle 1: Multiple, flexible representation of information

- Multiple examples, including graphics or engaging stories
- Accessible information for people with disabilities (e.g., large print, interpreters)
- Highlight critical information or features
- Multiple formats: computers or software, graphic organizers, manipulatives, PowerPoints, speaking, etc.
- Teach students to “re-interpret” and make sense of information for themselves
UD: Individuals access information differently
UDL Principle 2: Multiple, flexible ways to learn and demonstrate learning

- *Provide different ways to demonstrate learning*
- *Explicit strategies for using or understanding information*
- *Modeling, time to practice with supports, and/or scaffolding of learning*
- *Ongoing, relevant feedback*
- *Context or background information*
- *Share rubrics for grading*
Responding Emotionally...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihjZ90-5TJU
UDL Principle 3: Multiple, flexible ways to be motivated and engaged

- Give students choices or options
- Respect their opinions
- Keep things challenging, but not too difficult (Zone of Proximal Development - Vygotsky)
- Rewards for doing well
- Time for reflection
- Ways to monitor their own work and progress
Related Research

Learning Theory
- Vygotsky
- Bloom’s taxonomy
- Studies of “the best” college professors (e.g., Bain)
- Adult learning theory
- Differentiation
- Multicultural education
- Backward design

Neuropsychology
- Multiple intelligence theory
- Mind, brain and education project – Harvard University
- Learning disability studies (e.g., Shaywitz)
- PET Scans of learners

Developmental Studies
- Adult development (e.g., Kegan)
- Chickering (technology and inclusive undergraduate instruction)
- Rentention studies (e.g., Tinto)
Accommodations and Students with Disabilities

**Traditional method** for including students:
- Accommodations for students with disabilities (extra time, interpreters, notetakers)
- Tutoring or support for individual students

**Universal design method** for including students:
- Accommodations or supports for everyone when possible (e.g., notes)
- Design curriculum with flexibility and choices
- Utilize technology
- Know what is essential in your curriculum
- Individual disability accommodations may still be necessary
Example: What’s “Essential”? 

Question: Is it appropriate for a student with significant learning disabilities to give an oral report instead of writing a final paper for class?

**YES**

- Demonstrate knowledge of key themes in course
- Create an argument based on peer-reviewed articles
- Oral reports are fine for all students

**NO**

- Show writing skills and use of APA style
- Create a convincing written argument
- Papers can be written in teams of 2-3 AND/OR
- Students already had opportunities to orally demonstrate what they know
- With additional supports or feedback on draft, student would be fine
Steps in Using UD

1. **Reflect on what you’re already doing.**
   - Know the strengths and weaknesses of current activities, instructional methods, and materials (including readings)
   - Who would do well in the current course? Who would struggle?
   - Consider your own strengths and preferences for teaching
   - Think about the diversity of students in your classroom

2. **Consider ways to apply UD**
   - How can you offer more choices?
   - What is essential about an assignment, and what can be changed?
   - If a student would naturally do well, how can you utilize their strengths?
   - If a student is struggling, how can you support them or give them opportunities to learn and show what they know?

3. **Evaluate any changes**
   - How did it work for you?
   - How did students respond?
   - Did you still address essential aspects of the course?
Resources for Faculty

- Student Disability Services at Cornell  
sds.cornell.edu

- Taishoff Center at Syracuse University  
wharbour@syr.edu

- CAST, Inc.  
cast.org

- Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD)  
ahead.org
Moving beyond UD

- Consider ways to **infuse disability into the curriculum**

- Avoid disability as just “Disability Awareness Days” or disability accommodations issue; **disability becomes part of diversity**

- Examples:
  - “Right to Die” in philosophy class
  - Coding of “norms” in statistics
  - Disability and the Holocaust in history
  - Mapping epidemics or pandemics in math, science, geography, or public health courses
  - Inclusion of authors with disabilities in English/literature courses; finding disability subtext or including disability in discussions of “difference”

*For more ideas, see disability studies resources on handout*
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• The image of *The Unexpected Visitor* painting is from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ilya_Repin_Unexpected_visitors.jpg