

Early Learning Alliance Network

UDL SELF-DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PILOT



SUMMARY REPORT

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About the Early Learning Alliance Network

The Early Learning Alliance Network (ELAN) is a not for profit, 501C-3 organization focused on developing networks that can support children ages 0-8. ELAN envisions a community that is empowered with information and resources to engage in and support high quality early learning. This community will exist through transparency, networking, learning, and a commitment to all young children. As a result of our work, systems of learning connect to ensure that all families and children and educators have access to what they need to thrive. ELAN has three priority areas including transitions to K12 schools, data collection to help all stakeholders, and the empowerment of educators, families, and other stakeholders to better serve young children through their individual contributions. As an organization we are founded on the belief that there are resources in existence to support high quality learning for our children both in and out of formal learning communities; our job is to empower, engage, and ignite access to and understanding of those resources and supports so that all young children have countless opportunities to thrive.

ELAN Leadership

Dr. Jody Britten has been a classroom teacher, special educator, educational leader, professor, assessment coordinator, author, advocate, consultant, and researcher in education. Jody has been engaged with public and private schools around curriculum, creativity, learning environments, systemic change, student advocacy, and accessibility since a very young age. Jody's most recent work has positioned her as a thought leader in 21st Century skills, digital learning, and developing educational systems that impact student engagement. Jody co-authored several guiding documents on the implementation and assessment of critical non-academic skills throughout Canada and the United States. Having trained school leaders and teachers from preK-20 on six continents, Jody has made courageous contributions to education worldwide. Under the Obama administration she served as one of the chief architects to the Future Ready Schools framework and the Future Ready Schools assessment system that has impacted more than 20 million students and 2 million educators in the United States. She has co-authored the research foundations and classroom strategies for the International Society for Technology in Education 2017 learning standards for students used in over 27 countries. In addition, Jody has supported the Center for Applied Special Technologies and the Universal Design Implementation and

Research Network whenever possible. Jody was an original author on initial teacher-professional development around Universal Design in education. With a rich history in Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, Dr. Britten continuously seeks opportunities for all children to thrive. As a community advocate, Jody founded the Early Learning Alliance Network to support children, families, and educators using a framework for community empowerment. Her work in early childhood has supported more than 19,000 young children as she continues innovating to provide support and resources for young children and their families, educators, and caregivers. Jody's quiet and purposeful advocacy for children and education has enabled her to improve the knowledge and skill of teachers and educational leaders, the skills and awareness of parents, and the lives of children globally. Jody serves as the CEO for ELAN.

ELAN Early Intervention Team

The Early Learning Alliance Network has a dynamic team of professionals. The following provides an overview of the expertise we hold on our team.

Peg Rideout has been a special educator with a focus on early childhood for her entire career. As a professional serving families throughout Hamilton County for over thirty years, Peg has joined the ELAN team to continue her advocacy as our early intervention advisor. Peg is a certified IN*SOURCE parent support advocate and works directly with our preschools to support families living through the early intervention process.

Angela Loser has been a teacher, teacher leader, and administrator focused on developing PBIS, ELL, and RTI systems to support all children. Angela works continually to support families with a direct advocacy role for children and families impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorder. Angela serves as our disabilities advocate.

ELAN Impact Team

Dr. Susan Drumm has served in many capacities in K12 education and holds a doctorate in instructional systems technology. Susan has spent the last few years working at the district level to support systemic demonstration of progress. Susan leads ELAN efforts in demonstrating impact and is lead on evaluation of programs and services.

What is Universally Designed Learning?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, that guides the development of flexible learning environments and learning spaces that can accommodate individual learning differences.

What is Learning Designed?

Learning Designed provides personalized experiences for educators within a robust community of support. Learning Designed teaches about but also demonstrates Universal Design for Learning's evidence-based best practices. Learning Designed empowers educators and teams to do what's right for learners — at scale.

What is UDL Associate Credential Level One?

People who earn the Learning Designed UDL Associate Credential - Level One have demonstrated an understanding of why UDL is essential in today's learning environments and can explain the importance of proactively designing for learner variability so ALL learners have the opportunity to succeed. This entry level credential is considered a starting point for demonstrating understanding of UDL.

About this Report

The purpose of this report is two fold. One to provide ELAN and the UDL-IRN with feedback on the experience of teachers in accessing Level One UDL Credentials via self-directed professional learning and demonstration of understanding. This report's second purpose is to provide an overview of findings and suggestions around leveraging independent teacher learning to support long-term, sustainable change in education.

Survey Questions

The following are the survey items that were asked of those teacher participants accessing Learning Designed and the Level One UDL Credential.

1. Were you a part of the UDL professional learning cohort at [name of district]?
2. Prior to this last year, what was your knowledge level of UDL?
3. Did you have access to the UDL Associate Credential for Level One?
4. Did you start but not complete the UDL Associate Credential for Level One.

5. Did you complete the UDL Level One Associate Credential?
6. Did you share what you learned from Learning Designed and the UDL Level One Associate Credential with peers in your building?
7. Did you add your completed Associate Credential to your resume?
8. Does your building level administrator know about your work in UDL?
9. Do you have additional needs in understanding and implementing UDL?
10. Overall, what was the value add of the credential experience to your work?
11. What are your continued needs in integrating UDL as a design philosophy into K12 education?

Opportunity

A local school district had a cohort of teachers interested in deeply investigating Universal Designed Learning. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an approach focused on designing learning experiences and instructional choices that help give all students an equal opportunity to succeed. This approach offers flexibility in access, engagement, and demonstration of learning.

Process

The Early Learning Alliance Network worked with local teacher leaders to identify a cohort of eleven educators that would have access to the Learning Designed Portal and Level One UDL Credential. Coupon codes were provided to interested educators. Overall, five of the eleven coupon codes were used.

“UDL has taught me that it is the environment, not the student that needs to change.” – Loui Lord Nelson

Intention

The Early Learning Alliance Network is focused on quality learning experiences. UDL as a model has demonstrated over three decades to have a positive impact on the success of all students (when implemented effectively). Additionally, the design process associated with UDL provides a rich opportunity to address best practice, science backed practices that afford students rich opportunities that lead to deep learning. The intention of offering this opportunity to these eleven educators was to empower them

with the best in class information around UDL and in turn create a small cadre of leaders who could serve as peer coaches to others (including preschools that are faced with meeting the needs of all learners).

Participation

The following provides an overview of findings from the survey that was sent to the eleven members of the initial teacher cohort. Overall, six of those teachers responded and five completed the UDL Level 1 credential. All six survey participants noted that they were an active part of the UDL professional learning cohort at the participating local school district. 100% of participants reported having access to Learning Designed through the Center of Applied Special Technologies (CAST) and the Universal Design for Learning Implementation and Research Network (UDL-IRN). One hundred percent of participants reported having access to the UDL Level One Credential. Eighty-three percent reported completing the UDL Level One Credential.

Prior Knowledge

When asked about their prior knowledge and/or integration of Universal Design for Learning, survey participants responded as follows::

- 33% Intrigued by UDL
- 83% Interested in UDL and completed some initial study
- 67% Beginning practice integration of UDL
- 0% Intermediate practice integration of UDL
- 0% Highly invested in UDL
- 0% Had no idea what UDL was prior to participation.

Knowledge Sharing

When educators participate in cohort or individual professional learning opportunities there is a critical need for a feedback loop where knowledge sharing occurs within organizations. Knowledge sharing is a key component of organizational growth and is malleable in form based on local culture of sharing and collaboration. While the “*how*” of knowledge sharing can be customized, the need for knowledge sharing to be an expectation for change in practice and leveraging of opportunity/expertise is critical. Overall 67% of participants reported having shared what they learned from the Learning Designed platform and UDL Level One Credential with their building level administration. In the future it will be important for the Early Learning

Alliance Network to (in some way) facilitate those conversations and engage in more active, intentional knowledge sharing.

Next Steps may include:

- Teacher support in facilitating conversations before, during, and after implementation
 - It is important for human capacity building, as evidenced by teacher feedback in the additional needs section below, that teachers be supported in facilitating conversations with both colleagues and administration.
 - Using Instructional Rounding structure
 - Synchronous Conversations using PD or PLC time, or video conferencing such as Zoom
 - Asynchronous Conversations using a digital tools such as Google Docs or Flipgrid

“Knowledge sharing is a process through which explicit or tacit knowledge is communicated to other individuals within organizations with common goals.” - Sirje Virkus

Human Capacity Building

In education human capacity speaks to the action of purposefully developing educators and other stakeholders with skills, abilities, and experiences that intentionally advance the learning organization. Educators are able to develop their capacity individually and collectively, however the field of education still struggles with understanding how credentials, micro-credentials, or badges can add value to professional portfolios. Thirty-three percent of participants who earned their UDL Level One Credential reported having added their credential to their professional resume or portfolio. When teachers have growth opportunities like that afforded to them by Learning Designed and UDL Credentialing, it is imperative that they are coached in the practice of showcasing those achievements.

Next Steps may include:

- Providing more self-directed structural support for teachers to showcase their achievements for colleagues and administration. This could include:
 - Designing reflective tools before, during, and after implementation to drive conversations
 - The use of a UDL implementations gauge (either organization or teacher created)
 - Strategic targeting of and capturing of student work that shows growth evidence and correlating it/ showing causation to instructional design/ practice(s). This evidence/ data could target, be disaggregated, and/ or be analyzed for special populations of students.
 - Teacher support in data collection, analysis, and graphical representation
 - Teacher support with aligning teacher UDL learning growth and outcomes to their evaluation tool/ metrics.

“Human capacity building is the process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in the fast-changing world.” – Ann Philbin

UDL as a Theme through Individual Work

While there was no direct sharing of teacher experiences with UDL Credentialing and/or Learning Designed, 67% of participants reported that their building level administrators were aware of their overall work in UDL.

“If you are doing something great for kids, we need to get better at shouting those stories from the rooftops.” – Jody Britten

Early Learning Alliance Network needs to advance the question of how educator learning opportunities can be showcased to leadership so that there is continuity and understanding of how teachers are advancing their

own work and thinking. The Early Learning Alliance Network will need to identify strategies that are effective in helping teachers to share their stories of learning.

*“Teachers using UDL offer their students what architects bestow on buildings: coherence, utility, and access for all” –
David Rose*

Value Add of Experience

Participants shared that Learning Designed and the UDL Level One Credential experience added valued to their work. The following are select quotes from participants.

“I believe the learning credential and the access to resources helped me to set a learning goal and to use the information provided to improve my classroom instruction.”

“It helped me to better understand UDL and how to integrate it into my classroom.”

“Resources to better understand UDL”

“It was helpful - just wish we would have had a chance to finish the school year and implement things more! My hope is that teachers are able to integrate much of the UDL strategies into virtual learning too!”

“It allowed me to feel confident and continue studying other resources on the Learning Designed site post certification. I have also read several books.”

Developing teachers and leaders with tools, ideas, and effective strategies like UDL will always serve our students. Collaboration is key to make these experiences robust and purposeful not only for the teachers as individuals but for the systems of education that employ them.

Additional Needs

Sixty-seven percent of participants believe they have additional needs in understanding and implementing UDL. When asked about their individual continued needs in integrating UDL as a design philosophy into K12 education, participants shared the following.

“With a new virtual format for learning, I believe conversations around the use of UDL are needed for me to continue to enhance the instructional opportunities I provide for my students.”

“Continued support from administration, continued evidence of effectiveness.”

“Practice, feedback, and perhaps a group to continue brainstorming with! Especially if we're virtual!”

“I would like to see more teachers implement to remove barriers for learners. It is the best framework for developing expert learners and that is just what our kids need to be ready to embark on their life path.”

Conclusions and Next Steps

Overall the need for UDL to be an ongoing conversation, especially during times when virtual learning is the primary delivery source for students, was clear among more open-ended, informal teacher feedback. The promise of Universal Design for Learning to impact equity, inclusion, and access for all students is real. Participants who completed the Level One Credential were more interested in completing the Level Two certification than those that did not. In addition, those who completed the Level One Credential As the Early Learning Alliance Network continues its work with disabilities and educator empowerment it will be important to develop tools that help explain what UDL is to parents, families, and educators.