Universal Design for Learning

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Teaching students with different learning abilities has become a major problem faced by educators in classrooms today. Some students are visual learners, some are audio and others are hands on. How does a teacher reach each student? With the implementation of the new Universal Design for Learning guide, educators can effectively alter the style in which they teach so that they will be able to reach each learner.

The purpose of implementing UDL in classrooms is so educators can modify the curriculum already in place without having to completely replace it. "The universal design approach is to create products and/or environments that are designed, from the outset, to accommodate individuals with a wider range of abilities and disabilities that can be accommodated by traditional application" (Rose, Hasselbring, Stahl, & Zabala, 2005, p. 508). Not every student learns the same so in order to achieve our goal of having every student understand the material we must use different methods. Students in today's society are stimulated by technology from the time they wake up to the time they go to bed. "Technology has permeated all aspects of our economy and culture" (Rose, Hasselbring, Stahl, & Zabala, 2005). This is ruining traditional methods of educating with just a pen and paper.

Smart devices traditionally have been viewed as a distraction in the classroom. As the UDL continues to progress, educators are finding new ways to incorporate technology into a classroom to help struggling students. Apple has developed tools that can improve learning. Dictation is a tool that allows a student to write reports by speaking into the device's microphone. This is extremely effective for a student with a learning disability such as dyslexia that has a hard time organizing his thoughts. The "zoom" ability helps a student that has a vision problem. A student can follow along with the notes on their device and by just double tapping the screen the text can be enlarged by 200 percent. A student will no longer be singled out to sit

in the front row and they will never miss information. Finally the Guided Access tool is great for inclusive classrooms. For a child that has ADHD or Autism, Guided Access can be used to keep these students on topic. "A teacher or therapist can limit an iOS device to stay on one app by disabling the Home button, and even restrict touch input on certain areas of the screen" (Apple - Education - Special Education – iOS, 2015). This means that no matter what the student presses the project they are working on will stay on the screen. This is a way of following UDL to get a student of a different level to meet higher standards.

UDL is a positive movement. Every student is gifted in his or her own way and it is the educator's job to get the most out of his students. UDL changes the traditional approach to education and gives the educator the flexibility to alter the curriculum to meet the needs of each learner. As we progress in education, technology will continue to become an important aspect in the Univeral Design for Learning.

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