

### **Article Synopsis – Improved Lesson Planning with UDL**

Courey, S.J., Tappe, P., Siker, J., and LePage, P. (2013). Improved Lesson Planning With Universal Design for Learning (UDL). *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 36 (1), 7-27. DOI: 10.1177/0888406412446178.<http://tes.sagepub.com/content/36/1/7>

This research study looked at whether incorporating teaching on UDL in a special education teacher candidacy course caused the candidates to include UDL principles into their subsequent lesson planning. The researchers were interested in incorporating UDL into the teacher candidacy program as UDL is a strategy that serves to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners in the typical classroom.

For the procedure, the candidates were required to create a lesson plan at the start of the semester, before UDL training, right after training and then again at the end of the semester. The students were split into two groups. One group was given a three hour module on UDL. The lessons were marked for whether they included UDL principles in the lesson plans and also whether the components of representation, action and expression and engagement were included.

The results indicated that the specific training in UDL was effective at teaching teacher candidates about UDL and encouraging teachers to incorporate these principles in their lesson planning. An interesting outcome that was noticed by the researchers, however, was that even though teachers included many UDL appropriate materials in their lesson plans these materials were not necessarily utilized during the lesson. For example, during the action and expression portion of a lesson, a teacher included web-based games and manipulative materials but during the lesson itself the classroom students actually ended up solving paper and pencil worksheets. Teachers also overwhelmingly still used paper and pencil tests as assessments. Reasons for this were given as because textbooks still traditionally promote this type of learning and also because this is the type of assessment that the teachers themselves would be familiar with from their own schooling. The results indicated that while teacher candidates were able to include UDL principles in their lesson planning they were much less confident at actually implementing UDL in a real classroom. The researchers suggested that teacher candidates should have more supervised practical experiences with implementing UDL in the classroom.

I chose this particular article for this assignment as it looked at lesson planning while incorporating UDL principles. It also interested me as it looked at how to encourage teachers to incorporate UDL into lesson planning which is part of my role as a coach. The article emphasized the need to use UDL in order to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners in the classroom. The most interesting part of the article for me was the outcome that showed that although the teacher candidates were able to include UDL in their lessons they still struggled with actually incorporating these strategies in a real classroom.

The results of this research made me again wonder about the effectiveness of “sit and get” type learning as opposed to inquiry type learning from the Constructivist Theory of Learning. Obviously this type of learning did have some effect with the teacher candidates in this study as they were able to incorporate aspects of UDL into their lesson planning. During the UDL modules the teachers also used UDL strategies during the teaching so these modules would not have been entirely “sit and get”. I’m wondering if alternate teaching methods were used if the teachers would have been better able to use UDL principles in the actual classroom. This is where I see my job as a coach to involve teachers in a collaborative inquiry process within the classroom itself in order to assist teachers with the actual implementation of UDL.