

Synopsis of “Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning. Chapter 7 : Using UDL to Accurately Assess Student Progress.”

Chapter 7 in this book, written by the founders of the Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST), focuses on accurate assessment and evaluation of students in relation to Universal Design for Learning. It emphasized the idea that fairness does not equate to sameness in the classroom and how testing students in a standardized way does not create accurate results.

One example the chapter gives is a teacher wishing to determine the content knowledge of her students in her science class. To do this she provides students with a timed-test she got from the teachers handbook. The chapter explains that some students in the class have reading difficulties, others have test-anxiety, and one cannot hold a pencil. By standardizing her test for all students, the class does poorly on the test, in which she determines she much re-teach the information. However, this is not an accurate measurement of student knowledge! The students who have trouble reading may know a lot about the subject area but require text-to-speech technologies. The students with test-anxiety couldn't work under the pressure of the time limit, and the student how couldn't hold a pencil simply couldn't write the test!

Some teachers are concerned with students cheating, and by using assistive technologies on a summative assessments, it will not allow the students to show that they really know. Nonetheless, students should be tested in the same fashion in which they learned the information (including any regular supports), as the learning goal when the information was delivered should be the same as the learning/assessment goal when evaluating. The reading states that the type of knowledge being measured and the medium that is used to assess it should be planned simultaneously.

Furthermore, this reading explains the importance of integrating assessment into the curriculum. Teachers should be assessing student learning over time. For example, a doctor doesn't just prescribe a patient recovering from a disease a medication and call it quits. There are regular check-ups scheduled to determine if the treatment is working and if anything can be added or taken away over the life of the patient. In the same way, teachers must integrate student consultation into their daily schedules to determine what is and isn't working for the student, reflecting this in future lessons.

One of the greatest points of the essay was the “dynamic assessment”. It presents the same information to the students in different ways (concept maps, bullet points, text to speech, diagrams, timelines, etc.). It allows for scaffolding and further student success.

Lastly, the reading touched on accurate assessment based on student interests. For example: there is a group of 3 students- one loves music, one loves science, and one loves history, and they are being assessed on writing summaries – the reading given to them to summarize is on Mozart. The student with an interest in music will more likely excel at this task even though they may all have similar writing skills. With the presence of technology in the classroom it is far easier for teachers to allow for choice – Allow the music student to write about Mozart, the Science student to write about the solar system, and the history student to write about the discovery of Canada.

The chapter ended perfectly, “By distributing the intelligence between student and environment, the curriculum will be able to track student successes and weaknesses and monitor the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of its own methods. The result will be a curriculum that becomes *smarter*, not more outdated, over time.”

References:

David H. Rose & Anne Meyer (2002). Using UDL to Accurately Assess Student Progress. In *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning* (105-118). Ontario: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

<http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/ideas/tes/chapter7.cfm>