

*Universal Design for Learning: Technology and Pedagogy*

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The scholarly journal *Universal Design for Learning: Technology and Pedagogy* by Margaret King-Sears fits nicely into our specific inquiry focus, while also touching on how technology has been a big part of UDL. The article starts right off mentioning how "When Educators hear the term universal design for learning (UDL), most associate it with technology"(pg. 199)[i]. However, it is important to also remember UDL is also about instructional approaches used for the benefit of all students. It gives a brief history of how UDL started and its origins from universal design in architecture. Margaret King-Sears uses the seven guiding principles of universal design of products and environments to help explain how educators should employ UDL in the classroom. She shows how using UDL in the classroom will make accommodating students with IEP's more naturally occurring in a teachers lesson planning[ii]. By using these seven guiding principles King-Sears shows technology is an important tool of UDL but effective pedagogy is as important to implementing UDL in the classroom.

One notable description of a UDL approach to teaching is the guiding principle of *Equitable*. King-Sears explains how using a text book for instructional material can disadvantage students with a learning disability because "researchers who have analyzed textbooks found content difficult to comprehend"[iii]. She explains if a teacher takes a UDL approach to using a text book a teacher will redesign the features in the book for instruction that will benefit all students. The redesign of text book material will help "maximize the probability of learning when more cohesive instruction is designed and delivered"[iv]. When I think about how to implement *Equitable* instruction in my classroom, I would do my best to never assign text readings without giving more in-depth explanation of the information the students are reading. Blindly writing information from the text into a student's note book does not give meaning to this information. Students will not be able to target key facts and determine the relationships among these facts[v].

The UDL approach to teaching I could most relate to my teaching experience was the *size and space for approach and use*. Margaret King-Sears makes a great point about properly using technology in the classroom, such as PowerPoint slides and LCD projectors. These are all important to employing UDL in the classroom but "teachers need to ensure that the size of content is large enough for students seated in different areas of the room to see the content"[vi]. During my practicum placements at teachers college I continuously made the error of not thinking about if all students could see the information on the board. This mistake happened more than once because I was more concerned with keeping the lesson interesting for all students. However this cannot be accomplished unless all students are able to see the content or lesson on the board. A student who is unable to see the content on the board will be disengaged in the lesson no matter how interesting the lesson may be.

It was enlightening to see how UDL is much more than having assistive technology in the classroom. Instructional approaches to UDL go beyond technology and helping students with IEP's with this technology. A teacher who employs UDL in the classroom takes the time to design instructional approaches which enable students with a variety of different needs to succeed. This may include different types of technology but effective approaches to pedagogy need to be adapted to fit a complete UDL classroom. This could be as simple as giving a student a bookmark who regularly loses their place in a book.

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[i] Margaret King-Sears. *Universal Design for Learning: Technology and Pedagogy*. Learning Disability Quarterly, Vol. 32, No. 4. (Fall, 2009), pg. 199.

[ii] Margaret King-Sears. *Universal Design for Learning*. pg. 199.

[iii] Margaret King-Sears. *Universal Design for Learning*. pg. 200.

[iv] Margaret King-Sears. *Universal Design for Learning*. pg. 200.

[v] Margaret King-Sears. *Universal Design for Learning*. pg. 200.

[vi] Margaret King-Sears. *Universal Design for Learning*. pg. 200