

# Preface

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**S**ucceeding in the Inclusive Classroom: K–12 Lesson Plans Using Universal Design for Learning has been designed to help K–12 teachers think about ways to apply the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in planning. With the growing diversity of learners in 21st-century schools and legislative mandates for accountability and standards-based instruction for *all* students, it is critical that teachers plan for the wide range of learner needs up front to be as effective as possible.

Students come to school from many different cultural backgrounds. Some speak different languages while others simply struggle with basic communication skills. Some have sensory challenges, emotional disabilities, and other exceptional needs that require adaptations. Many are gifted and talented. More students today with exceptional needs are being served in general education classrooms across the country. In addition, students are more technologically savvy than ever before. Because we all learn in different ways, today's teacher must have a manageable way of adding flexibility to a lesson plan.

Most teachers, I believe, know what good teaching looks like and want the best for each learner in the classroom. Pre-service and in-service teachers are trained in traditional lesson planning formats based on sound research and development. We attend many classes or staff development activities to add to our knowledge about content area instruction, brain-based learning, co-teaching, English language learners, differentiated instruction, exceptional learners, learning styles, learning strategies, multiple intelligences, diversity, the latest in technology updates, and more. The task of lesson planning today can be overwhelming. It is a lot to process! UDL lesson planning just might be a solution.

## APPROACH

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The UDL lesson planning format presented here is offered as one possible way to add flexibility to a lesson plan. On the pages that follow, the tried and true elements of a traditional lesson plan format are presented with an additional layer of planning to match learner needs. It applies the three principles of UDL: multiple means of (1) representation, (2) expression, and (3) engagement. Are we presenting content in a variety of ways that match our learners' abilities to receive and perceive information? Are we thinking about incorporating a variety of strategies and products that will enable each student to show us what they know? Are we fully engaging our learners? The premise behind the application of these principles is that if we can identify the challenges

or barriers our students face, then we can brainstorm ideas that will help us make learning come alive for each one of them.

This lesson planning format also links goals, objectives, and assessment up front. This practice can help teachers stay on course. All expectations are clear from the start. In addition, strategic connections are made between discipline areas when possible to help the learner see patterns and make associations in their learning. Attention to this important practice will help students develop their own overall ability to plan, organize, and apply their thinking. You will also notice that social skills are often infused with academic skills in these lesson plans to help all learners develop or reinforce prosocial competencies.

Methods, materials, and tools are important elements to consider in UDL lesson planning. Research-based learning and organization strategies, behavior management techniques, and communication methods will all need to be considered. Choosing the right materials and tools also increases a lesson plan's flexibility. These materials and tools can be both high-tech and low-tech. Examples of high-tech tools may include computers, digitized video, text-to-speech software, electronic whiteboards, and iPods. Low-tech tools can be items such as highlighters, dry erase boards, response cards, posters, drawings, or pencil grips. Many of these tools are offered as examples in these sample lesson plans.

The last step in this lesson planning format is to consider pyramid planning. Pyramid planning is a visual organizing tool that helps teachers to further differentiate instruction for all students. It may consider both product and process—what students will do and how they will do it. At the base of the pyramid, teachers think about what the essential concepts in a lesson are that *all* students will be able to learn and express. In the middle section, teachers think about what *most* students will do. Learners might be asked to extend their thinking, find more information, or vary the process of their work. In the top section, teachers think about what *some* students will do. This might include applying even more complex thinking, incidental information/adaptations that relate to the major learning goals, or varying a process to an even greater degree (i.e., creating an Excel spreadsheet instead of making a paper/pencil graph to display data).

Collaboration should enhance all of these lesson plans and is another cornerstone of UDL. If you have the opportunity to co-teach or have other adults working in the classroom, the work can be easier if you can divide up the tasks during the planning stages. Be sure to find out who can assist you from the community with resources or by volunteering. Remember, too, that other students can be valuable human resources when trained to be peer tutors, mediators, or experts in other ways using their areas of strength.

## ORGANIZATION

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This text consists of lesson plans that correlate with the ten disability areas addressed in Part II of Richard Gargiulo's *Special Education in Contemporary Society*. One lesson at the elementary level and one lesson at the middle school/secondary level are presented for each area of special need. These lessons are only meant to be a starting point for general and special education teachers who have students with special needs in their classrooms and can be adapted for K–12 learners with a much wider range of challenges.

The learners whose special needs are addressed in this text are:

1. Individuals with intellectual disabilities
2. Individuals with learning disabilities
3. Individuals with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
4. Individuals with emotional or behavioral disorders
5. Individuals with autism spectrum disorders
6. Individuals with speech and language disorders
7. Individuals with hearing impairments
8. Individuals with visual impairments
9. Individuals with physical disabilities, health disabilities, and related low-incidence disabilities
10. Individuals who are gifted and talented

I chose the theme “The Olympics: Past, Present, and Future” to anchor these sample lesson plans for two reasons. First, the content is timely and relevant; these are events that students can likely relate to. Second, it is a “big idea” from an interdisciplinary area (social studies) that gives students the opportunity to explore the characteristics of people who set goals, solve problems, show determination, and persevere. Infusing learning with these core values and characteristics can be inspiring to all students and help them think about making better choices in their own lives.

State standards for North Carolina were used to guide these lesson plans but they can easily be adapted for other states. The plans are simply presented to be used as a springboard for developing your own UDL lessons. In practice, you will likely need to consider all learner barriers on one plan rather than just one disability area.

## MAKING THESE LESSON PLANS YOUR OWN

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In conclusion, as a teacher and teacher trainer, I have taught and observed many lessons about the Olympics and related topics. It is difficult to have an “original” lesson although we all have our own unique “stamp” on what we do. It is likely some of you have written or observed content that is similar to these sample plans. The focus of my work with them is on the UDL components rather than on the lesson components. In most cases, I have only sketched out the lesson elements in order to illustrate possible UDL applications. I encourage you to try the same technique to see how you can build upon your own lessons so that they can work more effectively for students with a variety of different learning needs. You will add your own unique detailing and personal “stamp.” It is my hope that the sample lesson plan format included in this text will provide you with another tool you can use to design effective learning for all students in your classroom.

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