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Changing Your Beliefs and
Your Classroom with UDL

Book Club Guide

ALLISON POSEY & DR. KATIE NOVAK

"If we want to learn how to teach all of our students today, we have to unlearn many of those teaching practices that are no longer effective.

Using this guide

As you facilitate your book club, remember to incorporate the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). For example, consider offering opportunities for synchronous or asynchronous sessions, in person and/or virtual sessions, and options for participants to respond to prompts using multiple means of action and expression. Consider setting up a free course in a platform like Moodle or Canvas so you can utilize discussion boards where participants can post reflections in written form, audio, and video. Alternatively, you can use social media platforms like Twitter to host a book club chat or create a Facebook group (don't forget to use the hashtag #UDLUnlearning for everyone to use and follow!). Although virtual is great for some and at this time necessary for most, you may also want to have the option for participants to meet in person in small groups if that is available to you (safely, socially distanced, and masked).

TIPS FOR FACILITATING A SUCCESSFUL BOOK CLUB

Have a designated point person for each book club option (i.e, the social media maven, the check-in person for in-person sessions, and the course manager if setting up a virtual course). This person can check in with the teams to monitor progress, provide feedback, and offer motivation to keep on reading!

Regardless of the pathways the participants select, consider offering synchronous Zoom sessions periodically where participants can share their thoughts, questions, and "aha!" moments as they read the book.

When participants are posting online, be sure to keep the conversation going - ask questions, share resources, make comments, and provide feedback.

Book Club Modules

This book club guide for *Unlearning* by Allison Posey and Katie Novak is broken into "modules" which correspond to each chapter in the book. You can determine the pace of getting through the modules based on the preferences of the group. In each module, participants read the associated chapter, consider the reflection questions at the end of the chapter, and/or choose one of the resources to further explore and put learning into practice.

OPTIONS FOR PARTICIPATING

Host an online book group on Canvas, Moodle, or other free tool.

Select 2-3 online tools or social media sites for people to respond to weekly prompts using a hashtag.

Offer opportunities for teams to meet in person and have discussions and then email notes.

As tempting as it may be, starting with application won't result in the outcomes you are hoping for.

We must first transform ourselves in order to transform our systems. We have to unravel old practices so we have the capacity to create more effective ones. The unlearning process is one of reflection, destruction, and change, but it is also one of learning and growth.

As you read this book, beyond your book club, consider pondering the questions provided for reflection by jotting down your thoughts, writing a blog, or sharing thoughts on social (#UDLUnlearning, #UDLChat). You can also ask your own questions about your teaching practices. Think of this book as your interactive guide to unlearning and to your UDL transformation.

Thank you for taking this journey with us. Our students are absolutely worth our efforts!

Before you dive into this book...

Think for a moment about a time when you experienced something in a new way. For example, consider the first time you used Lyft or Uber, tried Siri, or saw a Fitbit or Apple watch.

- What was your initial experience/impression of this new way of doing things?
- What were the trade-offs/benefits of that change?
- What parts of the old experience do you still want to hold onto?

Chapter 1

Apples and Buffets

"Variability" is the term used to describe how unique and varied our brains are. No two learners ever activate the same pathways in the brain. One student label (such as autism) will have a unique brain pattern and learning needs totally different from those of another student with the same label. While labels may be an important aspect of identity, people are so much more complex than labels that may define them. When we are focused only on labels, and not the whole person, we run the risk of having a fixed mindset or making false assumptions about our learners.
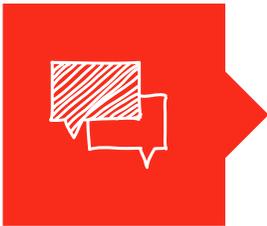
Discussion Questions

- How do you already provide options for students to engage with the learning experience, to build background, and to show what they know?
- How is thinking about students' variability and their jagged profiles of strengths and challenges in different classroom contexts different from labeling students or having lessons that must be completed in the same way and at the same time?
- How does the context, or the environment, contribute to the strengths and weaknesses of your students? Of you?
- How does the ice-cream story resonate with you? Have you had similar experiences that have caused an "aha!" or discrepant event that shifted your thinking?
- What resonates so far in your learning about UDL, variability, and context? What is a first step you can take?

Resources

- Download a copy of the UDL guidelines at **bit.ly/CAST-UDL-guidelines**
- Explore an excerpt from Mike Anderson on the power of choice for your students at **bit.ly/Mike-Anderson_Article**
- Explore this article from Katie Novak on asset-based vs. deficit-based mindsets at **www.novakeducation.com/student-variability/**
- Read this article "Beyond Average" from Harvard Ed. Magazine at **bit.ly/Beyond-Average**
- Watch this TEDx with Todd Rose at **bit.ly/Todd-Rose-TED**

Doodle Activity
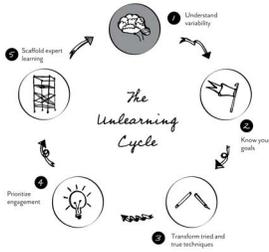
Draw out your classroom. Where is the current "buffet" of options for students?

Chapter 2

The UDL Road Trip

UDL offers a framework to reach and engage all students. In our classrooms it might feel satisfying to have every student working on the same math problem at the same time. It can feel empowering to deliver an engaging lecture to a group of students. But if these practices do not align with what we currently know about variability and learning, if they are not meeting the needs of all students, are they the best design? What would it mean to trade them for new ways of teaching? We are not saying that these practices have to go, but the design of the experience needs to be fundamentally shifted.

Discussion Questions

- How do you set and share goals with your students?
- Why should they care about those goals? How are they meaningful or relevant?
- What "buffet" of options will they have to help them progress toward those goals? Are there options for Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression?
- How will students know if they have reached the goals or how to monitor their own progress along the way?
- What resonates so far with UDL? What questions do you still have?
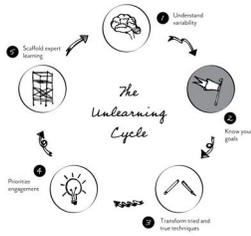
Resources

- Check out this article from Katie Novak which features a super helpful UDL Flowchart to leverage **bit.ly/UDL-Flowchart**
- Watch this TEDx talk from Alan Norman which features a great example of the benefit of empowering learners through goal setting **bit.ly/Alan-Norma-TEDx**

Doodle Activity

The Unlearning Cycle

1. Understand variability
2. Know your goals.
3. Transform tried and true techniques
4. Prioritize engagement
5. Scaffold expert learning

Think for a moment about a student who has transformed you. Remember their name. What was amazing about that student and how did they change you? How does this student fit in with the variability of learning? Jot down some notes, draw a picture or just write their name below. Take them on this journey with you.

Chapter 3

Transform Your Tried-and-True Techniques

Break Those Habits. UDL requires that we set rigorous goals and provide flexible options for all learners to achieve the goals. It is through access to flexible means that students have the opportunity to try something new, to break from their ineffective habits, or to take charge of their own learning pathway. Sometimes a small change can have a profound impact on learning and engagement. We can make our learning environments places where all students are able to learn flexibly and participate. But how can we change some of our habits that may get in the way?

Discussion Questions

- What professional practices, habits, or ways of thinking have not quite resonated for you in your teaching or learning?
- How does the Unlearning Cycle up to this point (understanding variability, knowing your goals, and transforming your tried-and-true techniques) support you in being intentional about the goal-driven learning buffet that is available in your classroom?
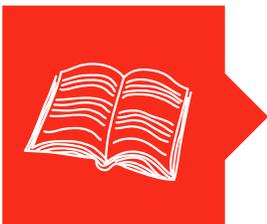
Resources

- Listen to this podcast featured on Fresh Air on "Habits: How They Form And How To Break Them" with Charles Duhigg - with **bit.ly/Habits-Article**
- Check out *Visible Learning A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement* by John Hattie. Download the free pdf version of the book - **bit.ly/Visible-Learning-Hattie**
- Explore unlearning thinking models **www.shift.to/essentials-guidebook/unlearning**

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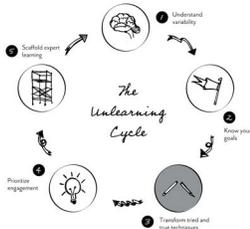
Reflect and discuss. If you're new(er) to UDL, start by describing what you use in your current pre-UDL teaching and lesson planning model. Identify some of the habits and routines you use. Use our stories, anecdotes, or Table 3.2 (pg. 52) to reflect on your teaching techniques.

Chapter 4

Prioritize Engagement

Unlearning means taking a risk and trying something new. It means having an "aha!" moment of some kind wherein you experience discomfort and embrace it. It's the tipping point of conceptual change. Every educator will need to go through the Unlearning Cycle at his or her own pace, and the most effective way to fully embrace UDL is to experience it in your own context. To have the cognitive energy to change our tried-and-true techniques we need to use the Unlearning Cycle to support teachers—and your engagement is critical.

Discussion Questions

- What strategies do you use to relieve your own cognitive load in some situations (at home or at school)?
- How is engagement already being addressed in your lesson design? How do the UDL Engagement guidelines resonate with your approach?
- What first, small steps might you take?
- What barriers do you face to engaging in UDL implementation?
- What is critical to motivating you to take first, small steps in your UDL implementation?
- What kind of discrepant event or "moment of wonder" can you share about your classroom that was a result of UDL implementation?
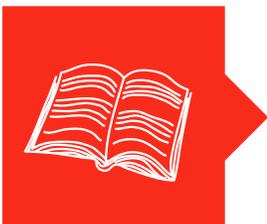
Resources

- Tips and tricks for building UDL in your classroom from EdSurge - **bit.ly/EdSurge-UDL-Tips**
- If you haven't already, read *The Tipping Point* or check out this oldie but a goodie interview with author Malcolm Gladwell at **bit.ly/Gladwell-Interview**
- Read about "Discrepant Teaching Events: Using an Inquiry Stance to Address Students' Misconceptions" from the International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 2009, Volume 21, Number 2, 266-271 at **bit.ly/Discrepant-Teaching-Events**

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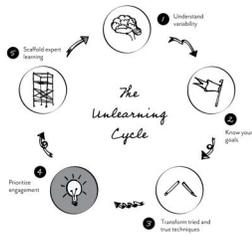
Doodle your thoughts about engagement.

Chapter 5

Relight the Pilot Light to Unleash Expert Learners

As educators, we are challenged to teach and model for our students how to become experts at doing what they need to achieve their best learning: be self-directed, motivated, and goal-driven in their learning. Some days, this can feel incredibly challenging; but just like the heater, we can't allow our students to quit and we can't quit. We have to keep high expectations for all learners because our belief matters. We understand that our students face very real barriers that may prevent them from learning, but we are the ones who set the goals and expectations for learning in our classrooms.

Discussion Questions

- What are your expectations for each one of your learners?
- How do you think the UDL shift to firm goals and flexible means can reduce some of the expectancy effects that groupings and labels may imply?
- What helps you hold high expectations for all students?
- How can you use the Unlearning Cycle to design for students to become more autonomous in their learning?

Resources

- Check out this blog from Katie Novak on the Growth Mindset and Teaching students to be expert learners **bit.ly/GM-Novak**
- Explore this article from Education Leadership on "The Power of Collective Efficacy" at **bit.ly/Collective-Efficacy**
- This TEDx from Jon Stolk breaks down Creating Autonomy through Supportive Learning Environments - **bit.ly/Supportive-Learning-Environment**
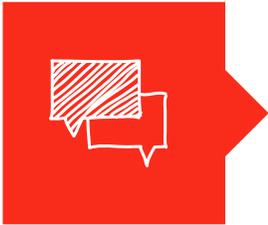
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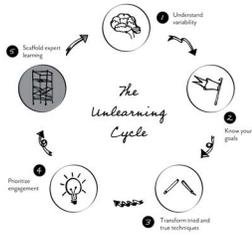
Doodle your thoughts about expert learning.

Chapter 6

Take Action

As educators, we are challenged to teach and model for our students how to become experts at doing what they need to achieve their best learning: be self-directed, motivated, and goal-driven in their learning. Some days, this can feel incredibly challenging; but just like the heater, we can't allow our students to quit and we can't quit. We have to keep high expectations for all learners because our belief matters. We understand that our students face very real barriers that may prevent them from learning, but we are the ones who set the goals and expectations for learning in our classrooms.

Discussion Questions

- Who has been your salesperson, maven, or connector? Which will you strive to be as you share your UDL journey with others?
- Share at least two actions you will take as a result of this book.

Doodle Activity

Design a plan for yourself: what you will do, whom you will work with, and what you will see as change. Diagram it, add images to it, come up with a mascot or theme song that will encourage you to go onward!

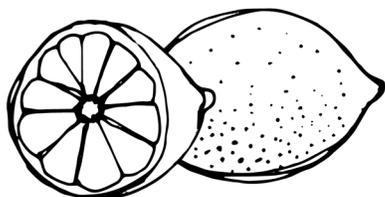# Whether you are in-person or apart - toast to your UDL Journey.

UDL Lemon Herb Cocktail

in honor of Captain James Lancaster

The Herb

Muddle 4 large basil leaves in the bottom of your glass.
Don't like basil? Try mint, cilantro, or a sprig of rosemary.
Leaving out the herb is also ok!

The Fruit

Add 2 tsp. fresh-squeezed lemon juice into the glass.
Lemons make you pucker? Try 1/4 cup freshly squeezed
watermelon juice, or 1/4 cup cucumber juice.

The Base

Pour 1 cup of plain seltzer in your glass with ice.
Want to kick it up a notch? Mix 6 oz. seltzer with 2 oz. vodka or
gin. Can't do bubbles? Still water works too!

The Sweetener

Mix in 1/4 tsp. rose water and 2 Tbsp. simple syrup.
Rose water taste like soap to you? Leave it out or substitute a
dash of your favorite bitters. If using vodka or gin in your base,
try using 1 oz. Elderflower Liqueur instead of simple syrup.

We'd love to hear from you!

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🐦 **#UDLUnlearning**

Dive deeper! Explore our self-paced course Learning and the Brain with Allison Posey at **www.novakeducation.com**.

If interested in speaking opportunities, contact us at **education@novakeducation.com**.