

# The Role of a RESC in UDL Implementation

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## Abstract

*In this presentation, we will describe the role of a regional education service center in assisting member school districts to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL). We will present the continuum of services available and the impact of those services on UDL implementation. This continuum meets the unique needs of each district, assists them at their current level of implementation, and also strives to move them to advanced levels of UDL implementation.*

## Keywords

UDL, Implementation, data teams, technical assistance, professional development, functional and alternating curriculum, Common Core Essential Elements (CCEE), Dynamic Learning Maps, Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System.

## INTRODUCTION

The Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) is a regional education service center that serves 35 member districts in the Hartford region of Connecticut. In addition, CREC provides training and technical assistance to 45 districts outside the CREC region in Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts. The Technical Assistance and Brokering Division (TABS) of CREC supports districts in UDL implementation through professional development, district consortiums, job embedded technical assistance and individual educational evaluations.

CREC became involved in promoting UDL implementation when the state of Connecticut adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 with plans for full implementation of the standards in 2014. At that time, TABS education specialists began the process of determining how to assist districts with the implementation of the standards. While all districts worked to create and align curriculum with the CCSS, few were prepared to consider the implications of learner variability for these more rigorous standards. TABS has put a variety of services and supports in place to assist with district exploration, preparation and integration of Universal Design for Learning. Three of these services and supports included developing a set of blueprint modules, job-embedded training and technical assistance, and also the creation of an assistive technology consortium. There are also plans for future initiatives that will address scale and optimizing practices in our districts.

## Blueprint Modules

The Blueprint Modules are a training series that CREC TABS created to assist special education staff to create

Individual Education Plans (IEP) that are reasonably calculated to result in educational benefits. Many districts in the CREC had concerns about the quality of educational programs and services for students with disabilities. The CREC TABS designed these modules in response to those concerns in preparation for the adoption of the CCSS. The first module addresses development of the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAPF) that are required in IEPs. The second module trains teachers to write measurable goals and objectives that are aligned with curriculum standards. The third module outlines the instructional shifts in the CCSS and their implications for special education. The final module tackles data collection and progress monitoring of the IEP.

The design of the four basic Blueprint modules was to address recommendations of the CCSS that students with disabilities have standards based IEP's, supports and services that meet their unique needs and teachers that can provide "high quality, evidence-based, individualized instruction and support services". In addition, these modules provide districts the opportunity to explore UDL, instructional accommodations and assistive technology.

Training for these modules has been provided to over 30 districts in the state of Connecticut. School districts that take part in these training modules generally commit to multiple years of support that begin with educational benefit of the IEP and move toward preparing the district to address barriers in the curriculum and classroom instruction. Workbooks for the BluePrint Modules can be ordered from the CREC or purchased at Amazon.

This presentation will share components of these modules and survey results from 10 districts involved in this training over the last two school years.

## Job Embedded Training and Technical Assistance

TABS has many unique opportunities to work on site with districts to provide training and technical assistance to teachers and other district personnel. This service has been used by TABS to assist districts with the implementation of UDL. For example, education specialists can take part in the instructional data team process (e.g., working with a group of teachers who assess and analyze student performance data for the purpose of identifying and recommending instructional strategies to classroom teachers), provide instructional coaching, and meet with curriculum specialists to audit CCSS units in language arts and math.

The instructional data team process has been a very effective means for aiding districts with the implementation of

UDL. Our presentation will share the data team process, sample lesson plans, and comparative data on student mastery of CCSS unit goals from the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school year at the middle school level. Hopefully, this year's successes will lead to the use of the data teams to further scale and optimize UDL in this district.

Providing districts with support in bridging the content from the CCSS to the academic expectations of students with significant learning disabilities has been an area of growing need in the CREC districts. Education specialists utilize a Common Core Essential Elements (CCEE) to guide CREC districts in generating a curriculum which demonstrates a reduction in unintentional barriers. The alternating curriculum provides standards based skills that encourage students to approach the grade level standards. A curriculum crosswalk, unwrapped standards, and sample lessons with embedded principles of UDL and CCEE standards will be shared.

### **Assistive Technology Consortium**

CREC TABS offers its member districts and any district throughout the state, the opportunity to take part in an AT consortium that offers a variety of services. This consortium is not just about assistive technology. Member districts take part in regular meetings on a variety of topics and can purchase packages of on-site technical assistance and evaluation. Eighteen districts belong to the assistive technology consortium for the school year of 2013 - 2014. Consortium meetings cover a variety of topics that assist districts with implementation, scale and optimization of UDL, despite the overarching label of assistive technology. Workshop topics are also based on district needs and feedback. Since its inception, the AT consortium has had over 300 attendees at various workshops.

This presentation will share information regarding the organization and scope of the consortium functions as another effective resource of the RESC in aiding districts to implement UDL.

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