

Learning Barriers and Tool Selection: UDL-PLC Series

LEARN

Using technology in the classroom is not the end goal. Like all other educational strategies and tools, the most important thing is to use them how and when they are needed to enhance learning. It is tempting to think of technology accommodations as items that fit certain student labels. For example, you may have had a parent ask for a student to be given a calculator because he or she is behind in math. But a calculator will not be useful for students unless they can understand the math concepts. A calculator is beneficial if the student is having difficulty with the rote memory required to calculate with fluency.

When thinking with a UDL lens, it is important to recognize that technology tools are not "cheats." There are three important reasons to use technology:

1. Technology tools can be an alternative method for learning content or demonstrating one's knowledge. Thoughtful application of these alternatives means that technology is leveraged to meet the learning preferences or needs of the students in the class.
 2. Technology tools can overcome learning barriers that are inherent in the curriculum materials. For example, printed text can be provided in a digital format along with text reader software. In this way, a student with good comprehension but whose reading fluency is impacted by poor decoding skills can read the same social studies reading passage as the rest of the class.
 3. Technology tools can provide or increase independence, thus deepening the learning potential of an activity. For example, a student who uses word prediction software to spell instead of an adult scribe is more independent in the writing process.
- Select the CAST link, "*UDL and Technology*" and read about the role of technology in UDL classrooms, and the role of assistive technologies. <http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udltechnology>

DISCUSS

1. Reflection on Technology in the Classroom:

- Consider two students that you have known. First consider a typical student and the use of technology to enhance learning in a typical classroom. Next consider a student with learning barriers due to English as a second language, social emotional difficulties, or disabilities.
- Click on the link to the "*UDL Guidelines -Examples and Resources*" and explore the technology options for the variety of checkpoints. How would some the technology resources support the learning of the two students you had in mind.
- UDL Guidelines- Version 2.0: Examples and Resources (CAST Website) . <http://www.udlcenter.org/implementation/examples>

2. Discussion and Response to Colleagues:

In the discussion area, summarize your technology considerations for the two students you have considered.

Also reflect on one of the following:

- What do you think the difference is between using technology as an activity and using technology as a tool? Support your answer based on your reflections about the two students.
- How do the UDL Guidelines support instructional planning?
- Respond to 1 or 2 colleagues. In your responses to colleagues, build on their answer to take the discussion deeper.