TATS & FIN Talk
with Instructional Staff
About Universal Design for Learning in Pre-K Inclusive Environments

A ramp into a building, curb cuts, and lowered service counters: We have all come to expect and use things that make environments accessible to everyone. It is unacceptable to wait until a person in a wheelchair arrives to think about designing and building a ramp for a restaurant. And when ramps are available, all of us use them—whether we use a wheelchair, a walker, or we simply prefer to walk up an incline rather than steps.

Designing environments that are accessible to all also applies to learning. **Universal Design for Learning**—or **UDL**—is a set of principles that guides the selection of curriculum materials and resources that all children can use, providing support for diverse abilities, learning preferences, languages, and cultural backgrounds.

3 Key Elements
to a universally designed Pre-K learning environment:

1. Multiple means of engagement:
How do you provide options for your children to be engaged and motivated to learn?

Ms. Fernandez makes the most of **all** her students' preferences during literacy center activities:

- Emily likes to look at books with Bailey, but she has difficulty manipulating the pages. Both girls can easily turn the pages of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* with small squares of styrofoam glued to each page.

- Paavai, Samantha, and Noah choose to hear the story on audio tape. They each take turns using a *Big Mac*™ switch to operate the tape player. Arturo joins the group by listening to a Spanish version of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar!*
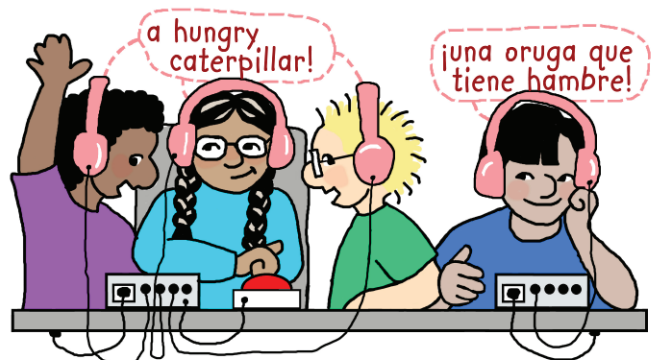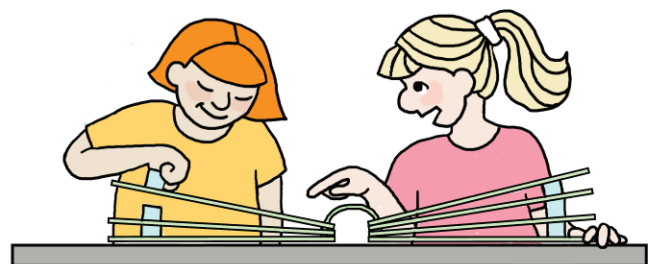
2. Multiple means of representation:
How do you present information so it can be perceived and understood by all children?

Mrs. Clark develops a picture schedule to help **all** her children visualize their day. She reviews the schedule during circle time:

- All the pictures have Velcro on the back, allowing all the children to manipulate and place them on the wall schedule as they learn about each day's routine or activity.

- Since Arturo and Juan are just learning to speak English, the daily schedule is labeled and reviewed with Spanish **and** English words.
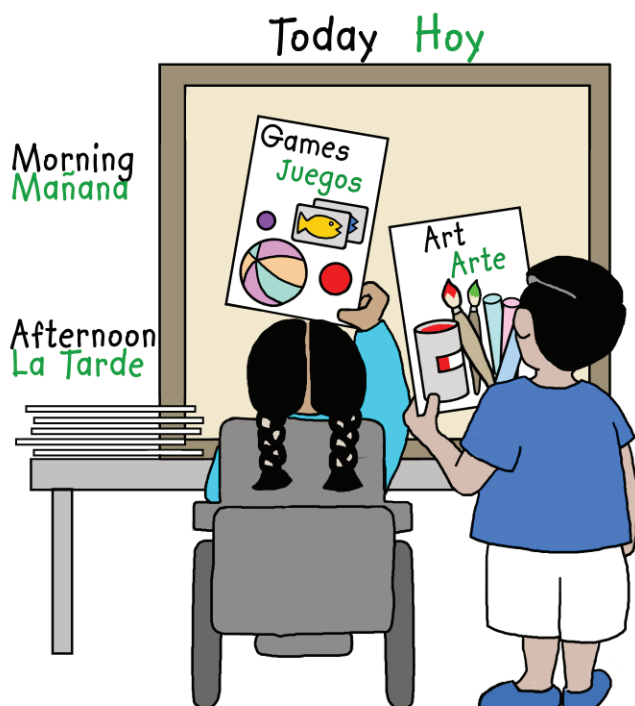
3. Multiple means of expression:
*How do you provide opportunities for all children to show what they have learned?*

Ms. Wang uses blocks, in a variety of colors and shapes, to teach **all** the children about "patterns." After the lesson, she provides ways for all the boys and girls to show what they know:

- Each step of the pattern—"blue square, red square, blue circle"—is done for the children except for the last step—"red circle." Children do this step and gradually increase the number of steps they can perform independently. A picture of the correct pattern is sometimes provided as a visual prompt.

- All of the blocks have thread spools glued to them, allowing for easy manipulation by little hands.

- All blue items are made with felt attached and red items are smooth plastic so the children who can't see a color difference can feel a texture difference.
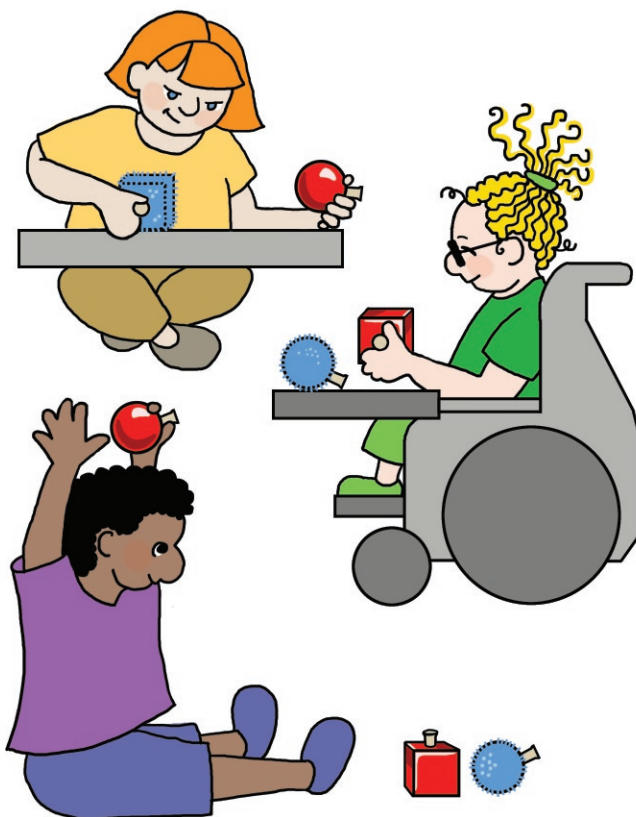
More about UDL and the Pre-K Learning Environment

There will always be children in your Pre-K program who need individual accommodations and supports. But Universal Design for Learning creates a classroom that is ready for **every** child. The more you learn about UDL, the more you will see that you are already doing a lot to make learning accessible to all children! As you read the information below, think of additional ways UDL can support children, with and without disabilities, in your Pre-K learning environment.
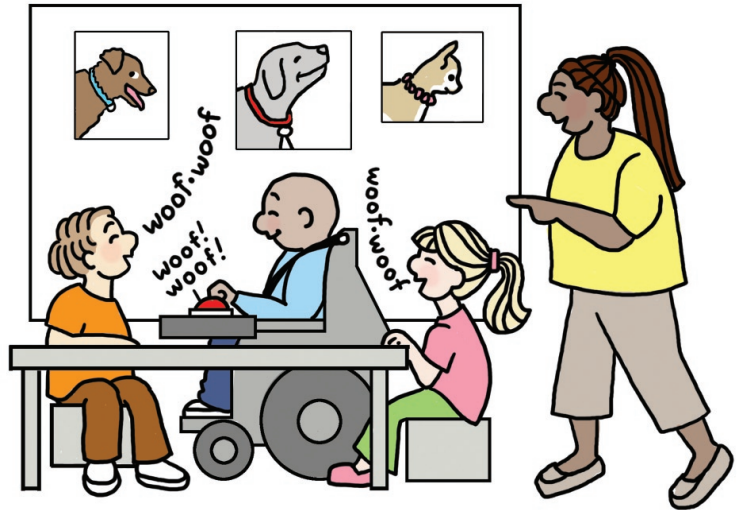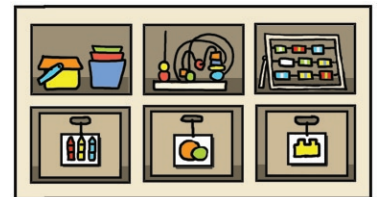
A key consideration in UDL:
All activities and materials should be accessible for every child to use!

Physical Environment

Accessible playground equipment, classrooms, and facilities; clearly labeled and accessible learning centers

Curriculum and Instruction

Visual cues and labels, presentations that include audio, visual and tactile material, visual schedules, peer supports, interactive technology and switches, manipulatives and toys with high contrast color and varied textures

Assessments

Recordable cards, text to speech software, pictures and displays, dictation of children's thoughts, ideas, and stories
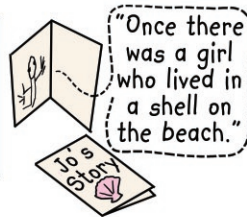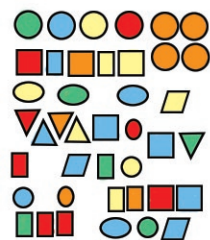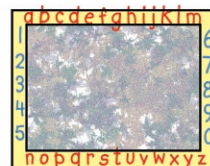
Although UDL may take extra time as you plan your Pre-K learning environment, curriculum, and assessment, it can **reduce** the need for planning individualized accommodations or modifications for specific children. Inclusive Pre-K environments designed with UDL in mind can help all children learn and grow together!

Check out the following resources to learn more about UDL and inclusive educational practices:

Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)
http://www.tats.ucf.edu/index.html

Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)
http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com

Florida Diagnostic and Learning Systems/Technology Coordinating Unit
http://www.paec.org/fdlrstech/udl.html

Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)
http://www.cast.org

The National Center on Universal Design for Learning
http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl

United States Department of Education/Office of Special Education Programs
http://www.osepideasthatwork.org/UDL/intro.asp

National Association for the Education of Young Children
http://www.naeyc.org

TATS
Technical Assistance and Training System

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