

The Assessment Playbook

A UDL Approach

A Companion to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
Assessment Video Series

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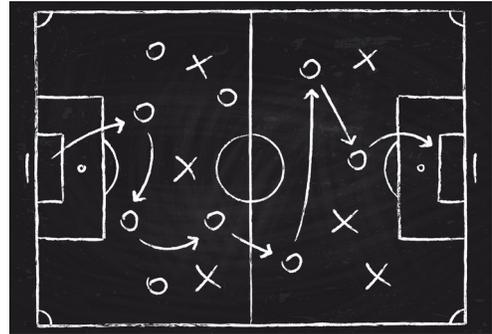
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Welcome

Welcome to The Assessment Playbook.

The vision of this Playbook is to highlight key ideas and deepen opportunities to learn more about the topics presented in the UDL assessment video series:

- [Intro to Assessments](#)
- [Evaluating Assessments](#)
- [Grade Level K-2 Video](#)
- [Grade Level 3-5 Video](#)
- [Grade Level 6-8 Video](#)
- [Grade Level 9-12 Video](#)



We hope this Playbook will support K-12 educators as they plan and implement assessments during the school year in order to inform the design of instruction. Effective design and implementation of assessments helps ensure that *all students* are able to grow and develop as learners—so they are empowered to build on their strengths and improve on areas of challenge. Inspiration for this video series and accompanying Playbook was developed as a way to better understand the gaps in learning that may have occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Purpose and Audience

Assessment drives so much of our world, even though we may not always think of assessment as part of our everyday experience. Consider, for example, that when we travel to a destination, we use information from our maps, our surroundings, or the GPS to redirect our route if we go off-course. This is a form of assessment. When we shiver from the cold, we use that physiological reaction to adjust our clothing or thermostat. In school, we use assessments to determine what students have learned so we can adjust instruction to make sure they gain the necessary knowledge and skills. Assessment is prevalent inside and beyond formal education provided in K-12 settings. It is critical to gaining an understanding of where we are, where we need to go, and what we need to do to get there.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, assessment of student learning had to shift overnight. Instead of having face to face interactions with students, where educators could see firsthand how students were progressing, instruction and assessment went fully online. This created a new set of challenges for educators, especially related to assessing student learning. However, the goals educators had for assessments remained the same: to make sure that the design of learning experiences were relevant, meaningful, and challenging to meet the learning needs of every one of our students.

Our goal with this video series is to support educators to think about assessment from a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) perspective. A UDL approach to assessment includes proactive design to make sure that assessments are accessible, flexible, engaging, and aligned to the intended learning objectives. In a UDL approach to assessment, the focus is on using frequent, formative assessment to improve instruction for all students by reducing barriers that may prevent robust learning. Whereas traditional tests and diagnostics tend to focus on identifying weaknesses and disabilities in the individual learner, assessments in a UDL approach focuses more on identifying weaknesses and barriers in the design of the learning context itself. This makes it possible to probe whether a different set of options, a different path, or a different design might lead students to deeper and more meaningful learning and opportunity to express what they know or can do.

Educators, students, parents, administrators, assessment designers/developers, and students themselves all need accurate assessments and timely results from assessments to use as feedback to inform next steps in the instructional design of the goals, methods, and materials. Formative assessments are designed to be part of an ongoing feedback loop that can be used to to understand what students know and can do—and to identify what they need to deepen their learning or skill development. Instructional approaches with a foundation in UDL incorporate formative assessments to help reduce the inadvertent barriers to learning that many students face, making the assessment of learning progress more accurate, informative, and useful—and enable all learners to become masters of learning itself. A UDL approach to assessment assumes and anticipates variability among all learners and asserts that when we apply the UDL framework to assessment design, more learners will benefit providing teachers with better evidence to make instructional decisions.

In addition, a UDL approach incorporates recurring and flexible assessments throughout instruction to provide ongoing, actionable feedback that educators and students can use before failure takes place, when taking action can make a real difference for all. By using flexible, formative assessments, we gather multiple sources of data that can help us better understand what students need to succeed in their learning. Such formative assessments

also enable educators to provide mastery-oriented feedback to students, so they are able to continue to make progress in their learning—and become masters of learning itself.

Finally, a UDL approach ensures fundamental access to assessments. The [UDL Guidelines](#) highlight ways to design assessments that ensure that learners can a) perceive and make meaning of the content, b) express and communicate what they know or can do, and c) engage, persist, and self-regulate during the assessment. To learn more about how to make your assessments accessible, visit the [National Center on Accessible Materials \(AEM Center\)](#) to explore free videos and resources. There, you will learn how to ensure your assessments are perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust (POUR).

The videos produced in this series build upon educator’s current assessment practices and illustrate specific strategies to design assessments using the [UDL Guidelines](#). However, no prerequisite knowledge of UDL is required—these videos are for any educator wanting to reflect upon or improve their assessment practice. We hope this Playbook supports your assessment design to ensure all students gain the knowledge, skills, and background to become successful, lifelong learners—until learning has no limits, as we like to say at CAST.

How to Use this Guide

The content in this Guide is designed to be used flexibly based on your learning goals. We encourage you to reflect on your goals for using the resources in this Guide: what already works well in your assessment process? Where do you want to further develop your assessment design so you gain accurate insights into student learning? Where are there barriers your students face in taking assessments that you hope to learn about? What challenges do you face in this COVID-19 year, or other year, to understand what students know and can do?

In this Guide, there are two main sections. The first section contains an overview of the key ideas from the video content, links to transcripts, and guiding questions. The second section contains resources to learn more, including resources on UDL, COVID-19, assessments, accessibility, and communicating with parents and caregivers. Please use the videos and resources flexibly. For example, you could:

- Watch the videos on your own, with a colleague, or with a professional learning community. Or you could watch the videos on your own, and then come together as a small group or team to discuss the ideas that resonated or the actions you will take in your practice.
- Watch the videos at your own pace, to pause, rewind, or fast forward to parts of need or interest. Share the videos with colleagues you think might be interested.

- Self-reflect on your practice using the discussion prompts, which are found within the videos and in this Playbook. Brainstorm action-steps you can take to make small, but impactful changes to your assessments. Observe changes in student engagement and learning as a result of your assessment design.
- Use the discussion questions as prompts for conversations with your colleagues, parents and caregivers, and/or administrators in your school or professional learning community. Include students in the discussion and design of assessments that help them best show what they know and can do.
- Use the resources to deepen your understanding or learning on any of the topics covered in this Playbook.

Section 1: Video Summaries and Discussion Questions

In this section, you will find an overview of each of the videos and associated discussion questions. Some of the discussion questions are found in the videos and there are additional questions and resources available in each section to learn more.

There are six videos, including:

- An **Introductory Video** designed to help understand different kinds of assessments used in classrooms, common barriers in assessments, and key strategies to develop assessments for students.
- The **Designing Assessments Video** has specific strategies to approach the design of any assessment in any content area or grade. It includes specific language to help identify the central *construct* for an assessment, potential barriers, and tips to include flexibility in the assessment.
- **Grade Specific Videos: K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12.** Each grade specific video has general recommendations, suggestions, tips, and resources related to assessments for the specific age-group. These videos are important for understanding some of the unique challenges and opportunities at the different grade levels. There are also examples of different ideas for assessment at each grade level.

Introductory Video

Welcome and Introduction

[Intro to Assessments](#)

The purpose of the introductory video is to encourage educators to reflect on why assessments are important, improving assessments, and barriers or challenges to assessments. We discuss some of the challenges educators face as a result of COVID-19, including understanding what students learned during remote learning and where there may be gaps in the learning that need to be addressed. This will help educators plan their instruction.

In this video, assessments are defined as the techniques we use to find the information we need to understand what happened and what we can do to help - and this video recognizes that teachers already do much of this already. Assessments help reveal where students are - and where we need to go next. We discuss strategies for how to use assessments, especially formative assessments, that focus on each student as an individual. [Review the full video script: Introductory Video](#)

Formative Assessments

Key ideas

- There are both *formative assessments*, which are short and help educators determine where there may be gaps in student learning, and *summative assessments*, which are large end of unit measures.
- Examples of formative assessments include: questions about the content, questions about emotional state, questions in exit tickets, items evidenced in student work, and feedback or interactions between educators and students.
- Look for ways that your assessments connect to real-world skills and situations to increase engagement in assessments.

Discussion questions

- In your own words, define **formative and summative assessments** (hint: think about the GPS analogy). How do you plan to integrate formative assessments this year?
 - Sentence starter: Formative assessments are different from summative assessments because ... This year, I plan to use formative assessments such as ...
- How do you design opportunities in your assessments for students to make *personal connections*?
 - Sentence starter: A way I encourage students to make personal connections in my assessments is ...

Have more time for discussion or want to learn more?

- Generally, what are you most worried about as you return to the classroom and begin a COVID-19 impacted school year?
- What role will formative assessments play in your return to school strategy?
- How do you use data gathered by formative assessments to inform your instruction?
- Consider watching [The Myth of Average](#), Todd Rose’s TEDx talk (~18 minutes). Rose shares the importance of having flexible options to make sure the full range of students are included in the learning opportunities. Then discuss how variability relates to assessments, especially in a COVID-19 impacted school year.

What Gets in the Way?

Key ideas

- There is concern about students returning to school with gaps, such as achievement, opportunity, or learning gaps. This can lead to a deficit approach to teaching and learning.
- We can use assessment to find out where kids are and how they learn best so we can design to support their learning.
- We can identify and reduce *barriers*, or roadblocks that prevent students from achieving a learning goal. Barriers can include background information, instructions presented in only one way, and social/emotional demands. Sometimes there are barriers in the design of the assessments.
- Barriers reside in the design of the environment—not in students themselves.
- There can also be barriers for teachers in terms of assessments, but we can expand our notion of assessments to be anything that helps us gather information about student learning.
- Assessment is not about what has not been accomplished, but is something we can share and discuss with students.

Discussion questions

- What barriers have you seen students experience in your classroom related to their learning or in their assessments?
 - Sentence starter: A time I noted my students experience barriers to learning was ...

- As you develop assessments, ask yourself “what barriers might be present for students’ in this assessment?” How would you answer this question about an upcoming assessment.
 - Sentence starters: Barriers my students may face in my assessment include ... I know this because ...

Have more time for discussion or want to learn more?

- How do you think the quote Allison shared— “When a flower doesn’t bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower”—relates to education?
- How is removing barriers different than making it easy?
- When was a time you experienced barriers in your own learning?
- Consider watching [Disabling Segregation](#), a TED Talk by Dan Habib (~18 minutes). Why is it important to make sure all students are included and have access to *all* aspects of learning—including demonstrating what they know?

Seven Tips for Good Assessments

Key ideas

- To analyze any assessment, ask the following questions:
 - How is the assessment linked to the learning goal?
 - How does the assessment engage the learner?
 - What barriers might students experience?
- Reflect on 7 Tips for Analyzing Assessments:
 1. Align assessment with the learning goal.
 2. Provide multiple ways students can show what they know. You can have high expectations, but include flexible means in your assessments.
 3. Examine how well students can transfer learning to meaningful situations.
 4. Look for barriers.
 5. Empower students to learn how they learn.
 6. Look for informal assessment opportunities, including engaging parents and caregivers in the conversation about their student learning.

7. Provide frequent, timely doses of feedback.

- Mastery-oriented feedback is timely and targeted, specific to the task at hand. It also encourages persistence and suggests next steps.

Discussion questions

- What strategies do you use to make sure assessments connect to the learning goal?
 - Sentence starter: To make sure assessments connect to the learning goal, I...
- Share your three favorite formative assessments. Why do you think they work well?
 - Sentence starters: A formative assessment I use is ... This works well because...

Have more time for discussion or want to learn more?

- What resonated to you about the GPS example from the video?
- What are some of the ways you provide mastery-oriented feedback to students? What strategies can you share with a colleague?
- Analyze one of your assessments with any of the 7 Tips for Analyzing Assessments. What is one way you can improve one of your assessments?
- Watch [Can Skateboarding Save Our Schools?](#), the TEDx Talk from skateboarder Dr. Tae (~14 minutes). Share one idea for redesigning an assessment that would make it feel more relevant and/or might make it more useful for students.

Assessment Examples

Key ideas

- Example #1: Use formative assessments to understand students' emotion states.
- Example #2: The stoplight strategy can be used to ask students to share something they learned (green light), something they have a question about (yellow light), or something that stopped their learning (red light).
- Example #3: Enhanced exit tickets can include questions about content, emotional states during learning, resources that were used, or barriers that students faced.
- Example #4: Mastery oriented feedback can be given that is specific to the task, encourages students to persist, and suggests next steps.

Discussion questions

- Why are assessments important—especially now?
 - Sentence starter: After watching this video, my perspective on assessments has ...
- How do you plan to communicate about assessments with students and parents?
 - Sentence starter: Ways I plan to communicate about assessments with students and parents include ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- The upcoming year might begin to feel overwhelming, especially if you students have experienced a fairly dramatic “slide” due to COVID and/or summer. What strategies can you put in place now to reduce your own anxiety or stress?
- Consider watching [The Power of Believing that You Can Improve](#) by Carol Dweck (~10 minutes). What aspects of a “growth mindset” can you apply to teaching this year? How can you share this message with your students?
- Check out the full list of resources at the end of the Playbook, including strategies to connect with parents and families.

Conclusion

Key ideas

- Assessments provide key information we need to make sure students are moving forward with learning.
- Now is the time for gathering formative feedback quickly and accurately.
- Barriers exist in the learning environment, not in the learner. Look carefully at our assessments to make sure they are related to the learning goal, are engaging, and are flexible.

Discussion questions

- How will you gather formative feedback at the start of this school year?
- What are the next steps you will take to evaluate your assessments?

Evaluating Assessments Video

Welcome and Introduction

[Evaluating Assessments](#)

The purpose of the Evaluating Assessments video is to empower educators to understand how assessments are designed and some of the fundamental components of assessments. The goal is to help educators develop strategies to effectively evaluate assessments to ensure they are accurately measuring the intended learning goal and measuring what students really know and can do.

[Review the full video script “Evaluating Assessment Video.”](#)

Key ideas

- We can better understand the assessment “engine” in order to understand how to better evaluate when an assessment is working and when it is not—and where the breakdowns happen.
- We use assessments to understand where kids are and how they learn best and what we can design to support their learning.
- Evaluate assessments:
 - a. Understand the *construct*, or the knowledge, skills, or abilities being measured by an assessment item.
 - b. Understand that often, the methods or materials used in an assessment demand additional skills or understanding not directly connected to what is being measured or tested. These are *construct-irrelevant* features that create barriers for some students, so we do not get an accurate measurement of the construct (or the knowledge, skills, or abilities).
- Educators can use formative assessment through observations of students—and this can inform the decision making process and design of the assessments (as shared in the spelling test example in the video).
- When we build assessments that focus on the construct, we get a clearer understanding of the students abilities—and we isolate variables.

Discussion questions

- Define *construct* and *construct irrelevant* in your own words.

- Sentence starters: The construct is ... Something that is construct-irrelevant is ...
- How does using specific terminology about assessments increase your understanding and design of your assessments?
 - Sentence starter: Using specific terminology about assessments helps me ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

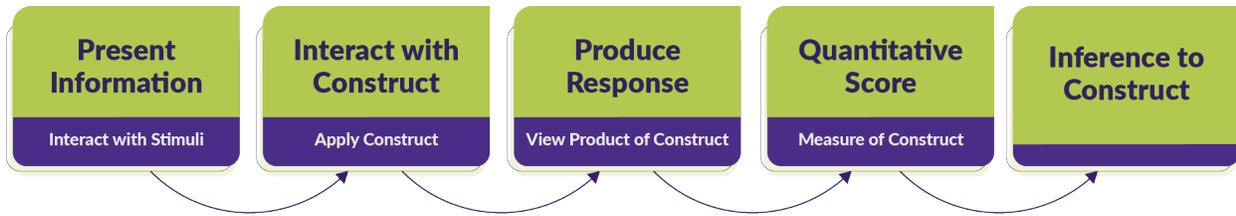
- How do you align your assessments, materials, and methods to the construct of your lessons (as Tracey outlined in the spelling test example in the video)?
- Here is an example of an assessment item to critique based on the potential construct-irrelevant features you notice. *Imagine you are giving a timed math assessment that students must answer in on a paper-pencil test. There are a series of 5 word problems students need to solve to show they understand how to add fractions.*
- Start small! Pick a specific assessment you can go through and analyze the construct and how it aligns with your assessment.
- This image was shared and discussed in this video. What resonated with you as you learned about this? What will you share with a colleague?

Steps for Evaluating Assessments

Key ideas

- Break down assessment items using the following steps to identify barriers in the individual questions or items. Look for items that are ambiguous, misleading, or that may be construct-irrelevant, preventing us from understanding what students really know.
 1. Present information: Student is presented with an item in the assessment.
 2. Interact with the construct: Student engages with the assessment item, comprehends it, and prepares to act.
 3. Produce response: Student answers the question.
 4. Quantitative score: Educators evaluate or judge the student response.
 5. Inference to construct: If there is a barrier in any of the steps 1 through 4, that can interfere with the accuracy of the measurement of the assessment.

- Our job as educators is to break down the assessment so we can see the component parts and analyze what information we are really gaining from the assessment—and to make sure it is really connected to the learning goal.



Discussion questions

- How has this video impacted the way you think about barriers to learning?
 - Sentence starter: Something I had not thought about barriers is ...
- What barriers do students face engaging with assessments or showing what they know on assessments?
 - Sentence starter: A barrier for students to engage or show what they really know on an upcoming assessment is ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- What barriers do students face building understanding about how to take different kinds of assessments in your class?
- What supports exist in your school that you can leverage to support students who might be facing more serious barriers to learning?
- Start small! Pick a specific assessment you can go through and analyze the barriers (look for construct irrelevant features) your students may face in that assessment. Be sure to identify whether the barrier is part of the construct.
- Consider this article: [How to Break Down Barriers to Learning with UDL](#).

Conclusion

Key ideas

- We can make more informed decisions about teaching if we analyze how and what we ask of students.
- We can talk with students about barriers they face in the assessment process so they deepen their own understanding about their own learning—and what they

need to work on.

- We want to keep high expectations for learning, but that we gain the information we need to help students get there.

Discussion questions

- This is a lot of information. What is one big takeaway you can apply from this video?
 - Sentence starter: A takeaway that resonates for me is ...
- How can you connect something you have learned from this video to support a student in your classroom?
 - Sentence starter: To support a student in my classroom, I will ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- How could I teach my students about assessment design and ask them to help me design lessons with them?
- What is one thing from this video that I can share with a colleague?
- How do you align your assessments, materials, and methods to the construct of your lessons?
- Don't be afraid to try something new to your teaching—even if it does not work as you had hoped, this is part of the learning process.
- Recognize how the small steps you are taking have an impact on the student learning and engagement. Share the small successes with colleagues, parents, and students.

Resources for the Evaluating Assessments Video

- A checklist for the [Universal Design of Tests](#)
- A video that explains the [definition of construct and construct irrelevant](#)
- An article on [the Role of Assessment in a Learning Culture](#) and why assessment matters
- A research paper on [considerations for designing accessible educational scenario-based assessments](#) for multiple populations with a focus on linguistic complexity
- A research paper: [The Expanded Evidence-Centered Design \(e-ECD\) for Learning and Assessment Systems: A Framework for Incorporating Learning Goals and](#)

[Processes Within Assessment Design](#)

- Learning modules from [the Center for Assessment Classroom Assessment](#)
- The article [A New Era for Educational Assessment](#) by David T. Conley
- A policy brief: [The Challenges and Opportunities of Balanced Systems of Assessment](#)
- Check out the full list of resources at the end of the Playbook, including strategies to connect with parents and families.

About the Grade Specific Videos

The purpose of the grade specific videos is to understand how to create high-quality assessments for grades K–12, given unique challenges and opportunities at different grade bands. There are four grade-specific videos: K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. In each video, you will find original content, recommendations, tips, discussion questions, and resources.

For each grade band, remember to focus attention on the three big guiding questions:

- How is the assessment linked to the learning goal?
- How does the assessment engage the learner?
- What barriers might students experience?

Grade Specific Video: K–2

Welcome and Introduction

[Grade Level K–2 Video](#)

In K–2, students are just getting acclimated to school—learning the routines and foundational skills such as reading and writing, working together and self-regulation. In this video, we share specific barriers related to this age group, general recommendations, and tips and strategies.

[Review the full video script: Assessments for Grades K–2 video](#)

Key ideas

- In these grades kindergarten through second grade, there is focus on learning the classroom routines and for students to learn how to read.
- This year, due to COVID-19, students have missed almost half a year of school—

and time learning and getting used to the school routines and learning content.

- There is a wide range of backgrounds and experiences students bring to school for the first time. In COVID-19, there is also the fear of getting sick.
- Teachers: You've got this! Look for ways to collaborate, be proud of the work of our profession. Think how you can learn about your students, their personalities, backgrounds, interests, and goals.

Discussion questions

- What are you most worried about as you return to school this year?
 - Sentence starter: This year, I am worried about ...
- What areas do you think you will see the biggest gaps in learning due to the summer or COVID-19 slide?
 - Sentence starter: I think the biggest gaps in learning may be ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- What barriers do you think students in the grade you teach (specifically) are going to experience related to COVID-19?
- In what ways could you use support in your teaching this year? What supports exist in your school?
- Read this article that details using [Universal Design for Learning to Design Assessments](#) and discuss or write down reactions.

General Recommendations

Key ideas

- Engage parents in the assessment process early and often. Have flexible ways for parents and caregivers to be able to share insights about students strengths and where there may be concerns.
- Keep assessments short. Quick checks that are informal and authentic moments can be used to assess the skills you are working on.
- Design assessments that focus on what students can do. Instead of focusing on deficits, we can help students develop a growth mindset about education.

Discussion questions

- Share two assessments that you already use to informally check in on students skills related to reading, math, or other.
 - Sentence starter: An assessment I already use to informally check in on student learning is ...
- Can you think of a third formative assessment that might help you understand what students can do?
 - Sentence starter: To better understand students' strengths, I could ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- How can you engage parents in the assessment process early and often?
- List three short assessments you could design or modify that would demonstrate what students know or can do.
- Read the following [article](#) and discuss why differentiation is a key idea when designing assessments.

Assessment Examples

Key ideas

- Formative assessment example #1: Identify thinking habits or routines that students can develop and practice in reading, math, and other subjects (such as the nonfiction reading example from the video). Stations became a formative assessment opportunity.
- Formative assessment example #2: Allow students to choose a goal they want to work on. Identify what success looks like and give students flexible opportunities to work toward those goals.
- Formative assessment example #3: Include opportunities for students to have choice in what they read or try, related to the learning goal.
- Formative assessment example #4: Use video as a way for students to make and share examples demonstrating what they have learned. Reflect on the learning process with students and caregivers throughout the year- to build the growth mindset. Frame assessment and learning as a process of continuous growth with parents and caregivers, for example, you can do this in the letter home.
- Formative assessment example #5: Use sentence starters to help students share

and communicate in a productive way about their learning process (such as the popsicle stick examples).

Discussion questions

- Share one of the assessment strategies from the video that you would like to use or already use in your classroom.
 - Sentence starter: An assessment strategy I could use from the video is ...
- How can you help students create their own learning goals?



- Sentence starter: To help students create their own learning goals, I can ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- Take time to write your first letter home to parents explaining what your approach to assessment will be this year, or create a list of 5-10 bullets to remind you of items to include in the letter later.
- How do you approach the “I cannot do this YET” approach to learning and the growth mindset?
- How could you use some version of the “popsicle-stick strategy” to encourage students to share their learning process with each other?
- Read this article and share which of the [7 tips](#) you think is most critical or which you plan to incorporate into your classroom.

Conclusion

Key ideas

- Choose one idea to try out in your classroom, such as focusing on formative assessments for the first few months of the year.
- Evaluate the quality of one of your assessments using the suggestions in this video.
- Approach this year as the “year of growth mindset” to embrace the power of the learning process.

Discussion questions

- How will you gather formative feedback at the start of this school year?
- What are the next steps you will take to evaluate your assessments?

Resources for Grades K–2

- [Tips for Designing Assessments for K–5 Students](#) from CAST Implementation Specialist Susan Shapiro
- The article [How Children Process Grief](#) helps teachers keep an eye out for ways young children will be working through the tumultuous events of 2020.
- Article [Why Ages 2-7 Matter so Much for Brain Development](#), on how rich experiences shape young children’s development
- [Creative formative assessment ideas](#) for young children
- Video on [Fun Math and Movement](#), to get young learners excited and engaged
- Tips for an [assessment guide for young children](#) with recommendations and ideas
- Check out the full list of resources at the end of The Playbook, including strategies to connect with parents and families.

Grade Specific Video: 3–5

Welcome and Introduction

[Grade Level 3–5 Video](#)

In grades 3–5, students may be comfortable with the routines and habits of schools and are building on the foundational reading comprehension and decoding skills, as well as math skills. They are also shifting from learning to read to reading to learn. In addition at this age, there is more socialization and project-oriented learning. This is when students first experience larger standardized tests. In this video, we share specific barriers related to this age group, general recommendations, tips, and strategies. [Review the full video script: Grades 3–5.](#)

General Recommendations

Key ideas

- Conduct assessments that isolate school related skills from content-related or academic skills.

- Create assessments that leverage video as a way for students to see what they know. Video can be used throughout the year as a way for students to reflect on their growth and learning over time.
- Embed reflection time into assessments, so students can develop a better understanding of how they learn.

Discussion questions

- What are you most worried about as you return to school this year?
 - Sentence starter: A concern I have as we return to school this year is ...
- What areas do you think you will see the biggest gaps in learning due to the summer or COVID-19 slide?
 - Sentence starter: I anticipate gaps in learning to be ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

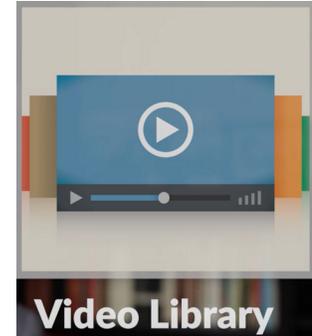
- What are some of the key skills students need to learn? What are some of the core content pieces they need to learn? How are these different from some of the school-related skills?
- What barriers do you think students in the grade you teach (specifically) are going to experience related to COVID-19?
- What are some ways you support the growth mindset with your students?
- In what ways could you use video to support student learning?
- What do you need as a teacher to support you in your work this year?
- Read the following tips for using [Universal Design for Learning to Design Assessments](#) and discuss or make note of ideas.

Assessment Examples

Key ideas

- Example #1: Review your assessments for confusing questions, built-in biases, and assumptions about background experiences.
- Example #2: Try assessments more than once and at different times of the day.
- Example #3: Have flexible resources reliably available in the learning environment - so students can get used to using those resources.

- Example #4: Focus on mastery-oriented feedback, including focus on sharing strategies to build specific areas for growth.
- Example #5: Try to engage with parents and caregivers early in the year and keep them in the loop. Consider sending a letter home to gain information from parents and caregivers about their child.
- Example #6: Incorporate growth mindset into your assessments, such as encouraging students to identify the kinds of mistakes they made and what they may do to take next steps to learn. For example, have students use video to narrate what they see themselves do as they work. The videos can help teachers identify where students may be struggling and where there are strengths. Videos can also be used to show growth over time for both students and caregivers.
- Example #7: Help students learn how to take tests and teach students how to use the different tools available in standardized tests.
- Example #8: Incorporate real-world examples in your assessments to make them relevant and engaging.
- Example #9: Create open-writing prompts to learn more about students and their social-emotional learning, as well as their writing skills.



Discussion questions

- In what ways can you use video to support your learning goals in your classroom?
 - Sentence starter: I could use video by ...
- List three assessment ideas you could incorporate into your classroom.
 - Sentence starter: Three ideas for assessments include ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- How can you embed the concept of the growth mindset into your assessments?
- How can you engage parents in the assessment process early and often?
- How can you teach students about test taking skills and tools available?
- How can you include video as a way to highlight a growth mindset?

- In what ways can you use open writing prompts to learn more about students' interests? What are other ways students could respond to the prompts, such as text-to-speech or voice recording?
- Read the article [Matching Instructional Uses with Interim Assessment Designs](#) and discuss why differentiation is a key idea when designing assessments.

Conclusion

Key ideas

- Focus on giving formative assessments early in the school year.
- Evaluate the quality of the assessments you use.
- Commit to making this school year the “year of growth mindset,” a fundamental belief that embraces the power of learning.

Discussion questions

- How might you create an assessment that includes students' advice to themselves, as described in the video?
 - Sentence starter: I could create an opportunity for students to give advice to themselves by ...
- How can you evaluate the quality of your assessments using tips from this video?
 - Sentence starter: To increase the relevance of my assessments, I can ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- Take time to write your first letter home to parents explaining what your approach to assessment will be this year, or write a list of 5-10 bullets that will remind you of items to include in the letter.
- What are some ways you could incorporate COVID-19, or relevant experiences for students, into some of your assessments? What should you be careful of if you decide to take this approach?
- What barriers might students experience in the assessment or in the learning experience?
- Read this article and share which of the [7 tips](#) you think is most critical or which you plan to incorporate into your classroom.

Resources for Grades 3–5

- [Tips for Designing Assessments for K–5 Students](#) from CAST Implementation Specialist Susan Shapiro
- The article [How Children Process Grief](#) that reminds educators that children process grief through play and helps teachers keep an eye out for ways young children will be working through the tumultuous events of 2020.
- The article [Helping Students Process Their Feelings During Remote Learning](#) outlines how elementary students might benefit from intentionally designing routines that focus on emotional well-being.
- Read [Universal Design for Learning to Design Assessments](#).
- Check out the full list of resources at the end of The Playbook, including strategies to connect with parents and families.

Grade Specific Video: 6–8

Welcome and Introduction

[Grade Level 6–8 Video](#)

In grades 6–8, students are well acclimated to school - and are now becoming much more independent and cued into social aspects of school. In this video, we share specific barriers related to this age group, general recommendations, and tips and strategies. [Review the full video script: Grades 6–8](#)

Key ideas

- With COVID-19 and remote learning, students have been communicating more in virtual spaces.
- Relationships and mental health issues (such as stress and anxiety) may start to manifest more at this age.

Discussion questions

- What are you most worried about as you return to school this year?
 - Sentence starter: This year, I am concerned about ...
- What areas do you think you will see the biggest gaps in learning due to the summer or COVID-19 slide?

- Sentence starter: Gaps I anticipate in learning are ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- What barriers do you think students in the grade you teach (specifically) are going to experience related to COVID-19?
- In what ways could you use support in your work this year?
- Read the following article that details using [Universal Design for Learning to Design Assessments](#). Discuss or make a note of reactions.

General Recommendations

Key ideas

- Codesign assessments with learners. At this age, students want more voice and control over their learning—and we can do this by getting student input in our assessments and lessons.
- Keep assessments relevant, for example include students' interests and have real-world examples or experiences.
- Build technology skills to provide flexible options for assessment and for collaboration. Support students to use the technology—and this works whether we are teaching in the classroom or remotely.

Discussion questions

- List a few strategies you could use in the upcoming year that would allow students to co-design assessments with you.
 - Sentence Starter: To encourage students to co-design assessments, I can ...
- How can you integrate assessments that specifically focus on ensuring students can use technology tools to support them to do their best on the assessment (for example, consider: Speech-to-text, verbal responses, use of diagrams or images.)
 - Sentence Starter: Technology tools students can use on assessments include ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- In what ways can you make assessments more relevant for your students?
- How can different technology strategies work in different contexts, such as

remote, hybrid, or face to face?

- How can you encourage parents and caregivers to communicate with you as needed, both around the assessment process and learning?
- Read the article [Matching Instructional Uses with Interim Assessment Designs](#) and discuss why differentiation is a key idea when designing assessments.

Assessment examples

Key ideas

- Example #1: Increase autonomy and space for students to decide what steps to take or where they need to go for help. For example, ask students to make their own test questions or consider integrating student self-report notes.
- Example #2: At the beginning of the year, keep assessments short, informal, and targeted. Focus assessments on specific areas or skills and let students know the goal and purpose of the assessment.
- Example #3: Support students in the social and emotional roles students need to learn to collaborate. Practice working in groups online and in-person.
- Example #4: Teach students how to use technology supports and options that may be helpful for their learning.
- Example #5: Communicate with families and caregivers about their children as learners, including their strengths.
- Remember, some students will do better in remote learning.
- Support students' executive functions by highlighting the different scaffolds and tools that can be used by students. For example, ask students which learning strategies they used to prepare for an assessment or encourage different students to be note takers. Note taking is a specific skill that can be taught, modeled, and scaffolded—and there are many ways students can take notes. Notes can be a formative assessment.

Discussion questions

- How can you encourage students to create their own test questions using the learning goals for that assessment?
 - Sentence Starter: To encourage students to create their own test questions,

I can ...

- Reflect on the student “self-report notes” discussed in the video. How could you incorporate this idea into your classroom?
 - Sentence Starter: “Self-report notes” could be used by ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- How do you support students to learn more about what they need to succeed in assessments?
- What are some ways you could make your assessments more relevant? Perhaps incorporate COVID-19 into some of your assessments? What should you be careful of—if you decide to take this approach?
- How can you teach and assess collaborative skills—whether in face to face, hybrid, or remote settings?
- Think of two summative assessments you typically give at the beginning of the school year. Use these three key questions to evaluate the quality of each. What could you change about this assessment to improve it?
 - How is the assessment aligned to the learning goals?
 - How does the assessment engage the learner?
 - What barriers might students experience?
- How can you support note-taking sharing and strategies? Brainstorm ways you could use student notes, or other tools, to conduct formative assessments.
- Take time to craft your first letter home to parents explaining what your approach to assessment will be this year, or write a list of 5-10 bullets that will remind you of items to include in the letter.
- Read this article and share which of the [7 tips](#) you think is most critical or which you plan to incorporate into your classroom.

Conclusion

Key ideas

- Focus on giving formative assessments early in the school year.
- Evaluate the quality of the assessments you use.

- Commit to making this school year the “year of growth mindset,” a fundamental belief that embraces the power of learning.

Discussion questions

- How will you plan to give formative assessments at the start of the year?
- How will you evaluate the quality of the assessments you use?

Resources for Grades 6–8

- [Using UDL to plan instruction](#) that supports all students at the middle school level.
- Formative assessment recommendations for [math](#) at the middle school level.
- [Mini-White Board Revelation](#) video, [blog post](#) on mini-white board use from an educator, and a [research paper](#) on the impact that using mini-whiteboards has on increasing engaging older students.
- Read the following article that details using [Universal Design for Learning to Design Assessments](#). Discuss or make notes about reactions.
- Check out the full list of resources, including strategies to connect with parents and families.

Grade Specific Video: 9–12

Welcome and Introduction

[Grade Level 9–12 Video](#)

In 9–12, students are more independent in their learning and have had years of experiences in school—and students in this age may have developed more of a sense of what they think they can and cannot do well. In this video, we share specific barriers related to this age group, general recommendations, and tips and strategies. [The full video script: Grade 9–12](#)

Key ideas

- Think about equity and recognize the differences in access, background, and opportunity for practice.
- SATs and other large-scale assessments are important at this age.
- Students may be more isolated and are likely spending more time on their devices.

There will be a range in what they did over the summer.

Discussion questions

- What are you most worried about as you return to school this year?
 - Sentence Starter: I am most concerned about ...
- What areas do you think you will see the biggest gaps in learning due to the summer or COVID-19 slide?
 - Sentence Starter: I anticipate gaps in learning to be ...



Have more time or want to learn more?

- What barriers do you anticipate students have experienced related to COVID-19?
- In what ways could you use support in your work this year?
- Read the following tips that detail using [Universal Design for Learning to Design Assessments](#). Discuss or note your reactions.

General Recommendations

Key ideas

- Use pre-assessments to engage students in the learning process and habits of learning. Make connections to what students already know and can do.
- Create assessments that give students the opportunity to transfer skills. Make assessments authentic to real-world examples, so they can transfer the skills to careers.
- Focus on giving mastery-oriented feedback. Use assessments to engage students in reflection to deepen their learning about their own learning.

Discussion questions

- How often do you use pre-assessments to engage students? Could you use them more frequently? How?
 - Sentence starter: I use pre-assessments ... and could also try ...
- How do you assess whether or not a student can transfer what they have learned

into another context or situation?

- Sentence starter: To assess how well students can transfer what they have learned into a new situation, I ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- In what ways can you include relevant examples from the “real world” to your assessments?
- How can you reflect with students about their learning and assessment?
- How can you engage parents in the assessment process early and often?
- List a few strategies you could use in the upcoming year that would allow students to co-design assessments with you and make them more relevant.
- Explain what mastery oriented feedback is in your own words. How often are you incorporating mastery oriented feedback into the preparation for and actual assessments?
- Read the article [Matching Instructional Uses with Interim Assessment Designs](#) and discuss why differentiation is a key idea when designing assessments.

Assessment Examples

Key ideas

- Example #1: The goal of pre-assessments is to help us uncover connections we can make for students and peak students’ interest. Use pre-assessments to peak student interest in the upcoming topics.
- Example #2: Use pre-assessments to help students explore the boundaries of their understanding, which helps them to set their own learning goals.
- Example #3: Avoid high-risk assessments. Instead, focus on pre-assessments that are not high risk and can actually lower stress about assessments. Increase the weight of formative assessments.
- Example #4: Focus on relevance in assessments: show, don’t tell. Consider how students can show what they know in different formats, games, and in different situational contexts. Increase the connection between knowledge and action.
- Example #5: Recognize the importance of authentic formative assessments, that include not only the knowledge of what students know, but includes knowledge of

the procedures and skills students know.

- Example #6: Use a letter home to gain information about students' strengths and challenges—and include students in those conversations.
- Example #7: Use assessments as an opportunity for you and your students to engage in dialogue about their learning. Focus on and communicate about the growth mindset. Give feedback that is specific and that encourages the learner to re-engage with the assessment and work toward providing their own solution.

Discussion questions

- How do you currently weigh formative vs. summative assessments in the overall design of your class? What would happen if you shifted the value to increase the weight of formative assessments?
 - Sentence starter: If I weigh formative assessments more, this would ...
- How can you incorporate a “growth mindset” into your classroom and into assessments? Why is that especially important this year?
 - Sentence starter: A way to incorporate the growth mindset into my classroom this year is to ...

Have more time or want to learn more?

- Think of two formative assessments you typically give at the beginning of the school year. Use these three key questions to evaluate the quality of each. What could you change about this assessment to improve it?
 - How is the assessment linked to the learning goals?
 - How does the assessment engage the learner?
 - What barriers might students experience?
- What are some ways you could make your assessments more relevant? Maybe incorporate COVID-19 into some of your assessments? What should you be careful of—if you decide to take this approach?
- How can you make time to meet with students one-on-one, whether for in-person, hybrid, or remote environments.
- Take time to craft your first letter home to parents explaining what your approach to assessment will be this year, or write a list of 5-10 bullets that will remind you of

things to include in the letter later.

- Read the following article, [Summative State Assessments Can Wait!](#) and discuss or craft your reactions.

Conclusion

Key ideas

- Focus on giving formative assessments early in the school year.
- Evaluate the quality of the assessments you use.
- Commit to making this school year the “year of growth mindset”—a fundamental belief that embraces the power of learning.

Discussion questions

- How will you plan to give formative assessments at the start of the year?
- How will you evaluate the quality of the assessments you use?

Resources for Grades 9–12

- Read the article [Turning the Lights On: What Pre-Assessments Can Do](#).
- The research paper [Acting, Learning, Growing, Simulating](#) shows the importance of helping students “show” not just “tell” what they know.
- A research paper, [The Effects of Using Mini-Whiteboards](#), discusses ways to improve the academic performance of 10th grade students.
- U.S. Department of Education resources related to [CTE and COVID-19](#) and ACTE Guide show ways to [provide high quality CTE experiences](#) in a COVID-19 impacted school year.
- See [7 Keys to Giving Effective Feedback](#) and [UDL approach to Mastery Oriented Feedback](#).
- Check out these articles: How to use a [How to Use a Growth Mindset in the Classroom](#) and [6 Tips to Help Students Develop a Growth Mindset](#).
- See this article that details using [Universal Design for Learning to Design Assessments](#).
- Check out the full list of resources at the end of The Playbook, including strategies

to connect with parents and families.

Section 2: Resources for Educators

In this section, you will find a comprehensive list of resources to support your learning. You will find topics include UDL, COVID-19, Assessments, Communicating with Parents, and Engagement.

Learn More about UDL

Websites

- [CAST | Until learning has no limits](#) for what's new at CAST
- [CAST: COVID Teaching and Learning Resources](#)
- Take a deep dive into [CAST's UDL Guidelines](#) for strategies to reduce barriers.
- [UDL On Campus](#) for concrete strategies for assessments
- UDL credential website: [Get certified in Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#)
For states, districts, or schools interested in learning more about the certification opportunities and packages for educators, please contact info@learningdesigned.org.

Articles

- [UDL: A Teacher's Guide](#) to learn more about UDL
- [Lesson Planning with UDL](#) to learn more about how to design lessons with UDL
- Explore the [Learning Designed](#) platform to find resources, UDL credentials, and network around UDL.
- Understand how [Universal Design for Learning supports the learning brain](#).
- [Universal Design for Learning to Design Assessments](#): Discuss and document reactions.

Videos or Webinars

- The CAST free webinar [Lessons from Remote Learning](#) highlights strategies from a teacher, principal, and district leader.
- Video: [UDL, Variability, and Emotion in Learning](#)

Books

- [Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice](#) lays out the foundations of UDL.
- A full list of books about UDL from [CAST Publishing](#), including:
 - [UDL Now](#), by Katie Novak to learn the basics of UDL implementation
 - [Unlearning: Changing Your Beliefs and Your Classroom Using UDL](#) by Allison Posey and Katie Novak

Learn More about Accessibility

Websites

- [National Center on Accessible Educational Materials \(AEM\)](#) to explore free webinars and resources to help bring accessibility to your learning design
- [Five Things Educators Can Do to Buy Accessible](#)
- [Designing for Accessibility with POUR](#)
- [Is It Accessible? Questions to Ask](#)
- [Creating Accessible Documents and Slide Decks](#)
- [Creating Accessible Video](#)
- [Creating Accessible Social Media Posts](#)

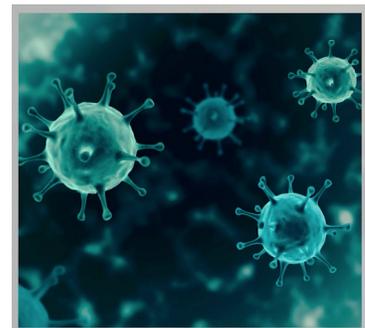
Videos or Webinars

- [Coming to terms: The meaning of accessible](#)
- [Curating Accessible OER with Confidence](#)

Learn More about COVID-19

Websites

- Council of Chief State School Officers' Recommendations for Restart & Recovery: [Assessment Considerations for Fall 2020](#)
- Fact Sheet: U.S. Department of Education [Impact of COVID-19 on Assessment and Accountability under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)



- [Executive Functioning in Online Environments](#), from CAST's UDL on Campus
- [TIES Distance Learning series](#), with many articles on working with students with significant cognitive disabilities during remote learning
- [Special Education Guidance](#), from the U.S. Department of Education related to COVID-19
- Fact Sheet: U.S. Department of Education, [Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools While Protecting the Civil Rights of Students](#)
- U.S. Department of Education: [Resources for Learning at Home](#)
- [7 Tips for Returning to School During COVID-19](#)
- [Virginia's plan](#) for moving forward during a COVID-19 impacted school year.
- Fact Sheet: [Providing Services to English Learners During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (Elementary and Secondary Education)

Learn More about Assessments

Websites

- Formative assessment [ideas](#) from educators and [7 Smart Fast Ways to do Formative Assessments](#)
- [A study guide](#) on formative assessments (recommended books, articles, etc.)
- Assessment tip: Make sure learning goals are [front and center](#) - where all students can access them
- [UDL Tips for Assessment](#)

Articles

- TIES Center and CAST distance learning piece on using [data to inform instruction](#)
- UDL and Assessment: [What, Why, and How?](#)
- [Classroom Assessment Principles that Support Teaching and Learning](#), an article from the Center for Assessment, Design, Research, and Evaluation (CADRE)
- [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) and the Future of Assessment](#), a brief by researchers at CAST

Books

- [Using Formative Assessment to Improve Student Outcomes in Classrooms](#), by Michael Connell (CAST, 2019)

Learn More about Engagement

Websites

- Use the [RULER and Mood Meter](#) from Yale Center on Emotional Intelligence to help students learn to assess emotions and to discuss how emotions can be a barrier or helpful to learning. Watch a short [video on the mood meter](#) or see how [Seattle Public Schools](#) use it.
- [Emotions and Learning](#) from CAST's UDL On Campus
- [Social Learning](#) from CAST's UDL On Campus
- Tips: Ideas on how to [personalize the reading experience](#)
- Top 10 UDL Tips for Designing an [Engaging Learning Environment](#)
- [Design better powerpoint presentations](#) by keeping student preferences in mind
- [Yale Center on Emotional Intelligence](#), with research and classroom examples on integrating emotions into learning

Articles

- [We Feel, Therefore We Learn](#) by Mary-Helen Immordino-Yang explores the central role of emotion for learning.
- [How to Support the Emotional Link to Learning](#), including how to use UDL and the Mood Meter to support students' emotions
- TIES Distance Learning: [Understand and Communicate about Emotions for Deeper Learning](#)

Video

- [We Feel, Therefore We Learn: The Neuroscience of Social Emotion](#), by Dr. Mary-Helen Immordino-Yang
- Yale Center: [Using Emotional Intelligence to Combat COVID-19 anxiety](#).

Books

- [Permission to Feel](#), by Marc Brackett of the Yale Center on Emotional Intelligence

- [Engage the Brain: How to Design for Learning that Taps into the Power of Emotions](#) by CAST's Allison Posey (ASCD, 2018)

Learn More about Connecting with Parents and Families

Websites

- [Engaging Families as Assessment Partners](#)
- [How to break down communication barriers between teachers and families](#)
- A series of articles to [Partner with Families](#), from Understood, including [8 Tips to Try](#) and [Family Engagement and Student Success: What research says](#)
- [Having Difficult Conversations with Families: A Teacher's Guide](#), from Understood
- Communicating About Autism: [Correlating Fears and Stresses Through Parent-Professional Partnerships](#)
- [Gathering and Giving Information with Families](#)

Suggestions

- Strategies
 - Offer flexible ways for parents and caregivers to be in touch with you.
 - Move from an interview to a conversation. Don't just ask questions, provide space for parents and caregivers to ask questions as well.
 - Start with strengths and what is going well with the student.
 - Ask parents and caregivers to problem solve with you. Ask about routines, the learning environment, family interests, strategies for transitioning, goals
 - If a caregiver is reluctant to answer a question, offer friendly but specific questions based on observations you have made in the classroom or based on classroom goals.
 - Offer a strategy that has worked well in the past and why it worked.
 - Explain why this information is important and how you plan to use it.
 - Reiterate the goal in order to work together to support the learner.
- **Letter Home Ideas** that could be included in a letter home to parents and

caregivers at the start of the school year

- Here is an article on [how to write an effective email to parents and caregivers](#), from Understood.
- What is your preferred method of communication (text, email, phone call etc)?
- What is the best time to reach out to you?
- What are the strengths of your child?
 - Academic ...
 - Character ...
 - Physical ...
- What are you concerned about for this upcoming year?
 - Has your child seemed disengaged from school during remote learning?
 - Has your child enjoyed learning online or in a remote setting more? Why?
- What has worked well in the past for your child at home or in school?
 - Does your child enjoy working in groups or as part of a team?
 - Have you talked with your child about the ways/environments that help them learn?
- What kind of teacher do you need me to be for your child?
 - What systems have you noticed leave your child feeling successful?
 - When your child is struggling what are the best ways to keep them motivated?



● **Considerations** for sharing and asking of parents and caregivers

- Consider sharing a [“live”](#) version of your syllabus that will be updated and includes links to folders and calendars, so parents can help students and see upcoming assignments/deadlines.
- Consider asking: When (what time of day) does your child seem most

interested in learning?

Acknowledgements

This Assessment Playbook was developed by CAST. **Please consider sharing your opinion and insights about the videos and the Playbook through a brief anonymous [survey](#).**

CAST www.cast.org is a nonprofit organization with more than 30 years of groundbreaking work to create a world where “learning has no limits” employing the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL, pioneered at CAST, is an evidence-based framework for designing inclusive learning opportunities for a variety of settings. The principles of UDL rest on research from the learning sciences and have been incorporated into all federal legislation governing K–12 and higher education (including most recently Perkins V) as a scientifically valid approach to educational practice that enables all learners to be successful (Meyer, Rose & Gordon, 2014).

UDL provides a framework for designing flexible learning environments and educational materials that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. Universal Design for Learning remains CAST’s core lever for change in all areas of our work which includes applied research, software development, curriculum design, and professional development in education and the workforce. CAST has successfully directed multiple national centers and research projects that have advanced learning opportunities for individuals with disabilities working in partnership with diverse stakeholders. CAST is currently leading the [National Center on Accessible Educational Materials](#) (2019–2024); the [National Center on Universal Design for Learning](#) (2008–Present), the [Center on Inclusive Software for Learning](#) (2018–2022); and the [Center on Inclusive Technology and Education Systems](#) (2018–2023).

Many of the resources shared in this Playbook can be found on [Learning Designed](#), an online platform that promotes learning about and implementation of UDL.

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