

# UNIVERSAL DESIGN AT PORTOLA MIDDLE SCHOOL

Scholar-in-Residence Presentation  
Portola PTSA/PARC Meeting  
Tuesday, September 10, 2013

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# SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE BACKGROUND

## Research

- Perceptions of ability in and out of school
- Identities around school
- Focus on disability
- Book on “disabling practices”

## Teaching

- Adolescent Development classes to new teachers at SFSU
- Supervising and coaching teachers
- Secondary credentials from Boston Teacher Residency
- Teacher in Boston Public Schools

## Community

- WCCUSD graduate (Fairmont, Adams, ECHS)
- ECHS debate coach and founder of Summer Debate Institute
- Work with ECHS Tech Academy and college/career supports

# ROLE OF SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE IN WCCUSD

- Design and conduct action research
- Facilitate dialogue on current education research
- Provide support on new instructional strategies
- Observe WCCUSD schools to discover successful strategies
- Communicate findings and stimulate new directions and opportunities informed by the local context

# RESEARCH DIMENSION

- Visits to all six district middle schools
- Video-recorded observations, interviews, and case studies in five middle schools
- Central question:
  - How do qualities of middle school environments expand or restrict students' opportunities to access content knowledge, participate and express their abilities, and engage in the learning process?
- Other responsibilities: updates to school board, organize district-wide education conference

# WHAT MAKES PORTOLA UNIQUE

- Observations twice a week in all classes
- Focus on 3-4 case study classrooms
- School-wide surveys with students, families, teachers
- 2-3 professional development sessions each month, working with teachers on UDL strategies
- Coaching and support role for teachers
- Online “clearinghouse” of teaching strategies and UDL practices to share with whole staff
- Design action plan for extending accessibility, challenge, and engagement beyond the Scholar-in-Residence year

# UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

For more  
resources,  
visit  
[www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)

# Universal Design for Learning

## Recognition Networks

The "what" of learning



How we gather facts and categorize what we see, hear, and read. Identifying letters, words, or an author's style are recognition tasks.

## Strategic Networks

The "how" of learning



Planning and performing tasks. How we organize and express our ideas. Writing an essay or solving a math problem are strategic tasks.

## Affective Networks

The "why" of learning



How learners get engaged and stay motivated. How they are challenged, excited, or interested. These are affective dimensions.

# BRAIN NETWORKS AND LEARNING

<b>Brain System</b>	<b>UDL Principle</b>	<b>Connection to Teaching</b>
<b>Recognition</b>	<b>Multiple Options of Representation</b>	<b>Teacher's presentation of the material to be learned</b>
<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Multiple Options of Expression</b>	<b>Students' opportunity to show what they know about what they are learning</b>
<b>Affective</b>	<b>Multiple Options of Engagement</b>	<b>Student active involvement in their learning, with each other and with the teacher</b>



# UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

- School and classroom environment
- Strengths address limitations
- Anticipate barriers to learning
- Common supports
- No “average learner”, address learner diversity
- Promote access
- Content, assessment, and engagement are interconnected
- Multiple means of representing content, expressing knowledge, and engaging in learning

# ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS



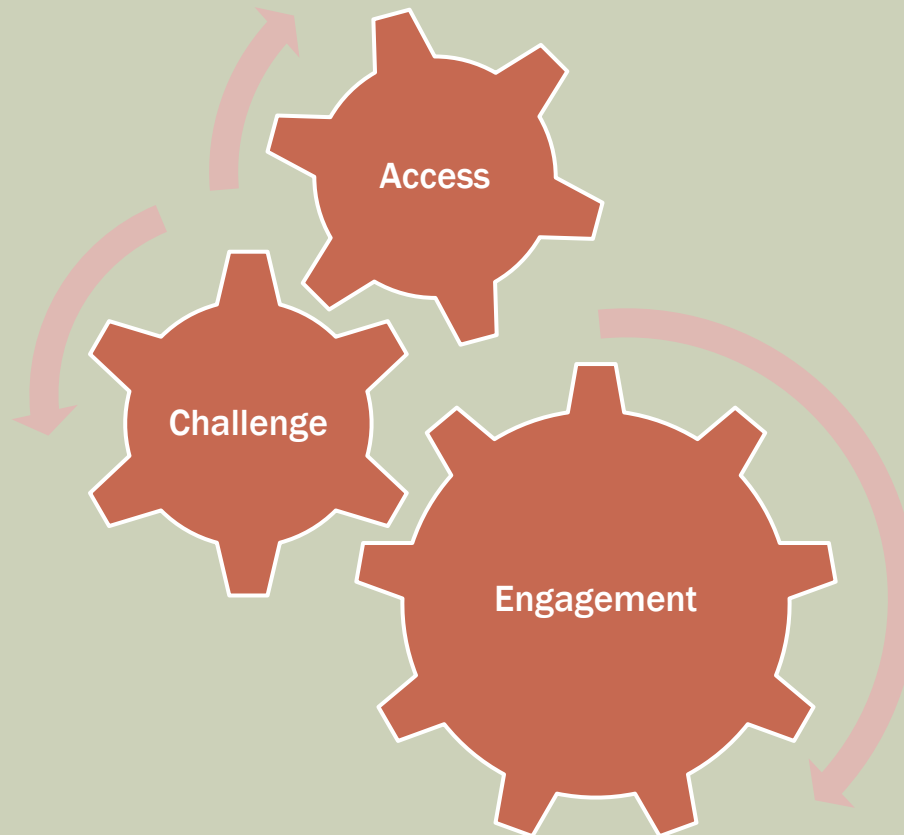
**Plan**

**Barriers**

**Supports**

# SUMMARY

UDL is an approach to make content, instruction, and school and classroom activities accessible, challenging, and engaging for all students.



# OVERLAPS WITH COMMON CORE STANDARDS

- UDL emphasizes creating **effective, flexible goals** and the Common Core provides a framework for what goals will be effective.
- In teaching the Common Core standards, educators should provide **multiple ways to access** resources and content so learners are given the opportunity to take charge of their own learning.
- **Specific areas of alignment:**
  - Connections to authentic, real-world scenarios
  - Emphasis on oral communication and argumentation
  - Incorporation of media and technology
  - Building knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers

# COMMON CORE CONSIDERATIONS

- According to UDL, an effective goal must be flexible enough to allow learners multiple ways to successfully meet it.

**To be universally designed, the standard must not embed the means (the how) with the goal (the what).**

## Examples:

- “Apply and extend previous understandings of multiplication to multiply rational numbers.” NOT
- “Tell and write time in hours and half-hours using analog and digital clocks.” (writing can be a barrier)

## Common Core issues:

- Some standards confuse means and goals (barriers)
- Focus is less on engagement

# WHAT UDL LOOKS LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM

- Different styles can be universally designed – common feature is multiple access points
- Teachers might have flexible goals, methods, materials, and assessments...
  - ...within one class period
  - ...across a week
  - ...across a unit
  - ...over a month
- More active participation from a wide range of students
- More student talk and self-advocacy
- More use of technology or other external resources to support content understanding
- Explicit instruction to teach students how to adapt, problem-solve, and address their own academic barriers

# WHAT UDL LOOKS LIKE IN THE SCHOOL



**Interdisciplinary  
Thematic Units**

**Organization  
Skills**

**Student-  
designed  
learning games**

**Integrating  
movement into  
learning**

# BENEFITS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

## Ideally...

- **Students of all abilities will be able to access content, express knowledge, and engage in learning, feeling a sense of pride and success**
- **More opportunities to demonstrate strengths, talents, and academic mastery**
- **Appreciation and celebration of learner diversity**
- **More challenging experiences – students encouraged to apply knowledge to different situations**
- **More integrated supports for struggling learners**



# WORK TO DATE

- **Three full days of summer professional development on UDL for interested Portola teachers**
- **Initial exploratory observations in eight classrooms**
- **Individual conversations with teachers**
- **Meetings with all middle school principals to prepare for visits to five other schools**
- **Two whole staff trainings on UDL strategies (as of this week)**
- **Preparing permission and release materials for video-recorded observations (which parents should expect sometime next month)**

# DIRECTION FOR THE YEAR

- **Professional Development**
  - Introduction to UDL sessions
  - Video analysis of teaching
  - Problem-solving around student cases
  - Specific strategies for classroom practice
- **Implementation of school-wide UDL approaches**
- **Other: video-tape classrooms, interview students and teachers (to document Portola culture and identify case studies for research, collect material for professional development)**

# DISCUSSION OF BARRIERS

- Turn and talk to the person next to you.
- Discuss the following questions:
  - What factors will make it difficult for Portola administration, teachers, and staff to make the learning environment both accessible and engaging?
  - What role can parents and community members play in alleviating some of those barriers?

# ADDRESSING BARRIERS THROUGH PARENT ENGAGEMENT

**How can parents provide supports that address  
key barriers?**

**Ideas:**

# QUESTIONS?

For additional questions and comments, please  
contact AnnMarie Baines by email at  
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