

# Universal Design for Learning: Multiple Means of Action and Expression

Educator provides students with multiple ways to express their learning by applying the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principle of Multiple Means of Action and Expression.

## Key Method

The educator strategically designs lessons that offer students flexibility in choice and support to access, engage in, and demonstrate learning.

## Method Components

### **Strategic Networks: Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression**

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principle of Providing Multiple Means of Action and Expression connects to strategies that strengthen students' strategic networks. The brain's strategic networks are the "how" of learning—we use them to plan, perform, and monitor how we learn information. Educators can grow students' strategic networks by offering flexibility and options in how students access learning materials and demonstrate their understanding of the content. Rather than providing differentiation on a student-by-student basis, educators embed multiple options for action and expression into the lesson design so that all students have the same opportunities to participate in learning activities and express themselves as their peers.

The following guidelines provide a more in depth understanding of the Strategic Networks.

### **Guideline 4: Provide Options for Physical Action**

Making physical and virtual learning environments accessible for all learners reduces barriers to classroom engagement and expression (CAST, 2018). Guideline 4 emphasizes the importance of providing all students with acceptable choices for how they will demonstrate learning outcomes by removing physical and curricular barriers that create additional challenges to access and expression. Properly designed instructional materials and resources provide a seamless interface with common assistive technologies through which students can navigate and express what they know. Educators may introduce students to no- or low-tech assistive technologies which are easy to use and inexpensive (e.g., options to use pencil grips, headphones, keyboards, different writing utensils, printing assignments in larger fonts, color coding). High-tech assistive technologies are usually designed for individuals with more

significant physical impairments (e.g., spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy) and do require a power source. To determine the best and most appropriate tools for students and to learn more about the range of supports available, work closely with the occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech and language pathologists, and assistive technology specialists in your district. Educators support Guideline 4 by considering the following checkpoints and supporting questions.

- **Checkpoint 4.1: Vary the methods for response and navigation.** Do I reduce barriers for students by providing alternate ways for them to physically access the instructional materials required to learn and by allowing students to respond to learning in a variety of ways?
- **Checkpoint 4.2: Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies.** Do I provide options to use no-tech, low-tech, and high-tech technologies (assistive and/or instructional) to all students?

### **Guideline 5: Expression and Communication**

Educators often rely solely on writing skills as means of students' expression. However, when the learning objective does not specifically require formal writing conventions, students should be allowed and encouraged to express their learning through a variety of communication modes (e.g., slide deck presentations, posters, role-play activities, storytelling, video or music creation). This approach is important not only for students with physical challenges, but students who might need additional time to process or who experience anxiety when asked to speak in front of others. Educators incorporate Guideline 5 by considering the following checkpoints and supporting questions:

- **Checkpoint 5.1: Use multiple media for communication.** Am I providing students with options to express their learning and communicate in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them?
- **Checkpoint 5.2: Use multiple tools for construction and composition.** Am I allowing students to select the tools and materials they will use to create a product to communicate the learning objective?
- **Checkpoint 5.3: Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance.** Am I providing students with graduated levels of support for their practice and performance?

### **Guideline 6: Executive Functions**

The term executive function is an umbrella term that includes many skills necessary for self-management: focusing attention, managing time, controlling emotion, and organizing materials. Executive function skills are necessary for students to set goals, develop strategies for achieving goals, and evaluate success. All students vary in their development of these skills, and deficits in executive function may increase learning

challenges for students with and without disabilities. Strategies that scaffold executive functioning for students include keeping a calendar or planner, breaking large assignments into smaller tasks, creating checklists, and giving students time to organize their space. Educators support Guideline 6 by considering the following checkpoints and supporting questions:

- **Checkpoint 6.1: Guide appropriate goal-setting.** Am I guiding students to set goals appropriate to their developmental needs and learning targets?
- **Checkpoint 6.2: Support planning and strategy development.** Am I supporting students as they plan and develop strategies to reach their goals?
- **Checkpoint 6.3: Facilitate managing information and resources.** Am I helping students to identify and manage the appropriate resources to help them meet their goals?
- **Checkpoint 6.4: Enhance capacity for monitoring progress.** Are students able to monitor their progress and re-evaluate the usefulness of supports and strategies as they work toward their goals?

## Supporting Rationale and Research

The Supporting Rationale and Research includes resources for learning more about UDL Multiple Means of Action and Expression. As you interact with these learning materials, take time to reflect on your professional practice.

### Action and Expression Guidelines and Checkpoints

**CAST.** The UDL guidelines (version 2.2). <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>.

**UDL in the Early Childhood Classroom.** This [research article](#) provides an overview of strategies that provide all learners various ways to navigate the learning environment, express their understanding, and demonstrate new knowledge and skills.

**Action and Expression Strategies.** Developed by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, this 5-minute [video](#) describes strategies for implementing multiple means of action and expression.

**UDLA.** The Universal Design for Learning Academy developed a video series focused on UDL Multiple Means of Action and Expression: [Introduction to Action and Expression](#); [Physical Action](#); [Expression and Communication](#); and [Executive Functions](#).

**The Strategic Network: Planning and Sharing Learning.** The New Zealand Inclusive Education [website](#) provides suggestions and strategies for implementing multiple means of action and expression. The following links can be used to access a specific

guideline: [Provide Options for Physical Action](#); [Provide Options for Expression and Communication](#); and [Provide Options for Executive Functions](#).

### **Assessments, Rubrics, Choice Boards, and Other Strategies**

**High School Science: UDL in Practice.** In this short [video](#), a high school science teacher shares how she defines specific goals to help make content more relevant to students and explains the different options for students to express their knowledge.

**Lesson Plan Spotlight.** This 3-minute [video](#) illustrates how one educator provided students with options to demonstrate their understanding of content.

**How We Use Digital Text.** In this [video](#), students provide insight into how they use technology (digital text) on a daily basis for educational purposes.

**UDL for Teachers: Action and Expression.** This [website](#) provides videos, articles, and strategies for the three guidelines that align with providing multiple means of action and expression.

**Multiple Means of Expression and Assessment.** In this short [video](#), an educator describes the use of authentic assessments and an example of how to provide students with a variety of options to demonstrate their understanding of an essential question.

**Holistic, Single-point, and Analytic Rubrics, Oh My!** In this [blog](#), Katie Novak explains the value of using rubrics to provide students with clear expectations and the criteria to master goals. Novak describes three rubric options: holistic, analytic, and single-point, and provides examples of each. Infographic: [Quick Access Guide to Universally Designing Rubrics](#).

**Single-Point Rubric.** This [article](#) from Edutopia provides reasons to try a single-point rubric and how to use this format to provide students with feedback. This [blog](#) provides tips for implementing, examples of, and student perspectives of single point rubrics. This [research article](#) describes key features of the single point rubric, how it is used, and how it is different from traditional multiple point rubrics.

**Choice Boards: Benefits, Design Tips, and Differentiation.** In this [blog](#), Dr. Catlin Tucker provides an overview of the benefits of using choice boards and explains how to use them to universally design learning experiences for students.

**The Power of Choice Boards.** This [resource](#) provides several examples of how to use choice boards within various content areas and this [resources](#) is specific to science.

**UDL-Aligned Strategies.** This [website](#) provides instructional methods and tools used by education professionals that are aligned with the networks and guidelines of UDL.

**Teaching Self-Regulation.** This [video](#) illustrates how one teacher incorporates supports for choice time to help students learn to take turns and manage their emotions.

### **Technology Related Resources**

**Low-Tech, Mid-Tech, and High-Tech Assistive Technology.** This [blog](#) provides examples of how various technologies can be used in the classroom.

**Texthelp and UDL.** Every student in Arkansas has access to three Texthelp tools – Read&Write, Equatio, and uPar – to help increase student achievement in reading and mathematics. Texthelp provides resources and tools to practically implement UDL: [7 UDL Examples and Strategies for the Classroom](#); [Assistive Technology and UDL: Reaching Every Student with Read & Write](#); and [Reaching Every Student with Equatio](#).

**Arkansas Accessible Educational Materials.** This [website](#) is designed to provide information about accessible educational materials, including available resources and services, to Arkansas educators, parents, and students.

**National Center on Accessible Educational Materials.** The National Center on Accessible Educational Materials for Learning [website](#) at CAST provides technical assistance, coaching, and resources to increase the availability and use of accessible educational materials and technologies for learners with disabilities across the lifespan.

**Assistive Technology Resource Guide for Schools.** This [Arkansas guide](#) places an increased focus on assistive technology and the application to a UDL Framework.

### **Executive Functions**

**The 3 Areas of Executive Function.** This [article](#) by Understood provides insight into executive function. Links are embedded within the article to learn more about the areas of working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control.

**Executive Function Challenges.** This [article](#) focuses on the use of classroom accommodations to support students who struggle with executive skills.

**Executive Function 101.** Developed by the National Center for Learning Disabilities, this [e-Book](#) is designed to explain executive functions in an understandable way and to help pinpoint the struggles students might experience.

**Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning.** This [resource](#) includes a series of brief summaries that identify the skills that are necessary for school achievement and various activities that can be used to help students develop these skills.

**Brain-Based Teaching Strategies to Build Executive Function.** This Edutopia [blog](#) provides strategies that can be used to help build executive function in students.

## Submission Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria

This section is divided into three areas: Overview, Artifacts and Evidence, and Reflection. To earn this micro-credential, you must receive “Passing” on Parts One and Three, and “Yes” on all criteria in Part Two.

### Part One. Overview

Read the Overview criteria carefully to ensure a thorough understanding of the expectations for a “passing” submission.

**Prompt:** Explain your reasoning for selecting this micro-credential which is focused on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principle of Multiple Means of Action and Expression. In your response, describe your current educational setting and context for implementing UDL. Include the following:

- grade level(s) served and content or specialty area(s)
- barriers or challenges students experience in your classroom or learning environment related to instructional materials and assessments
- specific ways in which you hope the learning in this micro-credential will reduce and/or remove the barriers or challenges for all students

**This submission is scored either “passing” or “not passing.”**

***Passing:*** Earner includes a response to each part of the prompt; total response should be at a minimum of 250-words and provide adequate detail to help the scorer understand the context for your submission.

### Part Two. Artifacts and Evidence

Read the Artifacts and Evidence Submission requirements carefully to ensure a thorough understanding of the expectations for a “Yes” on each task.

#### Task 1: Designing Options for Expression

Design a new learning plan or redesign an existing plan to provide students with at least three options for expressing and/or demonstrating their understanding of content. A template for [Designing Options for Expression](#) is provided; however, you may choose to use a different format or document for this part of the task. The learning plan should include:

- the Arkansas State Standard(s) aligned to the plan,
- the goal(s) of the plan (What do you want all students to know and be able to do?),



- barriers or challenges that students might experience in reaching the goal(s), and
- a description of the options provided to students for expressing and/or demonstrating their understanding of the content.

Additionally, submit a written response or a video/audio recording in which you provide a rationale for including each option in the learning design. The rationale should also address the identified potential barriers or challenges and the ways in which you incorporated the use of the UDL Multiple Means of Action and Expression Checkpoints to optimize learning.

*Please submit the lesson design and written response (250-word minimum) or audio recording with the titles “Task 1 Designing Options for Expression” and “Task 1 Written Response” or “Task 1 Video/Audio Recording” as evidence for Task 1.*

### **Task 2: Creating Self-Monitoring Tools**

For each of the three options for expressing and/or demonstrating understanding of content included in Task 1, create a tool (e.g., checklist, scoring rubric, exemplars, graphic organizers, digital reflection journal, etc.) to aid students with self-monitoring their progress towards meeting the goal(s).

Include a written response to explain how each tool will support students with improving their self-monitoring and executive functioning skills.

*Please submit the student self-monitoring tools and written response (250-word minimum) with the titles “Task 2 Student Self-Monitoring Tools” and “Task 2 Written Response” as evidence for Task 2.*

### **Task 3: Impacting Students and the Learning Environment**

Implement the learning plan designed in Task 1 and provide students with the self-monitoring tools from Task 2. Submit one student work product for each of the options provided to students for expressing and/or demonstrating their understanding of the content.

Additionally, submit an audio recording of a reflective conversation between you and a student. Ask reflective questions that prompt the student to describe the ways in which the flexible options for expressing and/or demonstrating understanding and the use of self-monitoring tools impacted their learning experience.

*Please submit the student work products and the audio recording with the titles “Task 3 Student Work Products” and “Task 3 Audio Recording” as evidence for Task 3.*

## Artifacts and Evidence Scoring Guide

Tasks	Not Met	Progressing	Yes
Task 1: Designing Options for Expression	<p>Earners <u>does not submit</u> a learning plan as evidence for Task 1.</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Earners <u>does not submit</u> a written response or a video/audio recording as evidence for Task 1.</p>	<p>Earners submit a learning plan that <u>includes some but not all</u> criteria as outlined in Task 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arkansas state standard(s)</li> <li>Student goal(s)</li> <li>Potential barriers or challenges</li> <li>Thorough descriptions of the three options for expression and/or demonstration</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Earners submit a written response or a video/audio recording that <u>partially</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide a rationale for including each option for expression and/or demonstration,</li> <li>addresses the potential barriers or challenges, and</li> <li>describes the ways in which the UDL action and expression checkpoints are incorporated in the learning plan.</li> </ul>	<p>Earners submit a learning plan that <u>includes all</u> criteria as outlined in Task 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arkansas state standard(s)</li> <li>Student goal(s)</li> <li>Potential barriers or challenges</li> <li>Thorough descriptions of the three options for expression and/or demonstration</li> </ul> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p>Earners submit a written response (250-word minimum) or a video/audio recording that <u>thoroughly</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides a rationale for including each option for expression and/or demonstration,</li> <li>address the potential barriers or challenges, and</li> <li>describe the ways in which the UDL action and expression checkpoints are incorporated in the learning plan.</li> </ul>
	Task 2: Creating Self-Monitoring Tools	<p>Earners <u>does not submit</u> tools for self-monitoring as required for evidence as outlined in Task 2.</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Earners <u>does not submit</u> a written response as required for evidence as outlined in Task 2.</p>	<p>Earners submit a tool for self-monitoring for <u>one or two of the three options</u> for expressing and/or demonstrating understanding of content.</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Earners submit a written response that <u>partially</u> explains how each tool will support students with improving self-monitoring and executive functioning skills.</p>



<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Task 3: Impacting Students and the Learning Environment</p>	<p>Earners <u>does not submit</u> student work products as required for evidence as outlined in Task 3.</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Earners <u>does not submit</u> an audio recording of a reflective conversation with a student as required for evidence as outlined in Task 3.</p>	<p>Earners submit one student work product for <u>one or two of the options</u> provided to students for expressing and/or demonstrating understanding of content.</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Earners submit an audio recording of a reflective conversation with a student. The recording <u>partially demonstrates the student describing</u> the ways in which flexible options for expressing and/or demonstrating understanding and the use of self-monitoring tools impacted their learning experience.</p>	<p>Earners submit one student work product for <u>each of the three options</u> provided to students for expressing and/or demonstrating understanding of content.</p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p>Earners submit an audio recording of a reflective conversation with a student. The recording <u>thoroughly demonstrates the student describing</u> the ways in which flexible options for expressing and/or demonstrating understanding and the use of self-monitoring tools impacted their learning experience.</p>
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### Part Three. Reflection

Read the Reflection criteria carefully to ensure a thorough understanding of the expectations for a “passing” submission.

**Prompt:** In what ways did the tasks in this micro-credential optimized student learning? Reflect on the following in your response.

- Describe the ways in which the flexible options for expressing and/or demonstrating understanding and the student self-monitoring tools impacted student learning and the overall learning environment.
- In what ways did the UDL Multiple Means of Action and Expression assist in reducing or removing barriers and/or challenges often experienced by students?
- As you continue to incorporate Multiple Means of Action and Expression into lesson design, explain what you might do differently or how you might improve the learning experience.

**This submission is scored either “passing” or “not passing.”**

**Passing:** Earners include a response for each part of the prompt 250-word minimum. Responses should clarify and further explain how earning this micro-credential has impacted your professional practice and student outcomes.