

**Transcript for Accessibility Bites: UDL 3.0 in Practice**  
**BCcampus webinar hosted on January 29, 2026**  
**Presenter: Dr. Seanna Takacs**  
**Host: Dr. Helena Prins**

DR. SEANNA TAKACS:

Thanks for joining, everyone. It's a pleasure to be here. So today, we're going to be talking about bite-sized UDL. We're going to talk about some ways of growing your UDL practice.

So a little bit about me before we get started. I actually work in accessibility services at KPU as the practice lead, so I'm a faculty member there. I work with students and I also do faculty support and development, and I also do work as a UDL and accessibility consultant and do lots of activities like this.

So before we jump in, this has really been on my mind lately is really asking the question, what is education for? I think because we're very wrapped up in education right now as we should be with lots of details around AI, around assessment, around behaviour. We're in the middle of a pretty big cultural shift around education, psychology, the field of disability is very much in flux right now. So it's a nice idea to have a bit of a reset, I think, and to say, you know, really, what is education for? What are we here for? What are we doing this all for? And just in my own work in my own life, you know, I'm surrounded by educators who are asking very, very practical pragmatic questions. You know, things that are going to really serve our world and serve our society, things like designing sustainable fabrics. And, you know, what are we going to do about the mental health struggles that are happening for so many teenagers these days? You know, how do we go about understanding flooding in the Fraser Valley, which we've recently experienced again? What kind of policy changes can we have? You know, what can we really do about AI proliferation? So there are these very practical problems that I think it's really important to keep in mind as, you know, as we're going through these sorts of presentations, and, you know, as we're really looking at our teaching practice.

So just as a reminder, learning is a social, emotional, and identity-based process. At the end of the day, students are learning content, but they are developing a sense of identity. They are developing a sense of social and emotional grounding. As educators, we are really, really key in that.

So just as a little reminder to get started, what is universal design for learning? Universal design for learning is an inclusive framework for designing curriculum, and that's a really, really key point that it is aimed at curriculum design, and it's curriculum design that's grounded in the variability in learning. It focuses on access and it builds learning through multiple pathways from access on.

I'm not going to go through the entire framework because that's a lot and I have other workshops on that that take half days. But just as a reminder, this is the UDL Framework. If you can see, it's organized according to the brain network. So there's a network for engagement. That's why we're here, why we're learning. There is the network for representation. That's more of the content-based network. Then there's the action and expression network. That's really about how we're going to show our learning. And what's really interesting about this, usually a lot of presentations on UDL stop at the networks, but I think it's actually really interesting and important to point out that if you look at the top line, it starts with access, and that is a key piece of the UDL Framework is starting with access. Without access, you

have nothing else, right? Again, in other workshops, I really go over the idea that a lot of the educational problems that we run into are actually access problems. I'd really encourage you to go back to this framework and key into the access line. And really evaluate some of the problems or some of these tensions that I'm experiencing, are they really access problems? Is it that students are having trouble really paying attention, getting to class, really accessing the material? I would really encourage having a look at that.

Okay, next we're going to do five bytes of UDL. These are very practical things that I have noticed as a UDL consultant, as an accessibility services person working with faculty, doing faculty development. This stuff is straight from the field, if you will.

So the first thing, and I've heard this from students. I've heard this from instructors, it's in the literature. Love what you're teaching. That is the best first move that you can make. Many of us have gone into teaching because we have a passion for a certain domain. We have a passion for certain subject matter. There are questions, there are problems that we just love and we just never get away from. We address them in all sorts of different ways. That enthusiasm is contagious. Make sure that you're sharing your authentic questions, share your curiosity, share your history. Why did you get into this field and what really compels you about this field? What are your likes about the field? What are the dislikes about your field? You know, what are you skeptical about? That is actually, if you look down in the corner there, that's actually an access piece. So loving what you're teaching provides access for students. That's part of welcoming interests and welcoming identities. There's that piece, if you look down the third node there, Nurture joy in play. When the new UDL guidelines came out, there was actually a lot of skepticism about this joy in play. It was thought to be very, very frivolous and there were a lot of questions about why it's there. Of course, I keyed into that and I can see everywhere that nurturing joy in play around concepts around your field is absolutely key to anything that you're doing.

Okay. So the next bite, the next step that you can take is offering one other option. And this is actually stolen a little bit from Tom Tobin, who works in the US. He does, this is part of his plus one theory, and it's absolutely key. Again, this is part of that access level of the UDL Framework, so designing options for perceptions. And that asks us to support opportunities to customize the displays information, designing for multiple ways of perceiving information, right? So are we watching? Are we only listening to a lecture? Are we only doing a worksheet? Are we only watching a video? The idea is that we can design so that there's just one other option. If we're filling out a worksheet, we can also watch a video. We can do both together, or we can do one or the other. It's that idea, it's that idea of having an option that's really, really pivotal for learners. And what I recommend, I've seen some instructors, what they'll do is they'll say, Okay, we're going to throw out everything we've always known. We're going to throw out the paper, we're going to throw out the exam, quizzes. We're not doing any of that. We're going to do podcasts or we're going to do artwork, and you run a risk with that. That's why I wanted... What I usually advocate for is having something more traditional and then something that would be a little more modern, something a little more unusual, or in other words, something hot and something cool. One of the key things that you can do with this plus one approach is really embed perspective taking, right. So the idea is that when you're making a choice of the medium, there are some commitments that you're making to a medium. So if a student is choosing sort of the more modern podcast sort of approach around assessment, why would they choose a podcast? What opportunities does that present? What sorts of work would that discourage? What kind of, it's sort of like the medium is the message, Marshall McLuhan. There's that kind of thing that we really want to bring in. So it's not just what option are you choosing. It's also what perspective does that afford you by taking that other option?

Okay. The next piece that I wanted to talk about is the idea of assistive technology. Assistive technology is still something that a lot of instructors aren't super super comfortable with. There's this question about, well, what does that have to do with the classroom? How is that going to intersect with my design? And what happens is that the idea is that assistive technology typically stays the domain of accessibility services or the library or whoever is supplying assistive technology. In British Columbia, Assistive Technology B.C. takes care of all of that stuff. But again, one of the key moves that you can make around designing pedagogy is around assistive technology. In fact, that is where UDL came from. UDL came in early 1980s grew out of this field of technology that was really moving forward, it's like, well, if we can help students use assistive technology, if they can use a computer to communicate or to read better or to do math, we may have to look at intervention a lot differently. We can embed this into the design. I feel that still many years later, we're still trying to get instructors to really glom onto assistive technology and really look at how it can be embedded in a classroom. One of the pieces that a lot of instructors are still quite unfamiliar with is text-to-speech technology, and this is the idea where basically the computer is reading to the student. Traditionally, we've used text-to-speech for students with dyslexia. It's a workaround for decoding. But what we're finding is that text-to-speech can be really helpful for a number of reasons. Certainly, it's helpful for students with dyslexia, but it can also be really helpful for students who are experiencing anxiety. Text-to-speech allows you to plop your earbuds in and you can go outside. You can sit in a forest. You can listen to your lecture or you can listen to a book. It's very helpful for students who really struggle with chronic pain. Oftentimes, you can ask yourself, you know, sometimes it's important to sit and read, do the reading or read on a screen, but sometimes it can be helpful to listen, right? So you're really using those two modalities, the reading and auditory modalities. You can put them together, which can really help students, again, who are slow readers or who have reading disabilities. But that's what assistive technology is a real boon. Again, if you can explicitly address that in your design, if you can promote that in your design, it can be really helpful. Another piece and I know, this is a contentious one, but in the same vein, audio recording lectures, having them pre-recorded or having the ability to record lectures that are pre-planned is also really, makes your lectures, makes your work, much more accessible. It means not only that the student can review afterwards, but it also means that while they're sitting in class and they're listening, it means that they can feel confident in listening that everything's being picked up and they can make notes later. Again, that helps all sorts of different students in all sorts of different situations. You can even check in with yourself and you can think, how many times is it helpful to know that I can just listen to something and know that the notes will come later? Even in this presentation, you might be saying, Oh, should I be making notes? You don't have to because you know you'll get the notes later. This is how text-to-speech and audio recording works. What needs to go along with assistive technology is you need to have accessible documents, and BCcampus has all sorts of work on accessible documents, so I'm not going to belabour the point, but it's really key to have accessible PDFs and when in doubt create word documents because those are the most compatible for text-to-speech, screen readers, any audio recording technology, that's always really key. Okay.

So in this bite, I'd like to talk and I'd like to advocate for group work changes. I've been working with a lot of faculty recently around changing the way group work is done. So it looks like probably the best move that you can make is looking at group work as part of the process but not part of the outcome. A lot of times instructors will say, Well, they need to learn to work in groups. This is a huge project, so we need a bunch of people working on it together. This is often a fast track to building community. Well, if we glue all these students together, they'll build community, they'll get along, they'll be able to split the work, and that often doesn't happen. It often creates a lot of consternation and a lot of challenges. One

thing that I'd really like to advocate for in keeping with the UDL Framework. This does have to do, again, if you look down in the corner around emotional capacity, one of the pieces is really recognizing expectations, beliefs, and motivations. Often the way we structure group work is an exact counter to that. We often have students who come in and say, I'm really excited about this course. I'm excited to learn this. I'm excited to learn business processes or I'm excited to be out in the field. What do you mean there has to be group work? Can I do this by myself? In accessibility services, we hear this all the time. I'm happy to talk to people. I just don't want to have to work with people. And really what that is that students don't want to be held accountable for someone else's decisions about an outcome. Really, they're happy to be part of the process, but the outcome they really prefer to be their own. So that's really something to consider. Along those lines, you know, then you might wonder, well, you know, how are they going to learn to work together? And we've got all this work. It's really, there's a lot of interpretation. There's a lot of trial and error. How is that going to go? Again, you can give students the option to do that sort of reflection, to do that sort of work individually and together. This is a really great place. The group work question is a really great place where UDL can come in and say, here are some choices, right? It's not all or nothing. It's not that you do everything together, you work together, reflect together. You know, create perspectives together. You can do that in different ways, and then the outcome can be your own. This is also another place to check in on content beliefs. A lot of times we'll all be familiar with this. Students will come into a class with particular expectations. When we talk about these options for group work, we can say at the same time that oftentimes underlying the plan for group work is that we really want students to develop a sense of content that has to do with their own perspective, but with the perspective of others. So this is where we can say, this really has to do with content beliefs and how you feel you are developing as a learner, how you feel you're developing as a practitioner. That doesn't necessarily have to be done in a group. It can happen within class. It can happen through different collaborations. I guess in a word, it doesn't have to necessarily be once people are in a group, they have to stay in a group. So I would really encourage looking at group work a little bit differently. Again, from process to outcome.

The next bite is around structuring and organizing information. Again, this is part of the UDL Framework for building knowledge. This has to do with how we connect prior knowledge to new learning, how we highlight patterns and explore patterns and cultivate multiple ways of knowing. One of the key moves that you can make in your design, if you're adhering to UDL principles, is really acknowledging previous experience. That goes beyond saying, is this familiar? Have you read this before? Have you done this before? Some instructors will say, Oh, what do you mean you haven't done this before? I thought you took the prerequisite or thought I thought you would know this. It's really important to design space and time to acknowledge and assemble a sense of previous experience. And it's really that all previous experience is valid. Whether you have previous experience a little bit a lot, whether this is old hat to you, whether you've done something a little bit different, that's really, really key. And it's key to activating a student's sense of the content. But it's also really, really key to relating to a larger frame and a larger self. Because again, to go back to that initial quote, what we're trying to do in education is we are trying not just to develop content knowledge. We're trying to develop self-knowledge, identity knowledge, we're trying to develop goals. And part of developing goals is understanding where you've come from. You can't really figure out where you're going unless you know where you're coming from. Again, we see that all over the literature. That's really, really important. So the last piece I wanted to talk about with this is around structuring and organizing and being really explicit about transfer. So the transfer problem is the idea that once we learn something in class, how are we going to generalize it to other settings? How are we going to take it to the workplace? How are we going to take it to other courses? How are we going to take it to make sense of things that are just going on in the day today?

How are we going to make sense of TikTok videos, right? Transfer is everywhere. That is learning. So really what we want to do is be very explicit about that and say, you can say things like, you may have heard about this concept in this previous course, or you may have heard about this concept in this news article or you may not be aware, but there's this field in archaeology that you wouldn't expect to be related to this, but it is. So really mapping out the structure is that we know that knowledge exists in a constellation, it exists in a network. So being really explicit about what that network is like, what are the other nodes in the network that you're connecting this information to. By taking this approach, what it does is it prevents us from dumping everything into the LMS and saying, Okay, here's all the content, learn all the content. What it can feel like when you're sort of dumping everything on students, it can have that feeling like you're just memorizing the phone book, right? You're just memorizing a series of phone numbers, but unless it really has that sort of structure and context, it can be really difficult to learn for students.

Okay. I just wanted to talk about a couple of UDL resources I've provided here. The first one that you can have a look at it was a project. It was a many year project, actually, and we called it storying UDL. These are actually stories from the field. From students, from instructors, reporting on what does a good classroom look like? What does a frustrating classroom look like? What does access look like? What does it feel like? Because access does have very much it does have a feel and a lot of that access feel that it has to do with these five bytes that I've presented. It's really having well-structured courses with enthusiastic instructors, with accessible technology. That really adds a feel for access. So part of this work that I've presented today does come from the "Storying UDL Pressbook," that's available for you for free. You can have a look through it. You can dip in, you can dip out. I'll highlight that my son's art is on the front cover. It's a photo he took in Wales. That's a bit of a point of pride as well. Then I wanted to point out the second UDL resource is "Designing for Equity." This is KPU. The Teaching and Learning Commons, they have undertaken a huge project to put together a really comprehensive UDL resource that's well structured. It has mapping throughout. Again, you can dip in, you can dip out. You can access it if you know only a little bit about UDL. If you're more of a pro on UDL, it gives you the opportunity to practise and really hone your craft. So I would really recommend having a look at that.

And that's it. I went faster than I thought I would. So again, I'd like to thank you very much. Thanks for joining. And I saw that everyone offered lots and lots of questions, which I really appreciate to help to guide this. I think I'm not sure if we have 2 or 3 minutes for questions, but here goes.

HELENA PRINS:

We actually do, Seanna, well done. Yeah, there were many things resonating with me. The text-to-speech, I feel really called to pay more attention to that. I love how you rethink group work challenges, there's so many things. But if there's anyone with a question or a comment, I welcome you to raise your hand or if you want to put it in the chat, there's lots of appreciation in the chat. Seanna, I don't know if you can see that.

SEANNA: Oh, I'm just looking now.

HELENA:

Yeah, Sarah Nelson would like to hear more about group work, if there's any other thing you want to add about group work.

SEANNA:

Sure. So this is I've worked pretty closely with a couple of instructors from the School of Business here at KPU, and we're very lucky to have some business instructors who are very accessibility minded and they've really kind of hone their pedagogy in this way. One of them is, like, I'm done with group work. I'm not doing it at all anymore. And it really was out of frustration in that sort of way. But she was like, I can provide if I'm building community, which is really what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to build a community so students have each other, have resources, feel comfortable asking each other questions, and feel comfortable reflecting with each other. Being autocratic about it and gluing people into groups and saying, Now, do it, that's not how human community works. That's not how anyone works, right? So sometimes in work, we have to do that, but in the workplace, we still have options and choices, right? So that was her approach. Here's what I'm trying to develop. You're not going to be held accountable for each other's work. You are going to be held accountable for your own work. What she found is once she took the pressure off being accountable for each other's work. Then there was lots of discussion. Then there was lots of clubbing together. Then there were lots of meetings and mutual reflection. Taking that pressure off, that's what enabled the community to be built. So that's very interesting and it's only once you do that, you start to see the outcome. So, yeah, I'd really urge experimenting with that and saying, what am I really trying to do? There are some projects, another instructor said, you know, there's an accounting instructor said there's this giant case that they have to work on. It is too much for one person. You genuinely need to work in a group to hack your way through this case. Students are like, Well, that's fine. We'll do that because that is what would happen in you know, in the workplace, that if you have a giant case to work on, you do genuinely need to work with each other. But again, it's not autocratic. It's not someone saying, you will get together and work and build community and have a nice time together. It's someone saying, Okay, there's too much work, so how are we going to do this? That's the way you would attack it in the workplace. So students came to it a lot better. Yeah, Trisha was just saying, it also enables bias about what participation looks like or sounds like. Absolutely. In other workshops, I go on and on about engagement. Engagement looks really different for different people. Like engagement for me is really, really quiet. Me personally, and people are like, Are you upset? Do you not like this? It's like, No, I'm a big listener and I take a long time to listen and gather things and then I'll say something, right? I find that hard about autocratic group work is kind of well, you have to say something and you have to show you're keen and interested. It's like, Well, I am. I'm really keen and interested, but I'm listening first, right?

HELENA:

I appreciate that. Manisha had her hand up. Manisha, quick comment from you.

MANISHA:

Always so fascinating to learn from BCcampus. Excellent session. My question is Indigenous. You know we don't see universal design applies for everyone and Indigenous is so unique, so diverse Indigenous, First Nations. You added so much knowledge. What's the final words about UDL and Indigenous pedagogy in the different ways of knowing and being and doing?

SEANNA:

A lot of the work and working in community as an Indigenous... you know, connecting with Indigenous ways of knowing, that's kind of the influence here. We have a really really strong Indigenous program generally that touches a bunch of pieces at KPU and I work in KPU Wild Spaces around Indigenous ways of knowing, land-based pedagogy, and that's where a lot of this work in this position on community comes from. It's sort of, community is not forced, right? It can be, but that's going to give you a certain type of community. If we want a genuine community that's interest based, and that's relational, then

yeah, we need to look at group work a little bit differently. It's going to give you, it's going to give you different outcomes. That's where I wanted to present this today to say, I'm working with instructors and doing some consulting over this, looking at community differently is really helpful. It can make group work go better if you approach it a little differently. So yeah. How do you build trust in the community and rebuild? Exactly. Trust is key. That's why it's hard getting thrown together with people, right? Because really it's can I trust you? Can I trust you to make sure that I get an A? Because I need an A. You may not, but I do. That's really key. And if you can't trust someone that you're in a group with because you've been thrown together without any sort of orientation, I don't care if Moodle generates the groups. That doesn't matter. It's the trust. The trust has to build, right? That's the key. I thank you.

HELENA:

Thank you for the question. Thank you for the answer, Seanna. We are at time. Thanks, everyone.

SEANNA:

Thank you so much, everyone. Thank you.