



Promoting Communication Through Universal Design for Learning and Text Analysis

Overview

Learning Objectives:

After reviewing this powerpoint, you should be able to

- Define Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Compare UDL to Universal Design (UD)
- Explain how and why to do text analysis

UD vs UDL

- *Universal Design (UD)* ensures inclusive *access to physical environments* and technological products
- *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)* focuses on *access to educational materials* created for people with a wide range of abilities, literacy levels, preferred languages, and cultural practice
- UDL can help autistic individuals navigate situations where effective communication is essential

3 Pillars of UDL

- **Engagement:** autistic individuals becoming self-aware and identifying how they want to be a part of community life
- **Representation:** cultivating a variety of pathways to meet their communication, social, and sensory needs
- **Action & Expression:** helping them to develop ways they can express feelings, needs, and desires as one part of emerging self-advocacy

Understanding how the three pillars of UDL work provides a clear framework for designing community autism-friendly participation.

Benefits of UDL Principles

- Provides guidance for implementing inclusive education strategies by presenting information in a variety of ways
- Helps people show their knowledge and skills in multiple ways, and reduces instructional barriers by using educational accommodations while maintaining high achievement standards
- Can lead to greater independence
- Can be beneficial to a variety of populations including minorities, autistic individuals, and those with disabilities

Text Analysis

- Adjusting reading materials to low and high reading levels helps promote a **least restrictive environment**
- Providing written materials that are **consistent across community settings** goes a long way to **making learning easier and more predictable**
- Determining text complexity requires uploading a couple of sentences of text to a program's analysis tool and retrieving a **complexity level** such as easy reader and complex
- Community partners can choose to use single word supports, storyboard or comic book style information, icon-based, and photographic communication
- The more **literal the images are, the better**

Final Takeaways

- Community members can explore their own resources and needs to develop the signage they need to make their venues as autism-friendly as possible.
- Asking autistic people and their families for their opinions and insights can go a long way to designing effective signage, but so it's taking the time to watch and learn from how they spend their time in the community settings.
- Practice can make perfect and repetition is the key to learning!



Our thanks to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for their support.

Dr. Tina Fletcher, Alicia Chen, Ashlee Norris, Edgar Pizarro, Jason Tran, Megan Tripp

www.PlanningforAutism.com