



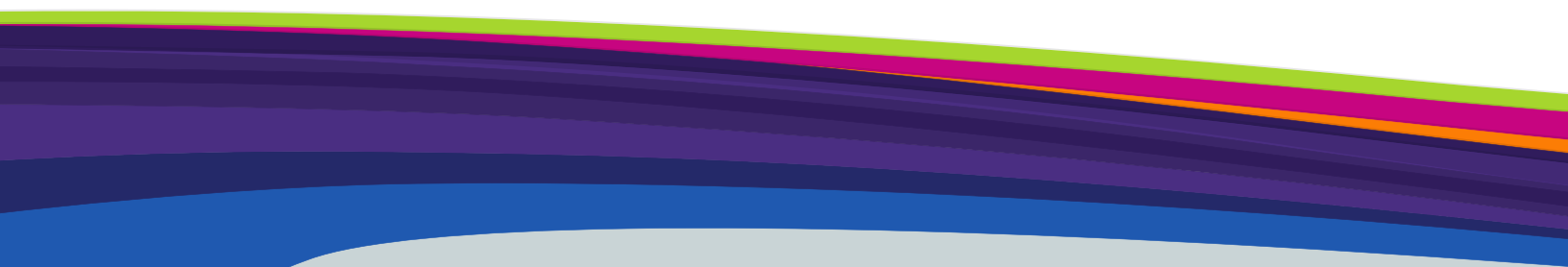
CAST
Until
learning
has no
limits

The
New Hampshire
UDL Innovation Network

Year 4 (2021) Report

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A Letter from the Commissioner

This has been a year for the history books in every way. I think history will show that, across the board, New Hampshire educators stepped up to the plate and hit it out of the park. The UDL Innovation Network has helped so many of us leverage the power of UDL to reduce barriers, in a time that exposed barriers that have always been there and created new ones. I thank NH educators for their dedication to designing until learning has no limits.

To the educators who have worked tirelessly to not only meet the needs of every learner, but to anticipate and design for those needs proactively, thank you. You have created communities of authentic learning that no mask or Zoom lag could diminish.

To the educators who have taken a risk this year, gone above and beyond what we could have imagined, or trained for, thank you. The innovations in your classrooms are helping to create inclusive, meaningful learning opportunities.

To the educators who have continued to expand and deepen their own learning, thinking, and planning, thank you. Your students noticed, and have been introduced to a model of what lifelong learning looks like.

What we accomplished this past year, and the ways we continue to grow, learn, and thrive no matter what we're up against, is a great way to go down in history.

Sincerely,
Commissioner Frank Edelblut



The New Hampshire UDL Innovation Network

In the Spring of 2018, Commissioner Frank Edelblut joined CAST in kicking off the first year of a multiyear statewide project designed to ensure that all New Hampshire students have access to high-quality, personalized instruction that builds academic knowledge and skills, as well as increased capacity in the art of learning itself. Now in its fourth year, the *New Hampshire Universal Design for Learning Innovation Network* has grown from an initial enrollment of 32 schools and 215 participants (Year 1) to 78 enrolled schools and over 650 enrolled educators in (Year 4).

CAST's unique professional learning designs allow educators to participate in cutting edge experiences that facilitate individual agency, job-embedded learning, networking, and community support. Last year (2020–2021 school year), participants attended two **statewide virtual Network Meetings** (offered synchronously and asynchronously) where they engaged in interactive breakout sessions, team planning time, and networking opportunities that supported the application of UDL to classroom teaching and the implementation of UDL schoolwide.

School teams also had the opportunity to participate in two forms of school-based professional learning. Using CAST's **UDL Instructional Rounds** model, teams observed a series of classes and collected data on what students and teachers were saying and doing. With the support of a CAST Implementation Specialist, the teams then analyzed their observational data to identify trends in how students engaged in their work, their options for mastering complex material, and how they demonstrated their understanding of that material. Finally, teams determined what was working well across classrooms, identified remaining barriers to learning, and co-constructed professional learning goals to minimize the barriers and improve instructional practices schoolwide.



CAST also facilitated **Lesson Design Studios (LDS)**, an innovative school-based protocol in which educators led their own professional learning. During an LDS, small teams of educators in selected schools across the state collaboratively created a Universally Designed lesson. One teacher then taught the lesson in their classroom while the rest of the team observed. Observing teachers each tracked an individual student's experience and asked the student for feedback on what worked and what didn't work in the lesson design. The data about student experiences was used to create a "journey map" of the lesson, i.e., a visual representation of the lesson design. The Journey Map empowered educators to analyze the lesson—drawing connections between student emotion, cognition and barriers that were faced and overcome. This analysis yielded both a deep understanding of student learning and new professional goals for the teachers.

Building statewide capacity is at the heart of CAST's efforts in New Hampshire. To that end, this year's Innovation Network offered two new opportunities: the **UDL Coaching Academy** and the **UDL Leadership Academy**. Originally designed to be taught as part of summer retreats, COVID required a pivot to virtual learning, so representatives from each school in the Network were invited to attend monthly online workshops. The goal of the UDL Coaching Academy is to teach design protocols and reflection activities that deepen the knowledge and skills of instructional coaches and other teacher-leaders who want to support their colleagues in applying UDL theory to the classroom. The UDL Leadership Academy offered school administrators

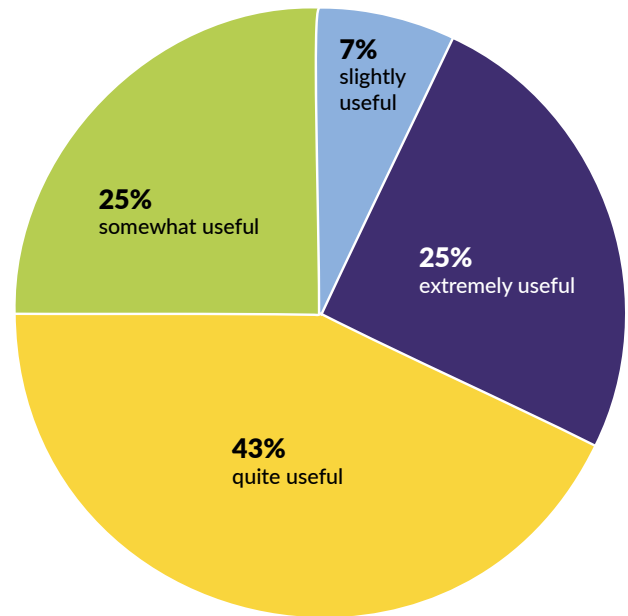
and other leaders opportunities to develop an understanding of UDL implementation and the scaling process, and provided attendees with a preview of CAST’s UDL School Certification criteria.

Because of the COVID pandemic, CAST offered extensive customized school support during the 2020–2021 school year. In addition to regular **weekly office hours** and **monthly consultation calls**, Implementation Specialists designed and facilitated weekly UDL team meetings, consulted on remote teaching lesson designs, worked with schools to build model Google Classroom and Canvas templates, and shared customized virtual learning resources with educators across the state. The CAST Implementation Specialists supported school-wide scaling efforts by creating new resources, engaging in dialogue about building UDL into school improvement plans, co-designing school based professional development, and providing feedback on student support systems. In a year of uncertainty, the CAST team organized innovative approaches such as individualized supports across the state. Much of that innovation (e.g., monthly virtual academies) is reflected in the Year 5 design in response to positive feedback and appreciation from NH educators.

UDL to Support Teaching During the Pandemic

Universal Design for Learning is founded on the idea that variability is the norm. Not only is every individual unique, but individuals’ needs change regularly depending on the context. The NH UDL project supports educators in thinking about, planning for, and addressing learner variability by designing flexibly for the diversity of learner needs. These design skills turned out to be an asset during the uncertainty that was a constant during the pandemic! Project survey data shows that the longer participants applied UDL to their instructional practice, the more useful they found it. In fact, of the educators who started in the Network 2018, 68% of respondents reported that UDL was either “quite useful” or “extremely useful” to them in supporting students during this unprecedented year.

Perspectives on the usefulness of UDL in supporting students during the pandemic (responding educators from the 2018 Cohort)



Teachers who apply UDL theory to practice are committed to proactively anticipating barriers that might prevent learners from mastering a learning goal and building options into learning designs to reduce those barriers. This past year, when NH teachers needed to design remote, hybrid, and socially-distanced learning, this mindset was front and center in the work of sustaining high-quality, individualized instruction for all learners. UDL Innovation Network educators approached challenges brought on by the pandemic with a well-seasoned capacity to recognize potential obstacles in a learning environment and to design options that allowed students to navigate these barriers. For many Network educators, the pandemic shone a light on their newly acquired learning design skills and abilities (i.e., their UDL knowledge and skill), and their students were able to continue learning in spite of the variability and lack of stability that the circumstances themselves created over the past year.

Teachers also reported that remote and changing teaching models highlighted the need for clear instructional goals and flexible means, a central pillar of UDL. Zeroing in on a specific objective empowered students to be creative in how they learned, using different online tools or physical materials that they had at home. Similarly, teachers were able to design unique options for how students could demonstrate their understanding, often using technology creatively to simulate in-person activities.

The UDL Innovation Network was put to an unusual test in NH this year. Among the positives to emerge: the overall impact of the project on teachers' abilities to adjust for variable conditions and the individual talents of NH teachers in the Network who mobilized in support of their learners.

How UDL Helps New Hampshire Teachers

(in their own words)

Through remote learning we were forced to reexamine our practices. This was an opportunity for us to really wrestle with the principles of UDL and how we can allow for student variability which is more than we've ever seen before. We have had strong conversations about practice and how to incorporate and plan for all learners in a variety of environments (remote, hybrid, in person).

UDL has supported my practice during these uncertain times because it has shown me the importance of focusing on the goal of each lesson. When you focus on the goal, "how" the goal is achieved becomes more open-ended.

My understanding of UDL has allowed me to build options into my curriculum to design around the unique barriers that exist in at-home learning.

When we went remote, the first thing I thought of was, "What barriers will our children have while learning at home?" [...] I don't think I would have had that first thought without UDL.

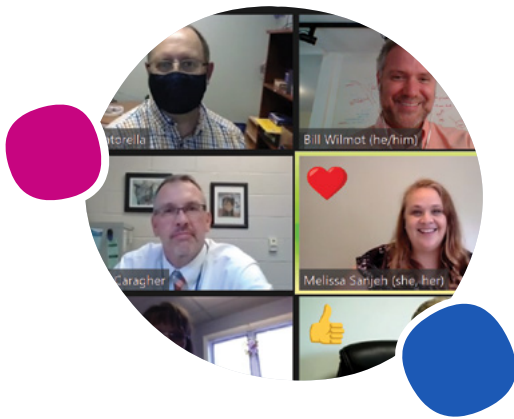
UDL has helped me see that no matter the format (hybrid, remote, or in-person), it is possible to implement those practices that benefit all types of learners.

During the pandemic teachers needed to adapt and be flexible. It almost forced teachers to utilize UDL in terms of providing multiple avenues of learning.

I feel like learning the UDL Guidelines has been the missing piece of the puzzle for me. Now I have a full picture to work with when designing lessons and experiences for my students.

I feel like my very new learning of UDL has given me confidence in knowing that having clear goals in mind for tasks is both crucial for students' understanding and focused instruction.





Learning more about UDL has given me language, concepts, and a framework to better work with teachers to consider different ways for students to show their understanding.

I have learned how to integrate UDL as a system of thinking into my design practice, instead of seeing UDL as a separate thing that I do on top of planning.

I continue to increase not only my understanding but my leadership skills in developing structures that support expert learning.

I think about my teaching from a different perspective now that I have begun learning about UDL. The standards are still important but I look at everything from the lense of students now to make sure that I am seeing barriers ahead of time.

UDL has changed the way that I look and think about education. I have started to look at my instruction and practice differently.

In the beginning, I thought that UDL was something you do as part of a lesson. Now I know that UDL is all about the approach to designing learning opportunities for students, the design of classrooms, how we use and incorporate technology, etc. Really UDL helps educators to be sure we are maximizing our impact on student achievement.

All of my leadership practices have improved since becoming involved in the NH UDL Innovation Network. Things that I knew were best practice now have a common language and allow all of the staff to speak together using that language with shared expectation to improve student learning.



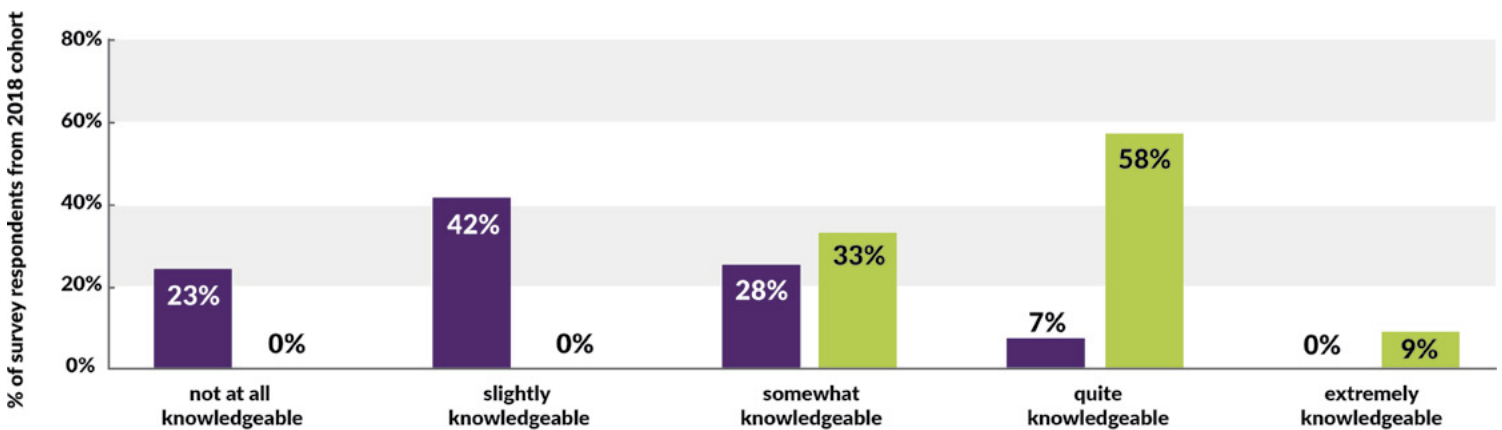
Teacher Growth in Unprecedented Times

The 2020–2021 school year was challenging for NH students, families, teachers, and staff. Although the easiest thing to do may have been to postpone additional professional learning connected to UDL, participants in the Innovation Network took the opportunity to learn more, grow professionally, and support their students in new and innovative ways. Of the participants who responded to our survey, only 7% reported that they were “quite knowledgeable” or “extremely knowledgeable” about UDL prior to starting in the Network, whereas 67% report that they are now. Similarly, of those same respondents, only 8% reported that they were “quite confident” or “extremely confident” in applying UDL to practice prior to starting in the Network, compared with 61% today.

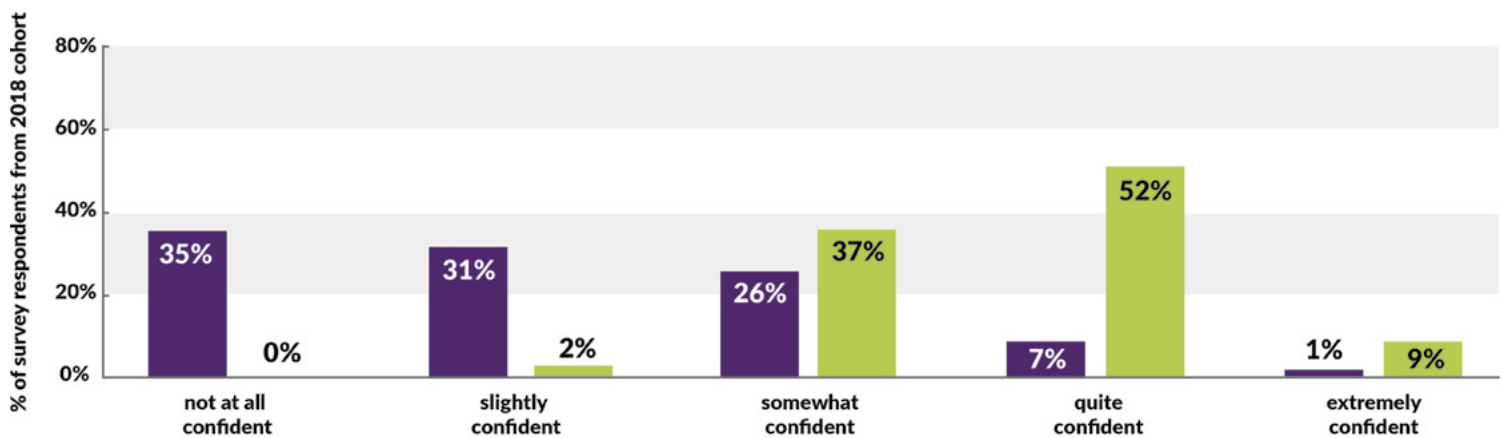
Perhaps the most powerful aspect of the professional learning work that has happened this year is the mindset shift many Network participants made concerning barriers to learning. Teaching during the pandemic highlighted familiar barriers as well as ones teachers had not often experienced. Some students didn’t have access to technology, others missed



All respondents to the end of year survey: How would you characterize your knowledge of UDL?



All respondents to the end of year survey: How confident do you feel in terms of applying UDL to your practice?

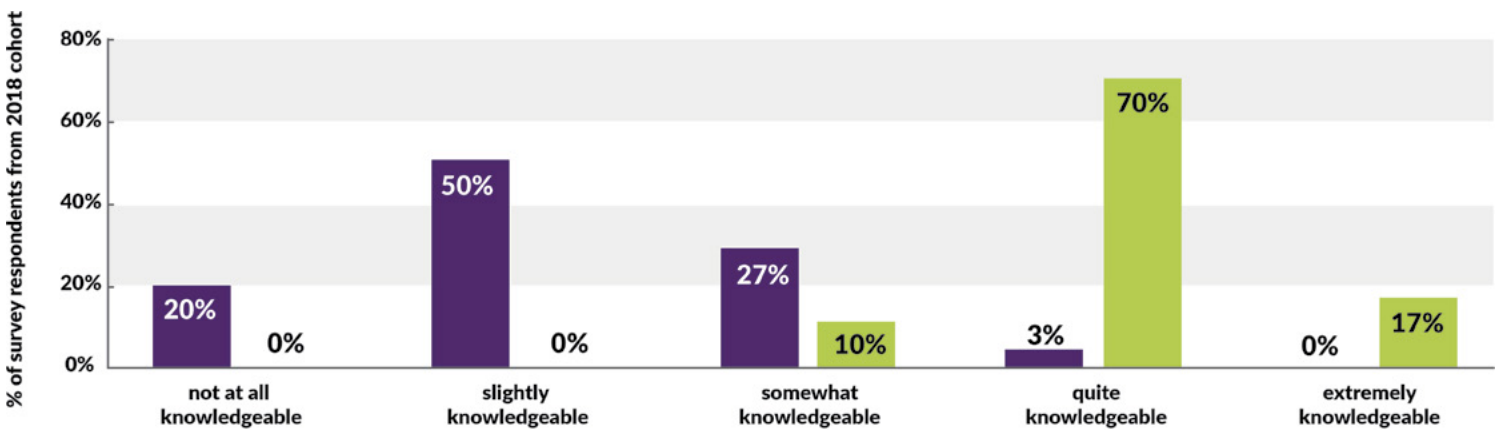


interacting with their peers, and others found the virtual classroom a challenging context in which to maintain focus. Along with an increased capacity to reduce these barriers via flexible learning designs, participants reported a deeper understanding that barriers are not inherent in learners but instead stem from their learning environments and the design of their learning opportunities.

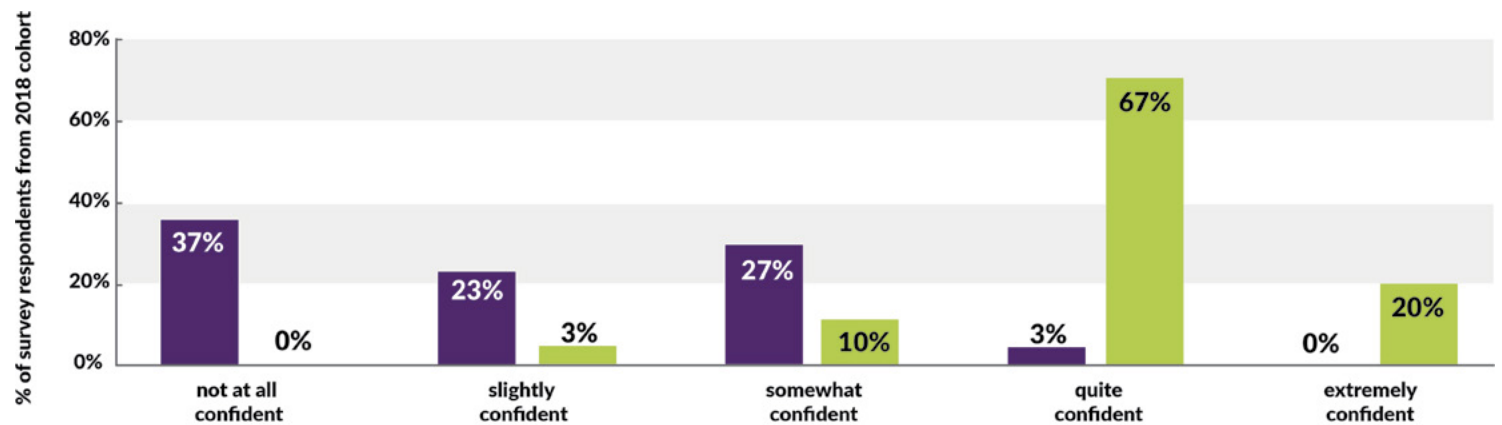
According to project data, UDL has given teachers tools to proactively build supportive virtual and physical environments, design lessons flexible enough to work in a variety of settings with variable learners, and incorporate new technologies. Additionally, teachers report that UDL brought forth a new and valuable shared language for talking with colleagues, families/caregivers, and students themselves about learners and learning (e.g., barriers in design, learner variability, multiple means of engagement, options for executive functions, expert learning).



Survey respondents who joined in 2018: How would you characterize your knowledge of UDL?



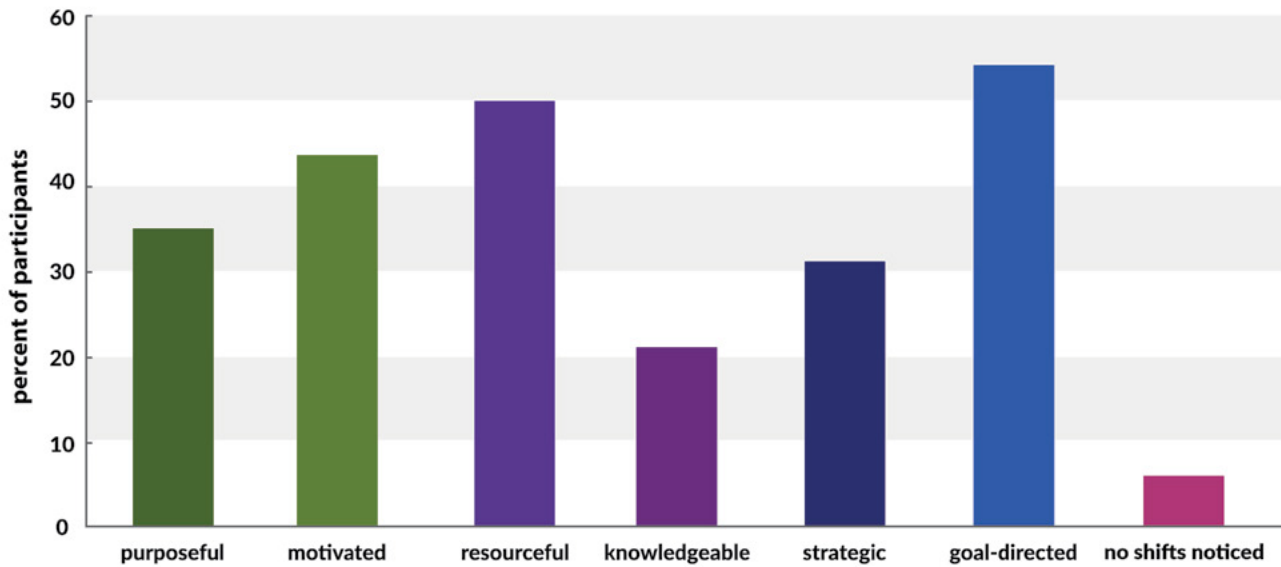
Survey respondents who joined in 2018: How confident do you feel in terms of applying UDL to your practice?



Becoming Expert Learners

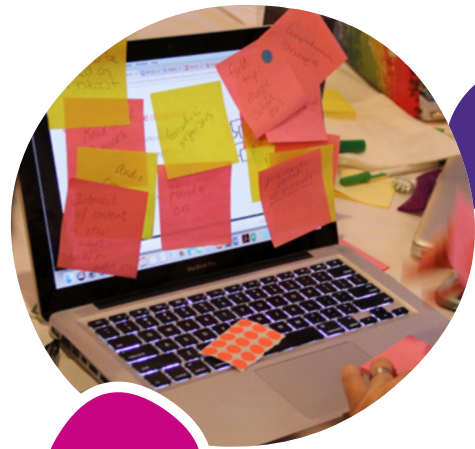
In spite of so many new barriers during the pandemic, students whose teachers were involved in the Innovation Network also continued to grow and learn. Unlike traditional teaching frameworks, UDL emphasizes both the acquisition of content knowledge and teaching students to learn how to learn. Network participants reported that they saw tremendous growth in these expert learning skills over the past year. Of the participants who responded to our survey, 54% saw students become more goal-directed, 50% noted an increase in students' resourcefulness, and 44% reported that their students were more motivated to learn than at the beginning of the year. By understanding how they themselves learn best, students are empowered to make choices that positively impact not only their classroom learning, but their engagement in school and ability to thrive in real-life situations.

Students are more...



| Value | Percent | Responses |
|--|---------|-----------|
| Students are more purposeful | 34.6% | 27 |
| Students are more motivated | 43.6% | 34 |
| Students are more resourceful | 50% | 39 |
| Students are more knowledgeable | 20.5% | 16 |
| Students are more strategic | 30.8% | 24 |
| Students are more goal-directed | 53.8% | 42 |
| I have not noticed any expert learner shifts | 6.4% | 5 |

My first graders are now referring to themselves as “expert learners!” It has been great to hear them say, “I used this strategy because ___” or “This works best for me because ___.” It has given me a new perspective on how they learn.



My students love that they have more ownership over their learning. As a result of the NH UDL innovation Network I provide more choice on how to meet the lesson goals and allow students to help me design lessons.



UDL principles and practices themselves are derived from empathy—putting yourself in the other person’s shoes—looking at the world (looking at a lesson, at learning) from the other person’s perspective.



Teacher Reflections

Studying UDL together as a staff during 2020 provided a sense of normalcy for us as educators. Constantly changing expectations and feelings of uncertainty were the norm which had the potential to stifle our growth and affect our efficacy in the classroom. Instead, we made the conscious decision to embrace the things which helped us feel connected to each other and to our mission of providing a rigorous and accessible education for all of our students. We had to be very creative in our delivery of staff professional development. Having to follow strict mitigation procedures, **we found ways to modify our processes in coming together as a staff with book studies, instructional rounds, and the learning design studio. Over the past three years, we have grown from a small group of UDL pioneers to a whole staff who are now thinking about barriers in the environment and understanding and planning for the variability of learners in our classroom communities.** We have come to share common vocabulary, and our discussions about UDL planning and implementation are a part of our new norm.

Jessica Therriault
Newmarket Jr/Sr. High School
7th Grade English Teacher



During remote learning, elementary students explored three-dimensional art and working with 3D materials. **Art teachers created different videos to introduce the project and to highlight the techniques of 3D artists: one for creating 3D art using found objects from around students' own homes and another for creating 3D art using found objects in nature.** Then, students got to work creating their own 3D art using everything from pens and markers to leaves and sticks. Students then shared their artwork to a virtual gallery where they could explore the different ways their peers interpreted the project.

Students in third grade were challenged to design their own restaurants. They made choices about the type of cuisine they would offer. They developed their literacy practices by exploring a range of menus and designing their own with the goal of using descriptive language to entice customers. They also developed their math skills using different tools to map out the space and to determine the area and perimeter. Finally, students presented their restaurants to their peers, and students had a chance to “review” their dining experiences.



Third-grade students explored idioms and the difference between literal and figurative meanings. As a class, they read a silly story that incorporated a range of idioms, and then got to choose an idiom from the story to represent in a variety of ways. **Students shared the literal and figurative meanings of idioms such as “feeling blue” and “smart as a cookie” through drawings, verbal descriptions, and even skits!**



Every year, fourth graders engage in a biography project and select a historical figure who interests them. This year, however, remote learning and learning more about UDL prompted the teacher to redesign the project. The teacher supported students to find audio and digital versions of biographies to engage in research more independently. To support their writing, the students had access to speech-to-text and to a series of slides created by their teacher that offered a variety of examples of different ways to structure paragraphs. **The teacher reflected that despite the challenge of remote learning, this was the best year of the project. “Zooming forced me to rethink how I do everything,” she says, “and that benefited me and my students.”**



Continuous Learning & Improvement

Like perfection, Universal Design for Learning is aspirational. There may never be a lesson that is designed perfectly for every student in every situation, but that is the goal. To this end, the NH UDL Innovation Network puts an emphasis on encouraging teachers and students to constantly iterate and improve. CAST has intentionally designed our professional learning opportunities to encourage this improvement, and we hold our professional learning work to the same standard. This past year we responded to feedback by creating two monthly virtual opportunities—a UDL Leadership Academy for school administrators and a UDL Coaching Academy for UDL practitioners preparing to coach their colleagues on UDL implementation. Both academies aim to develop educators’ expertise, empower them to lead professional learning of UDL locally, and to inform the growth of instructional practices statewide. The CAST team also implemented virtual weekly UDL Office Hours for educators who had questions or wanted individualized design feedback from one of the Implementation Specialists. The project supported some schools to be UDL Learning Hubs that others could visit (during non-COVID times) as participants in UDL Lesson Design Studios. Network educators contributed UDL artifacts and other field-based materials and stories to Network days. CAST staff supported school teams to optimize their regular meetings, including developing new online learning modules designed flexibly to be used synchronously and asynchronously, individually and collaboratively. And, perhaps most significantly, CAST modified all professional learning opportunities to be available and/or delivered remotely.



The 2021–2022 academic year will bring additional opportunities to Network educators. Plans are in place to add up to 16 new schools and invite up to another 8 schools to join the network of UDL Learning Hubs. Based on educator feedback, both the fall and spring statewide Network days will be offered both in-person and virtually. Over the summer, CAST made two UDL Digital Learning Series (“Introduction to UDL” and “Beyond the Basics”) available to cohorts of NH educators at no cost. Even as the project is adjusted for changing needs, it will continue to be centered on NH teachers and helping them meet their commitment to provide high quality individualized instruction for all students. In the coming year, opportunities for teachers to tell their UDL stories, share strategies and ideas across the Network, and co-construct professional learning goals for Network offerings will be increased and amplified. UDL builds the agency of learners, and the NH UDL Innovation Network aims to build that same agency in teachers.

What’s Working Well

“The instructional rounds and time with my UDL team are what keep me going. I love being able to get into other teachers classrooms and see how they are applying UDL differently from me.”

“Having time to interact, connect, and discuss strategies and ideas with my colleagues has been something extremely useful. We have been able to bounce ideas off of each other and figure out ways to 'sprinkle' UDL throughout our school.”

“The ability to connect with other schools and teachers is priceless. To hear stories of what other people are doing and what they’ve been through really has helped, especially in this pandemic.”

“I often felt isolated during the last year. My UDL team helped me to remain connected with other thoughtful and creative people.”

“CAST provided numerous resources that we have been able to share with our colleagues as they have navigated these challenging circumstances.”

“I LOVE being part of the network. This is the most beneficial professional development that I have ever had in my 17 years of teaching.”



A Letter from CAST

There is no way to reflect on the 2020-2021 school year without acknowledging the tremendous efforts of students, teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, administrators, families, and so many more. Some braved a new world of remote teaching and learning; others made it to school, masked and distanced, every single day; and still others weathered the unpredictability of bouncing between live and remote classes. But all put in a Herculean effort to make this a successful year.

We at CAST are grateful to have the honor of working with such a dedicated group of educators and are inspired by the ways in which they used Universal Design for Learning to ensure that each and every one of their students continued learning and growing this year. We are hopeful that as we prepare for next year the successes of last year push us all to continue thinking outside of the box, and advocating for each and every student to have access to learning that will empower them as learners and help chart a successful pathway to the future.

**A groundbreaking partnership focused
on better outcomes for thousands of
New Hampshire's learners.**



 **CAST** | Until learning has no limits[®]

**Stay in touch.
We'd love to hear from you!**



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Printed in New Hampshire by Puritan Capital