



UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

TRANSFORMING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR ALL MARYLAND STUDENTS

The Maryland Down syndrome Advocacy Coalition (MDAC) is bringing together general education, special education and advocacy organizations to support the incorporation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) references into the Education Article of the Maryland Code. Implementation of UDL will benefit all teachers and students, including students with intellectual disabilities.

Universal Design for Learning is a framework and set of principles to provide ALL students equal opportunities to learn. UDL principles make curriculum goals, instructional materials, teaching methods and assessments accessible and engaging for all learners. Barriers are reduced; supports and challenges are provided; high expectations are maintained; students gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning; and their learning is validly assessed. For more general information on UDL see www.cast.org and www.udlcenter.org

Individuals learn differently; they have diverse gifts and needs, and many students come from differing backgrounds and cultures. So it is important that everyone be given equal opportunity to learn, understand and demonstrate their knowledge. The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) support UDL because it will provide educators with the additional tools they need to provide meaningful instruction to all students in today's diverse classrooms. This will enhance the scholastic experience for students, teachers and parents, resulting in greater benefits for society as a whole.

More than 35 national organizations, including the NEA and AFT, are working on the Federal level as the National UDL Task Force to incorporate UDL in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) --currently known as the No Child Left Behind Act-- and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Task Force has already helped incorporate UDL principles in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. For more information on the Task Force see www.udl4allstudents.com. Many Maryland stakeholder groups are affiliated with the national organizations that are currently promoting UDL.

Incorporating references to the principles of Universal Design for Learning into Maryland's education statute could help the state become a national model for UDL legislation and implementation. Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk (District 21, Anne Arundel and Prince George's County) will introduce a UDL bill in the 2010 session of the Maryland General Assembly. The purpose of this bill is to move toward UDL implementation across Maryland.

MDAC is excited about the potential for UDL to transform learning opportunities for all students and we hope you will join us in this endeavor.

We would like to hear from you. Please contact <http://udl4maryland.com/contactus.htm> We look forward to working with you on this important issue.