UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING:
Important facts for Maryland Implementation

What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?

- UDL is a scientifically based educational framework with a set of principles and guidelines to improve curriculum design; including goals, instructional materials, teaching methods and assessments.
- A universally designed curriculum is developed from the start to be accessible (both physically and cognitively), as well as challenging, for ALL students
- UDL has its basis in neuroscience; the three principles correlate with the three networks in the brain which must be simultaneously engaged for optimal learning to occur. See www.cast.org
- The three UDL principles require:
    - Multiple and flexible means of representing information
    - Multiple and flexible means of action and expression
    - Multiple and flexible means of engagement
  You can find detailed guidelines for these principles at http://www.cast.org/publications/UDLguidelines/UDL_Guidelines_Educator_Checklist_4.29.09.doc
- UDL is recognized as an important educational reform in the Higher Education Act (HEOA) of 2008. See http://www.advocacyinstitute.org/UDL/HEOA.shtml
- Over 35 national education and advocacy organizations have formed the National Universal Design for Learning Task Force to promote UDL in Federal policy and legislation. See www.udl4allstudents.com

Why is UDL important?

- UDL ensures that:
    - All students have the challenges and supports they need for meaningful access to the curriculum and assessments that accurately measure their knowledge.
    - All educators have the strategies, tools and instructional materials they need to effectively address the diverse learners in their classrooms, including gifted students, English language learners and students with disabilities.
- UDL can help States, districts and schools meet the goals of NCLB and IDEA
- UDL can help lower referrals to special education.
- UDL provides the teacher with a variety of instructional materials, which can decrease the need for extensive adaptations and modifications.
- UDL allows students to work more independently and understand which supports they need.
- UDL complements other reforms including Response to Intervention, 21st Century Learning and initiatives to increase graduation rates.
- If education technology is used in a manner consistent with UDL principles it will be more effective for all students and provide a better return on the investment.
- The costs of NOT doing UDL are higher. See Appendix A

Why do we need a UDL bill in Maryland?

- Districts are already trying to implement UDL, but their efforts need to be coordinated to ensure that implementation is done in an effective, efficient and equitable manner.
- Maryland should be the national model for UDL implementation.