

UDL in 15 Minutes  
With Stephanie Jensen and Jeremy Miller  
Episode 103 - The Transcript

LOUI:

Hello, and welcome to UDL in 15 Minutes, where educators discuss their experiences with UDL. I'm Loui Lord Nelson, UDL author and leader. Today, I'm talking with Jeremy Miller, the Junior/Senior High School principal of Pike Valley in Scandia, Kansas, and Stephanie Jensen, who is a Resource Teacher at Pike Valley Junior/Senior High School and is on the Infinitec UDL Team members. Jeremy and Stephanie are going to share how UDL blossoms when instructional and technical leadership skills are used. Welcome to you both. I'm so glad you're here.

STEPHANIE:

Yes, thank you for having us. We're excited to share about our journey.

JEREMY:

Yeah, definitely. This has been a great journey, and I'm glad to share that with you.

LOUI:

Thanks so much. It's really nice to meet you both. So let's talk a bit about you. What's been your journey in education with UDL? So, who wants to start?

JEREMY:

I'll go ahead. So, I've been in education for about 24 years. Very early, I learned that I would grow by exposing myself to a lot of different opportunities. So I guess you could say I've done a lot of different things. I was a social studies teacher, a Spanish teacher, a PE teacher, driver's ed teacher. I coached a lot of different sports: football, basketball, track. I then moved on and became the school counselor. And then I, at this point, now I'm the principal for the last five years—also a father of seven kids. And I have one of my children has a disability, and that's really pushed me to have a deeper passion for UDL. I've always believed that student engagement, relevance were kind of key, even in my early years of teaching history. I used to do a lot of interactive projects and civic engagement projects. And this passion just kind of grew with my current position as a principal and having colleagues like Mrs. Jensen here, who are leaders in the push toward using the UDL framework.

LOUI:

That's awesome. Well, you got a lot of experience. Life and professional. It's awesome. So Stephanie, yes, please.

STEPHANIE:

Yes. And that's what makes him an amazing principle as far as when we start to do these new journeys. So, I have been a special ed teacher for over 30 plus years. I was just going to do it for a little while to pay back a loan and fell in love with that. I have taught K through 12, mostly in a resource room setting within a school building. So went, through have seen a lot of changes over time with inclusion and how that looks. About ten years ago, I had an administrator that said I am leaving this position with Kansas Infinitec CADRE, and thought that was a great opportunity for me. At that point, they did a lot with assistive technology and putting those things together and now kind of shifted and seeing that we still use assistive technology, but kind of working more towards that Universal Design and Learning. So one of the things I would say I'm pretty passionate about is I love to see kids make improvements and be excited about learning and that opportunity to try new things. I'm all about that.

LOUI:

That's awesome! You two are wonder twins! Wonder twin powers, man. So, I want to share what I meant by instructional versus technical leadership skills when I was introducing this, and I'm going to reverse the order for the listeners. So technical leadership skills are the skills that we use when the task is straightforward, like communicating the master schedule, or setting up a meeting agenda for a staff meeting, or establishing a new pickup area outside the school. But, instructional leadership skills are when the leader is directly modeling or supporting instruction. So Jeremy, you've tapped into both, which I think is brilliant, and I'd love to chat about the technical side first. So, what structures did you put in place to help your staff ease into UDL?

JEREMY:

Well, I would say several of the things that we did to help it fit seamlessly is we really placed a strong emphasis on our system. We have monthly SIT meetings. We have a structure where all of our students are a part of the MTSS Richmond intervention process at the junior high school level. All of our teachers, building-wide, are involved in the process, including our PE, our art, our industrial arts, even our agricultural science teacher. So it's all hands on deck. We have staff meetings every other Wednesday, and then we alternate that with our MTSS meetings the other Wednesdays. And then, we meet monthly over our SIT. With our system, UDL and stressing engagement and relevance became easy. And then after training on UDL, we learned a great deal about identifying barriers strategies, and have these next steps now of doing the peer

observations to identify barriers, and that's where we're going is next year, you know, as far as putting that into our time schedule.

LOUI:

Nice. Nice, and Stephanie, you probably have some even more specific or different information.

STEPHANIE:

Yeah, so one of our getting our set up with our UDL that Kansas Infinitec CADRE started with. If you wanted to be on this team, you can have it individually, you can have several teachers. So we joined that group. This will be our third year starting this fall, and which was a lot of support. We had four teachers, and Jeremy was on our team. And then we would meet monthly across the state, and they would we would talk about all different parts of UDL, which really was inspirational for us because we knew we wanted more, and this allowed us to not only talk within our team and bring back ideas, but talk with some other people across the state and have a mentor, Cindy Malone, who's in charge of that project to help us like, this is where you need to go. You guys are doing great with this. Let's kind of jump into this part. And that's kind of how we picked up engagement and started with that.

LOUI:

Awesome, awesome. So now, let's flip to the instructional side. I understand that your district invested in an instructional tool, which is great, but you tapped into your instructional leadership skills and modeled it for staff. Is that right? So, talk about that process.

JEREMY:

Well, we wanted to get some buy-in for from our staff. So we thought myself, Steph Jensen and some of our other train UDL staff could model the strategies, and maybe it could create more buy-in with the rest of the staff. We modeled engagement strategies reading strategies, opportunities to respond, exit tickets. You know, we did that during staff meetings. You know, some of my experts and exit tickets, like Steph Jensen and Amanda Woodard, did a little short training during a staff meeting on exit tickets, and then we had a little activity where they used exit tickets, and they were asked to come back to the next staff meeting, and then you have an example of how they how they use your exit ticket and talk to staff about it. I also use Read and Write as a tool to help implement building-wide reading comprehension, and I basically just simply use the highlighting tool on Read and Write to highlight the main idea, supporting details, and outliers. And I kind of add a little spice to it by using an article that happened to be on student engagement and different types of student engagement. So it kind of got a lot of

bang for my buck with that strategy. And then, after a training on barriers in the classroom, I was able to come across a barrier identification flowchart located at [learningdesign.org](http://learningdesign.org) that we use to help or to barriers and lessen design and we're practices during our staff meetings by simply just having staff members find some of their more complex lesson plans and some of the barriers that might have been part of using that lesson plan in the classroom.

STEPHANIE:

Yes, so along with not only Jeremy implementing and we were sharing in our staff meetings, we decided that we would really like to have our thing be full district-wide. So we worked on at our when we had district inservices providing some simple training things that didn't take a lot of time but gave them the experience. This is what it looks like. One of the ones we did was we came in, and we worked on about the barriers like Jeremy was saying, and instead of Katie Calderon, who's the ag teacher that is also on our team, we did a role play about like two teachers talking about a student, and you know, like who, and giving the talking more specific to the student and then the one teacher shared about well, let's look at the barriers maybe, you know, instead of identifying students you know, maybe we need to look at the barriers because there's more students, probably that this is a barrier for and we just don't know it. And we want to kind of work and go towards things like that. We also talked about how important social-emotional is, and we started our one staff meeting, our district training, with everyone needs to have a number two pencil lined paper. You have two minutes find it. You know, having that feeling of, oh my gosh, I don't have that. How do I, you know, and then we came back to doing some social-emotional welcomings and how that just changed the whole tone of the class and even the presentation, and we wanted them to have those experiences, and then allow time to talk with others to see how what could they do in their classes.

LOUI:

Nice. Wonderful. So you also tied UDL to other statewide requirements to help everyone move away from that one more thing: conversation. What did you tie it to, and how?

JEREMY:

Well, when I first came into the district, we were in the middle of the KESA process, which is the Kansas Education System Accreditation, and our district goals were and continue to be relevance and engagement. Which ironically fits exactly with our team philosophy. And then also meshes very smoothly with the UDL. You know, some of the district strategies we put in place where OTRs was the biggest one, and then exit tickets. And then we also implemented reading strategies and bell ringers that are

welcoming. So I did, so it all really tied together. And it just it matched, and it related to the staff. It felt just part of the process that we were already involved in.

LOUI:

Awesome. Awesome. And Stephanie, have that tie together affect your role?

STEPHANIE:

Yeah, so when we looked at it, it was a nice way that we can address some things like different student challenges things that they needed to work on. And then also, it was really, I think, enlightening to look at. Like, if we're using the opportunity to respond and having kids be engaged, well then other things they kind of took care of other things such as maybe students that were bored, or students that were causing behavior problems. And that really opened our eyes. The other focus that we spent just a little bit of time is on was, like, was this information. We wanted a welcoming environment because if you went in and you knew you were not good in, say, math, it's really hard to gather information when you have a negative feeling. So what can we do to these situations to make them more positive along those lines? So it made to kind of think a little bit more global than just like, I'm here to teach reading or a specific skill.

LOUI:

Right. Exactly. Loving this conversation because it is exemplifying that well-roundedness we need to have when we're helping our staff adopt Universal Design for Learning. So all these different structures that you both and your team are putting in place, that have the instructional side and then also that technical side, and I think it's just brilliant. So, in our last couple of minutes here, I'd love for you to share what your next steps are. What are your plans for year three, Pike Valley?

JEREMY:

Well, one thing that we continue to work on, and we'll focus on next year, is, basically, we want to take a deeper look at some of the disengagement symptoms. We'll look at more ways of creating interests, sustaining effort, and then providing different options for self-regulation and just the overall UDL process, but kind of look at those things in specific areas. And then one of the things I already alluded to before that I'd like to spend a lot more time on next year is looking deeper at having the staff identify barriers within each other by using just a pure observation tool. Having a Google forum where they can just walk in five minutes in a classroom and look at the little form that we have in place and be able to identify barriers, that they can help each other out as far as becoming, you know, better teachers. So those are a couple of things that I'd like to do for next year.

LOUI:

Awesome.

STEPHANIE:

Yeah, we're also going to continue. I think currently, we have our counselor, our ag teacher, our English, our science, and our math teacher on our team, and we'd like to expand that a little bit more. And also maybe have our elementary be involved in our program. One thing, we are a small school. So you know, sometimes it's a little easier sometimes to move things. And I think the great thing about our team was that people were willing to try new things. They weren't hesitant, which really opened the door, I think, for a lot of the things that we've been able to experience.

LOUI:

That's excellent. Well, again, I really appreciate you both coming on to the podcast. You've given such a lovely story, and I think it's going to help people think about bringing UDL in, but through these lenses of instruction and technical support, how you kind of organize that and wrap your staff up in lovely supports. You guys have done that. So congratulations, and thank you again.

STEPHANIE:

Yes, thank you.

JEREMY:

Thank you for having us.

LOUI:

You're welcome. So, for those listening to this podcast, you can find supplemental materials like an image montage with closed captioning, that montage with audio descriptions, a transcript, and an associated blog at my website, which is [www.theudlapproach.com/podcasts](http://www.theudlapproach.com/podcasts). And finally, if you have a story to share about UDL implementation for UDL in 15 Minutes, you can contact me through [www.theUDLApproach.com](http://www.theUDLApproach.com). And thanks to everyone for your work in revolutionizing education through UDL and making it our goal to develop expert learners.