

UDL in 15 Minutes
With Elke Greite
Episode 133 - 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 Elke Greite, an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program and Middle Years Program teacher at Dresden International School. Elke is going to share how UDL is helping her shift her students from being so product focused to being more process focused. Hello Elke, how are you?

ELKE:

Hi Loui, I'm fine. Thank you for inviting me to your wonderful UDL in 15 Minute podcast. I feel so humbled and honored and I'm excited to be here with you today.

LOUI:

Oh, you're so welcome. You're so welcome. So you have been learning about and thinking about UDL for a while, but you had an aha during a recent training that was really exciting for you. So talk about that aha. What was that?

ELKE:

Yeah, I strongly believe in identity centered learning. So in that context, yeah, I've been learning about parts of UDL for a while, but when the guidelines, the new one were published, I started to deepening my connection to UDL. And shortly after I had a great real breakthrough during a full day workshop led by Beth Stark and what stood out most was the role of goal-setting and self-monitoring. So Beth of course shared resources which were so valuable and started to inspire so much. But one article, "Yes you can motivate your students" by Goodwin was so insightful for me and really resonated with me as it emphasized the power of personalized goal setting and reflection. It really helped me then make critical connections between the UDL frameworks and the approaches to learning and in the IB programme.

LOUI:

Hmm. Wonderful. Wonderful. Now I have listeners from around the world and many are not familiar with the IB or international baccalaureate structures. So, could you explain some of those structures and actually one of them, it sounds like it is going to be really important, but ATLs.

ELKE:

Oh, absolutely. All these short terms, right? So, approaches to learning are ATLs. We also have ATTs (approaches to teaching), which I think is very important too, because teachers learn constantly as well how to teach. So, these are actually skills at the core part of the IB programs, all programs, EYP, PYP, MYP, and DP, so primary, middle years, and diploma years. And they are designed to help students become self-regulated lifelong learners. And there are certain

categories. So the broad ones, these are five altogether; thinking, research, communication, social and self-management skills. These skills evolve progressively, really from kindergarten through grade 12. And they provide students with essential tools to actually approach learning holistically.

LOUI:

Yeah, and so thinking about those ATLs and then thinking about students setting their own goals, it seems like there's a really strong connection there.

ELKE:

There's a very strong connection. Yes. Because when I think of my subject fields now, or being a DP advisor to, and you help students setting goals for the future aspirations, right? So they can be you know, highly advanced and, you know, super interesting and creative, but it's more important to then help them folding their goals, right? To meet them, to learn how to get up to this aspiration level.

LOUI:

Mm-hmm. So this is a really lovely way to point out that in the IB structures, content and these ATLs are equally important. Is that correct?

ELKE:

Absolutely. I mean, concept-based inquiry is embedded in all three programs, so four actually, so students are able to approach content and skills through a conceptual lens.

LOUI:

Ah, wonderful, wonderful. Well, this was great because I think it helps position your aha moment as being so important and so critical. So you have a unit that you've taught many times, but you decided to weave in this new idea. So can you share the goal of the unit and how you used to teach it and then how this idea of student driven goals changed that unit?

ELKE:

Yeah, of course. The unit we talked about is an MYP visual arts unit that explores identity, that's the concept as well, through portraiture. So in a broader sense, portraiture guided by a question, who am I and who are you? To respond to the statement of inquiry, art can mirror how we perceive our and others' personal and cultural identities. So previously this unit was fairly product-focused, with students mainly learning technical skills to create portraits, of course to express themselves, to develop self-awareness, etc. But over time I shifted towards a process-orient approach, which is now important to consider because the key concept identity helped me to dive deeper into it, as well as a big change that I made last year. I enhanced the unit's personalized inquiry more by giving all students the chance to define and verbalize their own inquiry question. So I didn't give them always the same, but now they can individualize their own question. And that was mountain shifting overall. So for example, one student explored, how does my cultural heritage influence my sense of self? While another investigated how has the international community impacted my identity as a Muslim. So since yeah since then, the

engagement has increased massively. And as a consequence, the media and motif choice or even theme choice varied as well. So going back to the workshop now, where you'd help UDL me really to move forward with helping them how to respond to these personalized inquiry questions is that they need to emphasize maybe their ATL choice more. So each unit always has a big or two ATL, right? In this case, lateral and creative thinking, etc. etc. This is clear. So that helps them thinking of how can I manage to produce a piece of art that responds to my question. But I decided to create a choice board with ATL focused options. And this is where this workshop really helped me doing this because I needed to have guidelines how to scaffold goal setting. And meaning, some students might prioritize research skills while others focus on time management or critical thinking. Or for example, during the initial brainstorm phase, some students recognized they needed better time management tools while others focused on refining their research strategies, right? So this flexibility allows every learner to grow in their own way. And the choice board helps them scaffold their process and reflect on their progress.

LOUI:

Wonderful. Were you already giving them choice of which ATL skills they were going to focus on within an inquiry question or was that also something that evolved out of your UDL training experiences?

ELKE:

That evolved certainly from that training. That full day workshop because I saw the connection between ATL and yeah UDL guidelines, especially the goal setting part. So how can I help students meeting their goals? How do I need to become flexible in order to allow change changing the goals? And so that was new. So the choice board was an idea I got at that workshop. And it was amazing how different it was because it allows also reflection through this process. So the reflection is built into every stage of the unit. And during the recent class, for instance, students shared their inquiry questions with their peers and many were surprised how much they have learned about their classmates even after years of being in the same class.

LOUI:

Oh, I bet.

ELKE:

Yeah, so and by allowing students to take ownership of their approaches to learning, the unit has become more engaging and personalized. So that is very clear and I wouldn't have managed that without the UDL workshop to that extent.

LOUI:

Yeah, I'm also wondering about the students creating their own inquiry questions because knowing that you're working with middle years, and so they've had some experience, assuming they came through a PYP program with being exposed to inquiry questions, and maybe creating some of their own. But did you find that some students struggled with that? And how did you help them?

ELKE:

Oh, that's a great question because when I decided to do that, you know, last year, I realized that some that went through the PYP were even so happy. They were relieved. Finally, they can come up with their own questions again. I wondered, well, maybe we should do this more often, the MYP, because once the PYP students entered the MYP, and this is just my perspective, sometimes they're far more conceptually prepared than, you know, older students or students that of course enter the MYP then later. And then of course you had students that struggled because they already were still so product focused and they found it hard to come up with the question that helps them leading to that product and I kind of like that because this task then, even though it was challenging, helped them stepping away from the product focus., right? So if you come up with a new question, a more conceptual question, and you think of products then, like in plural, don't you think that this is maybe more opening and inviting? So they were then seeing the point of doing this, as well as reflecting on their skills they need in order to get there.

LOUI:

Yeah, I think that's brilliant. And then when you were writing your own goal or goals for this unit, how did that shift for you? I'm assuming that you had to rewrite your own goals.

ELKE:

Oh, absolutely. I actually do this every week.

LOUI:

That's good, that's good.

ELKE:

So yeah and especially here, because what I found most inspiring and motivating for myself, realizing that students started to think far more about how to get there rather than the product. So this was, and also they started thinking about different ATL strengths. So it was amazing to see that they were far more, not self-critical, but they knew about their strengths. And since since then, I started to just react even more to their needs after each class. And they asked me, so how how many days and weeks do we have? And I said, honestly, I don't know yet. I need to see how these questions and your interim goals will help you managing the time and that will determine my time management.

LOUI:

Excellent, excellent. Oh my gosh, Elke, this has been so wonderful. Thank you for giving such clarity around how you've helped your students not only explore the concept of inquiry and owning that, but then helping them shift that to become more process focused. We know that that's such a crucial skill. Research has already told us that, but being able to activate that in a classroom is it's not an easy thing to do like i'm gonna decide to do this tomorrow. It takes some preparation and thank you for sharing the preparation you've taken part in and then also just so everyone knows, I will be putting some of these resources onto my website that's connected with Elke's podcast so you can look at them if you want to know more about the ATLs and more

about IB just to have that context. But Elke, thank you so, so much for being a guest on UDL in 15 Minutes.

ELKE:

Thank you, Loui. It was my pleasure to be part. And now you have made me thinking even more about UDL possibilities. This was great.

LOUI:

Oh, you're welcome. You're welcome. So for those listening to this podcast, you can find supplemental materials like images, a transcript, and an associated blog at my website, which is 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 And thanks to everyone for your work in revolutionizing education through UDL and making it our goal to design for learner agency.