UDL in 15 Minutes
With Juan Gallardo
Episode 139 - 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 Juan Gallardo, the principal at Middle College at HCC Fraga in Houston Independent School District. Juan is going to talk about the strong connection he sees between UDL and the concepts of logos, pathos, and ethos. Welcome, Juan.

JUAN:
Well, thank you so much. I'm so glad to be talking to you again.

LOUI:
You're welcome. Thank you for returning to UDL in 15 Minutes. If people haven't gone back to episode 74 to hear about your classroom experiences, you need to. But today, Juan and I are going to talk about something different, but very relevant. And so before we get there, though, would you share some information about your current position?

JUAN:
Yes, I think the last time we talked, I was dean of students in a kind of big public high school with about 2,000 students. It was Sharpstown High School, same district, Houston ISD. And since then, I've become a principal of a small campus, which is a Middle College at HCC Fraga, also in Houston ISD. And I serve 130 kids.

LOUI:
That's a big difference because you saw more students than that in a day when you were a dean, right?

JUAN:
Actually, as a dean, I was responsible for more kids than I'm responsible for now because I was in charge of 10th grade and I was in charge of about 400 kids back then. But now I'm in charge of 130 kids.

LOUI:
Wow.

JUAN:
Yeah. So it's interesting.

LOUI:
Yeah, you can get to know your students a lot better then.

JUAN:
Oh, absolutely. Back in the day, I could never learn all the names. I mean, actually, I have less kids than I used to have as a teacher. When I was a teacher, and I want to tell your audience that I was a teacher for 15 years. So not one of those who go up quick and start telling teachers what to do without having been a teacher for a long time.

LOUI:
Yeah. That's a lovely aspect that you bring. I definitely appreciate it. Okay. So you've done some writing recently and you really dug into the concepts of logos, pathos, and ethos, and you found some intriguing connections with UDL that I think might help others do some deeper and different thinking about the framework. We talked about this ahead of time. We talked about possibly scaffolding this idea. So why don't you just get us started?

JUAN:
It started with stories. I realized that a lot of writers follow a certain pattern. Basically, every writer in the world would know about the hero's journey, right? It's a 12-step route that every hero in almost every story follows. But I realized that the 12 steps, in a way, if you chop them in three big categories, guess what? The first set of steps have a lot to do with the hero being engaged. Then the second set of steps have a lot to do with the hero having a mentor or an oracle or a trainer. And then the last few steps are about the hero taking action. Is this ringing a bell, Loui?

LOUI
Yeah, it is.

JUAN:
Right?

LOUI:
Yeah.

JUAN:
Yeah. And then I went back to Greek mythology and I realized like, hey, pathos has a lot to do with emotion. Logos has a lot to do with content, with data, with information. And ethos has a lot to do with character which is what we display when we act. Okay. And then I kept pulling and pulling and I realized, and I guess I'm giving your audience the big reveal, maybe too early in this conversation we're having. Everything changed when I realized that UDL, more than being discovered, is not a trip outward. UDL is a trip inward. UDL is realizing who we are. UDL is who we are as humans. We have those three elements in us. Before the words UDL were even uttered. Going back to any tradition, you see the three elements. One element that is kind of spiritual, one element which is kind of about the need to doing something, one element which is about being guided by someone, and one element about you becoming the hero of your story. You can see that in religion. You can see that even in the branches of government. You have one judicial, you have one legislative, and you have one executive, right? You feel things, you

think things, and then you do things. Pathos, logos, ethos, I see them everywhere. And at that moment, I realized that basically it's a trip inward to realize what makes humans, humans? So maybe I went too far, but now I cannot not see these three things everywhere. Not just in education. That is the why, the what, the how, and it's inescapable.

LOUI:
I completely agree with you in all of the different trios. You can lay UDL on to these and all of your descriptions. So the hero becoming engaged with something, and then having someone who trains them, and then eventually taking their own action and definitely seeing that parallel. We feel things, we think things, we do things. But what I'm also intrigued by is that even though you've delivered this in a sort of a linear format, right? That's just for the purpose of explanation.

JUAN:
Correct.

LOUI:
It all melds together.

JUAN:
I love how you say the way I explain it was like a line, but you know what? Let's make it three-dimensional, right? What is at the center of your brain? You know, what is your reptilian brain? It's just emotion and then on top of that, you build more cognitive stuff. And then you would know more about this than me, but in the front of your brain, it's kind of like you're how you process your actions. But you can see the layers of the brain on top of each other, also following this kind of like three-dimensional route outwards. So, yeah, I see it everywhere. I mean, UDL again, it's not something that we are designing. It's something that we are discovering. We need to be looking inside, not outside.

LOUI:
Mm-hmm.

JUAN:
And as you said, yeah, you can be doing all three things at the same time. Absolutely, but that's because you're walking different paths at the same time. We're always learning. Not because you're a teacher means that you stop learning. Not because you're a teacher, you forgot your engagement and your passion, right? But at the same time, you learn something and now you are teaching something to somebody else. If we want to make that analogy, that action in the world of pedagogy it is teaching, right? So yeah, you're very right. They all interlace, go back and forth, but every route is aligned to those three elements.

LOUI:
The other part that I'm playing with, is as you started this conversation, you talked about the hero's journey. And of course, any of us who took high school literature, we learned about the hero's journey. What I'm seeing in my brain is that every single one of our students is going

through the hero's journey…

JUAN:
Yes.

LOUI:
…and we want to help them experience the pathos and the logos and the ethos of learning. We want to help them gain those skills around feeling and that thinking and that doing.
And that it's another interesting way to perceive our learners as participating in their own hero's journey. I just have never thought about it that way before.

JUAN:
Well, I'm so glad because a person like you, knowing as much as you know, me being able to spark any new ideas in you is such an honor. Yeah, I also read recently somewhere that it's also about balance, okay? The best way to learn something is also when you have the right combination of emotion and cognitive abilities, right? Like if you're panicking, you cannot learn, right? But if you are too comfortable, you cannot learn. You need to have a certain level of emotion in yourself, right? Like being a little stressed can be beneficial.

LOUI:
Mm-hmm. Yep.

JUAN:
Being a little happy, but not being ecstatic. When you're ecstatic, the emotion takes over everything, right? And the same thing with when you're suffering. But if you have a certain level of emotion, either way, positive or negative, that helps your learning as well.

LOUI:
Yes. And I do appreciate you reminding everyone that when we're comfortable, we aren't really taking in information. We need to have that spur but then we need to want to know that. We want to be connected with it, but it's a great reminder. Well, I really quickly want to make sure that you have a moment to talk about how you came upon this, because like you said, you've been writing and you went down this pathway with the pathos and the logos and the ethos because of a project you've been working on or have worked on. So share a little bit about that.

JUAN:
Well, Loui, I've been more like a co-writer. I wrote fiction with a friend of mine that we met when we were teenagers. But in the last few years, I embarked on writing on my own. So I wrote a book called Amor Fati. And I explore all these elements in it. But your question was also how I discovered this. You know what, I cannot pinpoint an exact moment in which I'm like, oh, it clicked on me. It's basically some idea that sparked in me many years ago. And I've been corroborating it with everything I see around me. So I don't know. It's just something that keeps growing and growing and makes a lot of sense. Sometimes the problem I have with things like this is that it becomes an idea so simple that it almost feels simplistic, but I see that I cannot

escape it. Again, I see it in everything. There's a lot of debate these days with artificial intelligence. The one thing that artificial intelligence doesn't have is engagement. Like there's no purpose. The computer doesn't need to do anything. It's whatever you express to the AI that the AI is going to do for you, right? So that's what makes us human. We need to have a purpose that creates an emotion. We need to see something that we want to change that's basically beyond or behind every desire, every one that we have. And then we need to learn how to do it. If we go back a little bit to the hero's journey, If you think about movies like Star Wars, The Matrix, Rocky, the hero is reluctant at first. Something needs to happen for the hero to want it. You know, and I think that's something that sparked this idea. Probably, I realized that in the movie, The Matrix, just on the first one, the whole UDL framework was represented, all of it.

LOUI:
Oh, yes.

JUAN:
And that's what I'm like, oh, my God, like everything. I mean, step by step. I don't know if that answers your question. You know I'm very convoluted when I talk, especially in my second language. Not really in Spanish, it's even more complicated. But I hope I answered your question.

LOUI:
You did. This was wonderful. And I think it's going to be a great way for people to think about Universal Design for Learning. I think that these different angles help people see the framework as something more than a bunch of words on a sheet of paper, or even just starting to use it. And as people blossom into it and find these kinds of connections, it's just really valuable. So thank you so much for articulating this. I'm so excited and I can't wait to hear from people, but I appreciate you so much, Juan. Thank you so much for sharing this.

JUAN:
Thank you so much for having me, as always.

LOUI:
You're welcome. So for those listening to this podcast, you can find supplemental materials like an image montage with closed captioning, a transcript, and an associated blog at my website, which is the www.udlapproach.com/podcasts And finally, if you have a story to share about UDL implementation for UDL in 15 Minutes, you can contact me through the www.udlapproach.com And thanks to everyone for your work in revolutionizing education through UDL and making it our goal to support learner agency.