

UDL in 15 Minutes Podcast Transcript: Kim Babeu - S.P.O.R.T.

LOUI: Welcome to this extended special edition of UDL in 15 Minutes. This week's episode is a conversation with the very first guest I hosted, Kim Babeu. During this episode, Kim describes a system she calls S.P.O.R.T. that positively impacts her classroom environment. She created S.P.O.R.T. before she knew anything about UDL. Her big take-away from her first UDL workshop was providing her learners with choice and she saw fabulous outcomes, but she knows that those outcomes were so terrific because she had S.P.O.R.T. in place. I encourage listeners to focus in on how the foundation of S.P.O.R.T. aligns with the UDL framework but to also read the associated blog about the intentional use of the UDL framework. And now, UDL in 15 Minutes.

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 Kim Babeu from Toltecalli High School in Tucson, Arizona about her high school anatomy classroom where she implements UDL. More specifically, Kim is going to how she helps her learners move toward becoming expert learners by participating in a learning environment that is thriving on community building and focused on her system called S.P.O.R.T. Hi, Kim. How are you?

KIM: Loui, I'm excellent. How about you?

LOUI: I'm great. Thank you so much. And thank you for being here. So, before we get started would you go ahead and share with us your teaching background?

KIM: I certainly will. I am in the middle of my 38th year of teaching, which absolutely blows me away because I feel like, especially this year, I feel like I'm like in my first couple of years because the two summer workshops that you facilitated for us on UDL, so I'm like so excited.

LOUI: You're so kind and UDL is awesome!

KIM: Absolutely! And I'm finding that out day by day! I'm telling you!

LOUI: So that gives everybody a little bit of an indicator about how you learned about UDL. Right off the top of your head, just really briefly, what, what were some of the immediate connections you saw with UDL?

KIM: Well, I'm telling you, I have this this model that I use, it's called S.P.O.R.T. S.P.O.R.T., S.P.O.R.T. It's an acronym and I can't wait to explain it to you. In fact, Loui, today I'm so excited, when I told you I'm excellent, I'm beyond excellent because today my kids, my anatomy kids and my Integrated Science, specifically my physics kids today, they earned a five out of five in S.P.O.R.T. And I think you understand a little bit of it, but I want your listeners to understand that meant that all of my kids in both of these classes earned all five letters of S.P.O.R.T. that means the whole class. So we danced, and we sang, and we got on the loudspeaker and it is growing exponentially. And it's like becoming this life force at Toltecalli, so I can't wait to share this with you.

LOUI: Yeah, please. So, start with the acronym. Give us a clue with that.

KIM: Okay, so S.P.O.R.T. stands for sportsmanship, participation, organization, respect, and teamwork. And each of these life skills is what I grade these kids on. And, do you want me to share anything about my background first?

LOUI: You know what, as you going with the S.P.O.R.T., you can probably give us some of your background information that feeds in there.

KIM: Okay, so the 38 years I taught PE, sports medicine, anatomy, biology, physics, chemistry, I ran a before and after school program. I'm a retired high school

principal. I've done some stuff in fine arts. But, let me just tell you that one time I was driving over this this beautiful area in Tucson that's called Gates Pass. And, Gates Pass is this area that has beautiful sorrel cacti and as your driving over this area it's where old Tucson, the old movies, where these movies were filmed. And I was driving over it and I looked down and I saw this beautiful sunrise and I said, "You know what? What do I teach? What do I teach kids? Do I teach kids PE? Do I teach kids anatomy, physiology? What do I teach kids?" And I started thinking to myself, I said, "Do you know what? I teach them more than just pedagogy. I teach them more than PE. I teach them life skills. I teach them how to be a good person. And, what is my legacy? What do I want to teach these kids after I leave this earth? I want them to know how to be a good person to each other, how to be a good person to one another, to themselves. How to participate in life and how to get the most out of life." So, I started thinking about it and came up with, I happened to be teaching PE at the time, and I started thinking about sport. How to be a good sport. How to participate in life and not and not be a wallflower. How to be organized and show up to class have the things that you need to, to show up in life and be organized in life. How to be respectful, not only to your classmates, but to yourself and to your classmates into your school. And then, a team player. Like, you need to know that you're a larger part of not only amongst yourself, but to another person, to your class, to your school, and to your community. So, I started thinking about that and it grew into this and it morphed into this community within my class. And then, when I brought that to another school, and then when I became an assistant principal, and then I was honored to become Arizona Teacher of the Year in '05 and I started speaking to schools all across Arizona and I talked about S.P.O.R.T., I started realizing that we as teachers, no matter what we're teaching in the classroom, we're teaching kids how to be real and real people. So it matters not to me, Loui, at the end of the day, when I'm teaching anatomy, it matters not to me at the end of the year, if they know that the femur is largest bone in the body. What matters to me is that kids feel good when they walk out of my classroom and that they know when we're dividing up in teams, they know that it's okay to go from one team to the other. And when they need to go to another

team, that it's okay if there are other team that maybe they're out of their comfort zone. Because you know what, when they leave school and they go into the workforce, they need to know that that's going to be real life and when they really don't want to participate in the activity, you know what they need to do it because that's what real life is about. And in terms of "O" for organization, I have kids running down the hallway to get into my class so that they're not tardy so that they don't lose their organization points. And being respectful to themselves, and you know, they watch their language when they were in my class. And then T for teamwork it's more than just getting along with each other it's saying hey, hey come on now, you know, we, we gotta, we gotta really step up to the plate, really got to do this. So, what I'm finding now in class, Loui, in my class with UDL is, after we had the workshops with you this summer, I realized that you know what? I need to give up some of my control in the class. Especially with task analyses. I'm finding that when I'm giving these kids these choices with UDL, I had to front load S.P.O.R.T. in my classes more than they usually do so that the kids feel safe in the environment. And that they know that their neighbors next to them in the classroom, that they can feel safe and say, "Hey, will you help me?" and then they know that each other has their back, and that the respect is grown exponentially, not only with the people around them, but with me. And I have to model that S.P.O.R.T. 24-7, all the time. And Loui, it's exhausting as a teacher, but it's paying off! The dividend payoff is unbelievable. It is growing, and it's morphing, and it's paying off for me and for each other. Today in anatomy and then in physics class, I had both classes, no one was late, everyone showed good sportsmanship. No one cussed. No one was on their phone when they shouldn't have been. Everyone was helping each other out. Everyone was sharing. When it came time to cleaning up, I didn't even have to say word one, Loui, everyone was doing it. And it's like, I just had to just kind of step back. And now we're into October, Loui, and you know, you said this was going to happen. And I have just stepped back and I have relinquished my sage on the stage, my omnipotence, and I have just let it go to the kids. And I don't have to worry about my kids, it's taking care of itself on its own. And the magic is that with, I'm grading 80% of the grade is based on this S.P.O.R.T., and I have teachers

saying, "But wait a minute, Kim! Wait a minute! What about their test scores and their homework?" Well the test scores and their homework are embedded in the P for participation and O for organization. Loui, they're doing their homework! I have 50 kids in both my anatomy classes, and the ones that come to school have A's because they're doing their work and they are showing up. They're getting A's on their assessments. They're taking their A's home and I have shared with you that they're putting the work up on the refrigerators, they're taking pictures of their A's on their assessments with their pets, with their parents. They're going across the border to Mexico and taking international photos! And I'm sharing them with you, Loui, I can't believe it, Loui! And you told me it was going to happen. And part of me believed you, but part of me didn't believe you. Because holy moly this UDL is blowing me away!

LOUI Well, I... (laughter) [overtalking] I'm so excited for you...

KIM: It's blowing me away, Loui!

LOUI: It's so good! You know in the time we had together the two different workshops, and there wasn't a lot of time, and you started to explain S.P.O.R.T. to me and helped me understand the acronym. And so, we started to have conversations about the connections and even now you're helping me have a deeper understanding. Because, you know, initially and I'll explain to everyone since you're, you're new to Universal Design for Learning, I would not impose on you to have all the language that's related to the framework. Because...[overtalking]

KIM: Thank, God! Thank, God! Because I'd look pretty stupid right now! (laughter)

LOUI: But you know, so I was thinking, man this is heavy on engagement, which is just awesome because we know we have to set those affective of networks up, right? Recruiting interest, which is in the top left-hand corner within the new graphic

of the guidelines, that talks about helping the students see relevance and value. And so, they're connecting with your learning environment, you're giving them purpose around that, but you're also minimizing threats and distractions for them in that they're learning how they need to work and, we'll use the word behave, but it's beyond that, because there's the academic side to it also. But it's for everybody and you're making it accessible. And the expectation is, it's for everyone. You don't say, "Well, you know these five kids, yes, but you know what, I'm going to let you slip here a little bit." No, you've set that expectation and that can actually be a really safe environment as long as what those stipulations are, are supportive to the students. That's what you've done. We also talked about and sustaining effort and persistence, the heightening the salience of goals and objectives. Well, you've clearly laid out the goals for them and the objectives then it comes to S.P.O.R.T. You've helped them understand sportsmanship, participation, organization, respect, and teamwork, (and yes, I have those written down because I wouldn't have them memorized!). And in there also, you know, fostering collaboration, collaboration and community. That's what this is all about. You've created this thriving community. And like you said, it's just kind of feeding off of one another and to cap it all off, it's all to help these students learn about self-regulation and gaining those skills so they can facilitate their own personal coping skills. And so, like you said, if they have to move to a different team, it's okay, but you're going to help them strategize around how to figure out how to cope with that. But these are also skills that they need to learn over time. Now, I, I do have one other question. We're right here at the very end I knew this was going to eat up time, but really quickly, so when you're helping the students learn about this, how do you represent these things to them? I'm assuming you model it. And then, do you have other descriptors that you give them?

KIM: What do you mean, how do I how do I represent it to them?

LOUI: So, when we think about UDL and we think about the principle of representation and more specifically, language and symbols, this is language

heavy, right?

KIM: Yes!

LOUI: And so, students are learning about these things via behavior like probably watching you and it's being modeled, but there's also a language thing here. So how do you support the students, in learning about S.P.O.R.T.?

KIM: I have posters up around the room. I also have students, like, for instance, I had four new students today. As soon as the new students come into the classroom, I have helpers that stand up and say, "Hey, let's go out in the hallway". And the helpers take them out in the hallway, and they, they take the posters, I have handouts and they have symbols on there about what sportsmanship looks like. And they show them. And then when they come back into the classroom, these kids sit with the with the kids and actually help them through what sportsmanship, participation, organization, respect, and teamwork looks like. And I model it. And so, it a morphed, ongoing 24-7 representation. And it, it takes it takes a life of its own. So, it's not something that can be a snapshot, it's a movie.

LOUI: Nice! Well, once again, we have come to our 15 minutes so quickly, and we're actually a little over, but you're so good with sharing pictures and photos with me. So, I'm sure you'll be willing to share photos so everyone can see examples of what you're talking about.

KIM: Absolutely.

LOUI: Thank you. So, I want to say thank you again for sharing this other rich, rich story and I'm sure we're going to be talking again!

KIM: You have a wonderful day.

LOUI: Thank you.

KIM: Thank you, Loui.

LOUI: For those listening, if you'd like to share a story about UDL implementation, you can contact me through my website www.theudlapproach.com. And, thanks to everyone for your work in revolutionizing education, and making it our goal to develop expert learners.