

UDL in 15 Minutes with Cherie Smith
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. This episode is live in conjunction with the UDL-IRN 2020 Summit on Demand and the UDL-IRN's Network And Learn LIVE series. But before I introduce my guest and the specific topic for this podcast, I am sharing my resolve to take action against institutionalized racism specifically within our educational systems. And while I will continue to listen and learn, I will not hide behind the luxury of getting it right. I will be out there, and I hope you join me. But for this podcast. I'm talking with Cherie Smith, who is a regional consultant for the State Support Team Six and a member of the UDL collaborative at The Ohio Center on Autism and Low Incidence, known as OCALI. And today, Cherie is going to share how one district is using an in-house practice profile on clear goals to perform fidelity checks and align their support. So, hi Cherie! How are you?

CHERIE: Thanks Loui. I'm doing well. I'm happy to be here.

LOUI: Oh, it's so great to talk with you I really, I really appreciate it. And I especially appreciate your willingness to be on a live podcast! This is, you know, there's only one other person that's done this so you are in a small community of people, so thank you for your bravery! So first off, if you would share a bit about the State Support Team as an organization and then the role, your role as a regional consultant.

CHERIE: Sure, sure. So, in Ohio, there are 16 Regions, State Support Team Regions, and Region Six is on the western side of the state. We support about 47 school districts and we are just a part of a state system of support that collaborates with schools, families, and other regional partners through a continuous improvement process. And our charge is really to ensure that each child (and that's part of our strategic plan that that language each child is our future), that each child has access to high quality education. So, we do that through leadership development, we support team development, we try to build capacity, professional capital, within our teams and also instructional, inclusive instructional practices such as universal design for learning.

LOUI: Yeah, so your role is really broad. We're just, I feel like, we're tapping into, it's dangerous to put a percentage to it because then it sounds like it's weighted, but it sounds like this is a corner, like this is like a 20% or something because it sounds so broad. Am I my right?

CHERIE: Yeah. So there are different hats that I wear. I support districts in special, special education, with Secondary Transition, but it's almost like once you see the framework, you can't unsee it. And so it, to me, sort of bleeds into all those other areas, you know. Helping students prepare for life after school, transition right, is really helping them become an expert learner, and in learning what skills work for them and what skills are going to translate so I see it reaches multiple areas.

LOUI: Yeah, I love what you just said, like once you see the framework and you start to really understand, you just can't unsee it! It is, it's there! And maybe people who aren't as used to it or aren't as invested in it yet, you can potentially get under their skin because you're like, "Oh, it's just so connects here and.." [laughter] It's this and that and the other! [Indistinguishable sound]

CHERIE: It's UDL! What's new?

LOUI: I know! So, what route did you take to get to this point as part of the State Support Team?

CHERIE: Well, so some of my formal or graduate training was around educational leadership, but also curriculum and instruction around the idea of the inclusive classroom. And a lot of my experience has been, you know, it started out in special ed. I was an exceptional school education, ESC teacher, and school specialist in Florida, and consultant. I, I found that I was, oftentimes, offering, working with teachers in ways to improve what they were doing in their classroom for students with disabilities but then we were finding ways that that would translate to all students. And so, when I, when I heard of UDL, when I first heard of it, I, it just clicked like, "Oh! Of course! That totally makes sense!" And then I was really excited about going back into the classroom to be a co-teacher because then I wasn't just coming from Special Ed. I felt like I, I could really have a conversation about all students. My co-teachers embraced that. I had some really wonderful teachers that I that I taught with. And so that idea of becoming an instructional coach just started to come about. And then when the state support team

was hiring, it just appealed to me, you know, really, it now, instead of just working with one district, I could work with multiple districts and just impact so many more students, so I, I was really excited I just jumped on that opportunity and I love it.

LOUI: Yeah, I agree with you in that being able to spread it. Being able to spread your experiences, but then also see the impact across several different sites can be really exciting. And I think fulfilling.

CHERIE: Yeah.

LOUI: So, in this life that you have of supporting these different districts, you have one district who specifically adopted, they action of a practice profile, and they chose to focus on clear goals and that was kind of the story that you were going to share. So I guess starting off with, maybe, I know you did a session earlier, go ahead and reference that so people can go back and find it (if you've purchased the access to this week's conference, which is so worth it, then you would be able to go back and see Cherie's presentation from earlier this week), but you can reference that and then just get into like what a practice profile is and tell the story.

CHERIE: Yeah, so the presentation was from the UDL-IRN Implementer SIG, and I believe the title was Implementation At All Levels: Classroom to the Capitol, and it does come from that place of "How do we support implementation in all classrooms and all buildings in all districts across the region across the state, across our country?" So really, implementation at all levels. And the idea for a practice profile came about. I found that I would, when I would train teachers, and it was so interesting what you said about kind of before the guidelines, even with the guidelines which were designed to be in, like teacher friendly language. It still seemed very conceptual to them, and they really had a hard time with it. And I had one teacher tell me, "You're a very lovely person, but you speak in riddles. You know? What does this mean in my classroom?" and so I realized they needed something a little bit more descriptive that focused on adult actions, and that's really what a practice profile is. You find an innovation and you define it. So, what does it look like? What are the core components? And most of the practice profiles I've seen included clear goals as a core component or a critical component of UDL. You have to have clear goals. They often have, you know, you need to use multiple means, you need to build that expert learner. So, there have been a variety of

them kind of created. The UDL Collaborative from Ohio, we, we created one and kind of worked through that process so that we would be better able to help our districts do it. And so I, I am working with one district that really took a hold of it. And they really liked the idea of defining it so that it was something that teachers could practice, they could observe, was very doable, actionable, measurable. And so they tried to define what they wanted and what their expectations were around clear goals. And actually, their, their strategy is a three part strategy, but so far they've only defined clear goals and they've been able to implement that. They're, they're working with their district leadership team. I think just this year they're defining the second piece, and then the following year we'll design the third, so it's a multiyear process to sort of begin to create this, you know, they looked at research kind of pulled in. What does the research say what does it look like, and then begin to just use it. What would this look like if we were going to observe everybody doing it? And so the practice profile was really that that starting point. Each building kind of developed a sort of look for. You know, if we go in the classroom, we want to see these things, and then they did it. And of course, you learn so much from that you know then you start to get a little bit of nuanced details on each building. It's going to look a little different right, because you're applying a framework and it doesn't look the same, every classroom doesn't look the same. So it's been really exciting to see that.

LOUI: I love practice profiles, I've seen yours and you know that we have them, and for those who are listening, you're going to see examples. So Cherie's gonna share the ones that she's talking about here. I know we can connect you with probably some from the Ohio collaborative. I'm going to share one that Michael McSheehan and I have put together on the combination of MTSS and UDL. And, as Cherie and I have talked about before, these take a long time to develop because you're doing such deep thinking about these things, but the thing that I really like about practice profiles is it's, it's a rubric for adults right? And we have all contributed to it in a sense of being able to articulate what is that full implementation, what are we looking for, and then what are the things that help us know we're on the way to getting there? And so, maybe share some of the conversations or some of the ways that you help guide people in that conversation of how do they know they're getting there.

CHERIE: Yeah. So one of the ways is to go and observe. Are we seeing the same thing? It's sort of that fidelity check. And, and then to have discussions around it. So, you look at the data and sometimes data is a scary word, so sometimes I say evidence. Look at the evidence. Look what you collected and have a conversation about it. Sort of this inter-rater activity where, "Is this what we meant? To what extent, you know, are we there yet?" And it's that iterative sort of UDL process, "Okay, no. So let's define it a little bit more. Let's, let's sort of talk about what worked and what didn't and let's try it again," and then kind of pull that data again and kind of keep going through that that process that continuous improvement process so that we are really ramping up our, our fidelity. One thing that the district did that I really loved is, they, they created a very beautiful visual for what it looks like at various levels of implementation. So, the component was clear goals and they had sort of sub components and for each of those sub components, you had a description of what it looked like along the way. So, you can sort of see if you are moving towards that full level of implementation, that high fidelity. And one thing that I love that they did was they started to link resources. So, you know, we're not sure we have this yet, but here's a few resources, here's some videos of some teachers teaching, here's an article that explains it a little bit more. I loved that every time they mentioned multiple means in the practice profile it linked to the guidelines which links to the research, so you can keep digging down if you're that person that wants more details and wants to know more, it's there for you, and they made that available for their district.

LOUI: The other thing I like about the practice profile process, so when we take this back to the framework, right, that that level of recruiting interest is just the rock solid cetera of this! Because there's the authenticity of understanding what you're looking for. And the, "Are we there yet?" I always think of like a little kid in the backseat, "Are we there yet?" So, in the, in the practice profile, you don't have the kid asking that question anymore right? They've figured out how to understand the mileage that's left in the trip, and that they're going to get there and so there's that authentic understanding. And then I love this representation that they're creating. These visuals, that's beautiful! That is a wholehearted adoption of this! And then when it comes to them as practitioners, within that action and expression, they feel good about it feel solid! They know what they do

need to do. It's, it's a beautiful representation of the whole framework all the way across all the guidelines and the principles.

CHERIE: They actually, they have a graphics department, I think it might be in connection with their career technical education. And so, they asked a student to do that. So that was created by a student. I mean, right? I mean just I love the district. [Laughter. Inaudible talking] They had conversations around it. So, I just I love that piece so I'm glad you reminded me to share that. But I would agree with you that the whole process of building a practice profile is, it's a learning process in and of itself because you think you have an idea you think you know it, but through conversation and asking questions and reflecting, everybody's knowledge grows. And it's good to have sort of those, you know, are we there yet people those maybe that are new, because what we found, especially in the UDL collaborative is we're all sort of, you know, somebody comes from each region, each of the 16 regions, so we're sort of the leaders in our region in UDL and we think we know what we're saying, right? We think we understand it, and we do so well that when we brought some people in who were kind of new to it, we weren't as clear as we thought we were, we had to break it down a little bit more and explain it, and maybe a different way. But that's an important piece, too, is to have your experts but have those that are sort of new to the innovation or to UDL when you're creating.

LOUI: Absolutely! Well, Cherie we have hit our 15 minutes. I knew we would! It's so easy, but I really appreciate this. I think you've given a lovely example of the practice profile. I know you've already sent me images that are going to go into the photo montage that people can look at and get some visual representations of this and have an easier time, and I always send these things out by Twitter so people be able to contact you that way because I know they're gonna have questions. And so, and so, and if you're willing, then we can, we can share that information too of how to get in touch with you, but thank you so, so much for this.

CHERIE: You're welcome.

LOUI: Great! For those listening to the 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.

And then finally, if you have a story to share about UDL implementation for UDL in 15 minutes, contact me through www.theUDLApproach.com, and thanks everyone for your work in revolutionizing education through UDL and making it our goal to develop expert learners.