

UDL in 15 Minutes with Lauren Helberg
Transcript

LOUI: In response to how most educators are delivering instruction right now, I'm hosting a special series of UDL in 15 minutes episodes where I'll interview educators about their use of UDL to design online learning experiences. If you want to share your experiences, contact me via my website, www.theUDLapproach.com

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 Lauren Helberg who is a math instructor at the Four County Career Center in Archbold, Ohio. Today, Lauren is going to share how she uses UDL to make math accessible to all of her learners and the shifts she made after moving to emergency distance learning. Hi Lauren, how are you?

LAUREN: I'm good, thanks for having me.

LOUI: You're welcome. Thank you, thank you so much for coming on. So, can you share a bit about Four County Career Center?

LAUREN: Well, the Four County Career Center is a career center, so that means that we service students from several different home schools or school districts, and we service 22 school districts for about 800 students. And so the students spend their day, whole day with us. And half the day they are learning a trade and the other half they're doing their academics. So, a trade could be electrical, it could be auto technology, vet assisting, health careers, some of the technology fields, some sports fitness, ag diesel. So, we have a wide range of careers and certifications that our students receive during their time at our school. Our school only has juniors and seniors, so they decide to make that transition to come to our school their second half of their high school career, and then they finish out their career with us and hopefully leave with some trades and definitely leave with some good life skills to start their careers.

LOUI: Wow. So, of these 800 students, are there students with IEP? Students with

disabilities included?

LAUREN: Yes, there are students at our school that have disabilities and are on IEPs. They are oftentimes in classes with non-IEP students. Sometimes they may be in classes that are mostly IEP students. They participate in various labs and they are definitely mixed into all of the academics as well. So yeah, there are definitely IEP and non-IEP students at our school.

LOUI: Okay. And I think this is really interesting, the junior and senior, because different career centers across the US do it differently. So do these students during their freshman year they start to talk about, "Okay, I know I'm going to want to go to the Career Center," and so they, they're helped to create an academic line that will take them toward the Career Center?

LAUREN: We have students that come visit us in their eighth grade year, we do what's called eighth grade tours. And we contact our home schools and they bring their students to us and the students will visit three labs for about 10 to 15 minutes. And then they'll come back again as sophomores for what we call a sophomore visitation day and they will visit two labs at that point in time that they are interested in. And then from there, they will then start the application process. And then they'll be hopefully enrolled if the numbers all, all shake out.

LOUI: Okay. Awesome. Well, thank you, that helped me understand a lot! So, you teach math, you're the math instructor. So, I I'd love to hear about your teaching background, and of course I know we're going to get to your first a-ha with UDL part in there, but I think also maybe helping us understand what math instruction, because you said that, you know, that's the half day trade, half day academic, so I assume you're on that academic side so just start where you'd like.

LAUREN: Okay, so I am one of six math instructors at Four County. This year I taught all financial algebra which I thoroughly loved that course. I love teaching it and the

students find it very useful as well. And so I we, we have a lot of range of math classes. We have algebra II, we have a transition to college math class, we have an advanced math class, we have pre-calc, and a few other different geometry, different types of math classes. So, we have several that we, we cover all the bases based on what the students had previously, and what their future plans are as well. So, I just finished my 12th year teaching. All 12 years have been at Four County, and I have loved it. It's so interesting seeing the students in their, in a field that they love. So that can really help some of the students excel and it helps some of the students who may not like being in a desk all day long. So they get to spend half their day building a house or half their day playing with an engine and different things like that, so I think it also then helps them academically because they have some of that action throughout their day as well. As for my, my first a-ha moment, I got started with my supervisor Lisa Hite, who was just fantastic. And she got us started with UDL. And in talking with UDL with her, we were talking about some of the, how some students just need a longer period of time to do things. And it really kind of brought up my high school career because I was usually the last one to finish a test. And then when it came to the ACT, I took the ACT three different times. And I never finished any section of the ACT, all three times I took it. And so it really got to the point of, "Okay this is my score." I mean it was an OK score, but what could my score have been if I had been able to finish the entire test and answer all the questions, and look at all the questions, and read all the questions? And what could my score have been? What would that have look like if I had been able to finish the whole test? And that just really resonates with UDL and being able to show what I know. I never fully got to be able to show what I know on that ACT. So, it's just one of those things where what could it have been?

LOUI: Absolutely! It's, that's so... it's a wonderful story because it talks about the simple barrier of time and how time is, has nothing to do with intelligence! Somehow, somewhere down the road, somebody convinced somebody else and I kept going, that if you could do things quickly, if you could process it quickly then you were more intelligent, and that's false. It's absolutely false, but it continues to be a barrier. I love how you had that introspection, and brought that into your own experience with UDL.

And now your own use of it! And then I was also thinking about how you said you love financial algebra and I was thinking, “Well yeah! It's so authentic!” Your students! I'm mean right there! You're kicking into engagement right there!

LAUREN: Yes, the students do find it very useful. Sometimes I'll hear the comments of “Why did it take 12 years to finally get a math class I'm going to use?” and, but we use a lot of the skills that they had built up over the years in what we talked about and it's just now in a context that they are interested in because most of my students that I have are seniors. I have a couple juniors but most of mine are seniors, and so a lot of them are getting ready to jump out into that real world I always called adulting. I go, “You guys are gonna be adulting soon. You know it's right around the corner!” And so, it really transitions them nicely into their next step.

LOUI: Yeah, that's beautiful. So, I understand that you created an end of the year lesson during the UDL workshop, and then COVID-19 came along and so you had to go back and shift that lesson. So I'd love to hear about what you created initially and then how you shifted that along for our emergency distance learning.

LAUREN: Yeah, so I had read a book which, as we just talked about the ACT, is a big feat because I'm a slow reader. And so, hence why it took me so long to take ACT tests and stuff, but so I finished a whole book and it was talking about these different ideas that all high schoolers should essentially learn before, you know, they transition to adulting. And so I kind of took that idea of that book and those different principles and ideas that it covered, and I wanted to share that with my students because it really became like a culmination of the whole year. It talked about all the different things we talked about from homeownership and renting to budgeting and, and saving and a bunch of different things that we had talked about. And so, I just thought that this would be a good end of the year project. And our school, we are one to one and so, towards the end of the year they always have to return their, their laptops, and so I was like, well, this would be a good thing when they have no laptops. I can have all these different ideas available to them and then they can read about them and it's just kind of

a good summation and send off. So, I put this together. And so, I had the different principles and ideas grouped into different categories. So, like saving, retirement, housing, budgeting. And so, when I was doing this in the UDL [workshop], color coding is very beneficial for some students. And so, I color coded the different categories. I color coded my rubric, because they had to pick. And a lot of, with UDL is a choice in what interests you and different things like that so let's say for housing I would have six different things for them to read, and they would all be colored the same color. And I would say pick one or pick two that you, of those topics that interest you, so they would look over the heading and the topic being covered and determine if that's one they wanted to read or not. And then actually at the UDL training session. I came across a bow tie activity. So it's a big picture of a bow tie and you kind of put on one side of the bow tie what you agree with on the other side what you disagree with and then there in the middle, your takeaway. And so, I was having the students you know kind of fill out bow ties for each of those ideas that they were reading about. And so, I still wanted to do that during the COVID learning at home time period. And so I had to shift it so I now had to put everything online. We use the learning management system Canvas, as our centralized area for teachers to put stuff, so I put all the things I wanted them to read on there and I color coded them into different sections. And the part that took me a little bit to come up with was, how am I going to do the bow tie part? And so, with that bow tie part, I decided that some kids were going to have a hard time putting together how they wanted to organize this. Some would be organizing it perfectly fine. But I knew there'd be some that they just weren't going to know how to organize it so I kind of created a little template that they could use if they wanted. And it kind of laid out the information I wanted. What color were they on, what was the topic they were reading about. And then I had spaces where they could type in with what they agreed with what they disagreed with and what their takeaway was. And so, I set that up and some of the kids used the template and some of them did not use the template and that was perfectly fine. I was still able to get what I wanted and needed, and they were still able to show me what they knew, and what they got from it, and I still felt that I accomplished the same goal. And after doing it I kind of thought that some of them may like that better than the bow ties. So, so we'll see what next year brings and where we're at with devices and no

devices and maybe the ones that have their own devices that they'll still have in class, maybe they may want to do that. And so we'll, we'll leave up the, the choice I guess.

LOUI: So the irony is not lost on any of us that you purposefully designed a lesson in a school where everybody has a device, then they turn in the device,... then oh my gosh! [Laughter]

LAUREN: Yeah. [Laughter]

LOUI: And then you create something for no device and then you need to switch it back to....oh, wow! [Laughter]

LAUREN: It all worked and out and it was good. So,...

LOUI: Yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah! I'm very taken by the focus that you had on saying, "Okay, the...this bow tie piece." This was definitely comprehension, right, they were working on...they're gonna show you through the bow tie what they know, of action expression there, right? It's a way for them to express and communicate. But you are working with them on that deep concept of comprehension way down there in representation. They needed to be at that level to be able to give you good information in the bow tie. And so you took away the barrier of the actual bow tie for those students who may not have connected with that,...

LAUREN: Right.

LOUI:...so you didn't get so locked into this really cool visual thing that sometimes we, we get so excited when we see something like that at a workshop, and you allowed that flexible thinking to come in and go, "Oh wait, I might have some learners that might struggle with this." So that was brilliant. I love that.

LAUREN: Yeah, it worked out pretty nice.

LOUI: Yeah, yeah! I think it did! Well, we have bumped up against our 15 minutes. We... that was a great story I really appreciate it I think we got to hear somebody in the background shaking his little collar around...

LAUREN: I'm sorry the dog just cannot be away from me!

LOUI: Oh, no! Don't apologize! [Overtalking]

LAUREN: Otherwise he would have scratched and you would have heard the scratching at the door the entire time!

LOUI: Oh I think it's wonderful. I really do! Well, I want to thank you so much for giving up some time today, and being on UDL in 15 minutes, Lauren. This was a great story and I know people are gonna find different points of entry for UDL and especially the fact that you've helped people move forward maybe with understanding that math and UDL they do go together! They really do!

LAUREN: They do! They, and it's, sometimes it's just little things like adding the color and different things to help some of your visual learners or the ones that may not be as organized and just need that color to help them get organized and keep things straight, those little things can really go a long way.

LOUI: Yeah, I think they can, too. Well, thank you again.

LAUREN: Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

LOUI: Sure. For those listening to this podcast, you can find supplemental materials like an image montage with closed captioning, that montage audio descriptions, a transcript, and an associated blog at my website which is www.theudlapproach.com. 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 develop expert learners.