UDL in 15 Minutes

With Kelly Zombo

The transcript

[The UDL in 15 Minutes logo followed by a school picture of Kelly, a white woman with shoulder-length brown curly hair with highlights wearing a brown blouse]

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 part of a special series about UDL implementation at Fraser public schools. Today I'm talking with Julie Zombo was a 21st Century literacy teacher slash coach at Eisenhower Elementary in Fraser, Michigan. Today, Kelly is going to share how UDL has shaped their portrait of a graduate and their strategic plan. Hi Kelly. It's great to talk to you!

KELLY: I thank you so much for this opportunity.

LOUI: Oh, you're very welcome. So, let's get started with your background and education and with UDL.

KELLY: So, this is my 21st year in elementary education. All of the years of teaching have been in Fraser. I started as a classroom teacher, mostly teaching fourth grade, I taught a few years in fifth. And then about 10 years ago, an opportunity came up in Fraser for the 21st Century literacy teacher and coaching role. And as that role came up, I was able to become part of that position, and I have been in that role for the past 10 years. I started learning about UDL many years ago, but it has really been a main focus of our work for the past five or six years. [The homepage for Eisenhower Elementary School showing a boy and girl proudly pointing to their work on a bulletin board]

LOUI: Wow! So, I'm so interested in the fact that you are already in the building and then came into the coaching role. I'm just guessing that you had greater trust with the teachers and they just kind of said, "Oh. Well, we'll let Kelly come in and help us" maybe

a little bit more than in other settings where coaches from a different building or they just don't know the person as well. I know that's hard to judge on your end, but what would you say?

KELLY: I agree, I think it was nice because I already had relationships with the staff and had built a good rapport. So, I think it was a nice transition into the role. And the way the 21st Century role works is we have two separate things that we do during each week. So, part of the week we teach a specials class, so I teach kindergarten through sixth grade for 40 minutes once a week and we do things such as digital citizenship, Internet safety, coding, creating STEM activities, and then the rest of the week, I'm able to do the coaching role and that's with individuals or grade level teams, I'm able to co-teach and we also are able in the 21st Century role to facilitate UDL professional learning with all staff at some of our early release days. So, the position looks a little bit different at the middle and high school, but the role that I have, there's one of us in each of the elementary and Fraser.

LOUI: That's awesome. So, I'm really intrigued by the co-teaching. Do you get time to work with one another? Do you have like prep time that you can take? How does that work? [A collection of photos showing young elementary students playing math games on tablets and with manipulatives]

KELLY: So, often we are able to meet during teachers prep. So, some teachers prefer to meet individually, some teachers prefer to meet as a grade level team. Some teachers that I work with like to meet weekly, others we do every other week, and then the co-teaching is out there as an option if they wanted to try maybe a new tool or a new UDL strategy and be able to go into the room with them and work with their students.

LOUI: And like you said, you've been a coach for 10 years, which is just incredible. Was the role always this 21st Century role or has it shifted over the years? I know you said it started off as a 21st Century, but has the role shifted?

KELLY: It has. When we first started in this position 10 years ago, we had just started with one-to-one devices. At the elementary level we had iPads; originally, we all had iPads. And since then, the secondary has moved to laptops, but at the elementary level, we have iPads. And it started with more of an instructional technology coach in really implementing the technology as a tool in the classroom. And then it has evolved over the years to the UDL coaching role. So, kind of from an instructional technology coach to more of an instructional coach with a focus on the UDL framework.

LOUI: Nice!

KELLY: And we really, in our in our district, we really started focusing on the UDL cohorts about four years ago. And the way we're doing that is we had small groups of teachers going through a two-year program, which is each of the cohorts. And as we're going through them, they're kind of getting a deeper dive into UDL, as well as the whole staff we're doing UDL throughout the year as part of our professional learning. But the cohorts are doing a little bit more with specific workshops and focusing on specific checkpoints within the framework. We're also working through a district right now and getting some UDL certifications. We also are working through some coaching cycles. So, teachers are working on with coaches to choose a UDL goal that they'd like to focus on. And right now, our work has been on identifying the goal and then working on learning strategies tools to work towards a plan. Our focus is always on an intentional plan using the UDL framework and that's how we really are supporting our strategic plan. Which I can explain a little more if you'd like!

LOUI: Yeah, that'd be great. [Students showing off games they invented]

KELLY: So, our strategic plan in Fraser we have our focus on 6 C's, which are deeper learning competencies and that ties into our Portrait of a Graduate where those are the skills, attributes and experiences students need for success after High School. And the 6 C's are critical thinking, communication, creativity, character, collaboration, and citizenship. And that all ties into the four goals of the strategic plan. We have teaching

practices, where that's where we're really focusing on using the UDL framework to increase student achievement. Learning partnerships. The third goal is learning environment, really working on having a more flexible design. And then the fourth goal is our digital ecosystem. So that's kind of the bigger picture of the strategic plan in Fraser and luckily, we're able to work very close with our 21st Century team. We have elementary team meetings. And then we also have meetings where we meet with K through 12 coaches in some of our curriculum consultants and our director of curriculum as well. So, we all work very closely together to see how things are going across the district and to help guide our coaching. And luckily, I also meet very often with my principal to look at more of our building and how things are going with UDL in our building.

LOUI: Really nice. So, when it comes to you guys building your skills as coaches, what does that look like? You just said you have the meetings once weekly. I'm sure you do some deeper dive into what coaching is and how to be an effective coach.

KELLY: Yes, so over the years, we have done things such as some book studies, we've been digging into a little bit more of the coaching cycle work with Jim Knight and also we have been fortunate to partner with our local ISD and we've done quite a bit of training and workshops with them over the past few years to really work on our coaching role, as well as implementing the UDL framework in our district. And really just focusing right now with the coaching cycles and going through the identify, learn and improve process has really helped just really focus on our coaching and active listening and making sure that we are supporting teachers in becoming expert learners as well as teachers being able to support their students and becoming expert learners. So, it's an ongoing process learning about UDL. So, although I feel as if we have a really good understanding, we're continually growing with that as it's a process throughout the years.

LOUI: Nice. And then so help people understand kind of what the coaching relationships looks like. Do you have an example of how that role comes to life at Eisenhower? [Students using digital and non-digital game-play to understand concepts]

KELLY: Sure, so I often will meet with teachers on a regular basis, either weekly or every other week. And one of the examples of a meeting I just recently had with the teachers she's one of our four three teachers. Her name is Christine Arnold and she teaches all of the science for the fourth grade and she was really trying to focus on a goal of providing more options for expression and communication with her students. So, we sat down and took a look at what topic she was working on, what her goals were. And at the time they were working on sound energy and she wanted some different ways for students to share their learning. So, her plan was to have them create instruments with using recycled materials. So, they could choose any type of instrument they would like. They had all types of materials they could use, but her main goal was to have them share their learning with the other students and talking about vibrations, pitch, energy, kinetic and potential. So, when we sat down and looked at was in her choices, we had a coaching conversation about anticipating variability and reducing barriers and what are some of the options that she could provide for her students to have them share their learning. So, we focused on multiple means of action and expression, and really getting down into using multiple media for communication. [Students using iPads to do close investigation and discovery] So, students could take their instrument that they had made and we're demonstrating all of the different scientific vocabulary about the sound's energy, and she came up with in working together she had some options and we do have iPads, so a lot of these are apps, but piccollage.edu, where students could take a collage of pictures, they could add text, Book Creator was another one that they could use where it could be a book in Book Creator or it could be a poster. So, they were able to add images, text, they could record their voice. They could even add in videos. Students could create their own video using the clips or iMovie. So, some students chose to create a video in iMovie other students chose to create a movie trailer was in that app. Stop motion was another choice that they had. And then another one we have right now is we have licenses for MinecraftEDU for

fourth graders and they were able to create in Minecraft and do a screencast using their iPad. And what was really nice about that is students that may not have been comfortable sharing as much verbally were able to create signs in boards in Minecraft to really share their knowledge of vibrations pitch and sound energy while showing their world that they created a Minecraft. So, some of them rebuilt their instrument using Minecraft and then walked through them; it was kind of like a little museum where they had different boards and posters to share their learning with that tool. Another thing that the fourth-grade teacher did is she had another option where the students could come up with their own ideas. I think there were six choices there, but if they had something that they wanted to share their learning in a different way, that was an option as well. And what she had at the end was she had them put all of their final projects in a Padlet. So, they were able to go in and see each other's work. And it was just really nice because in addition to having choices for action and expression, they were able to really be engaged. They were really enjoying what they were working on during this time, they loved being able to see what other students were doing. And really, science vocabulary started coming out more, supported their comprehension as they were sharing their own knowledge and learning from others. And it was just a really nice way to have students share their learning with images, text recording, and lots of different options. So that's one example of one of the things I've been working on with the teacher, kind of helping as she came up with that project. A lot of other teachers in our building right now are really focusing on social emotional learning. Engaging students more in their morning meetings to help foster collaboration and community. So those are kind of a few things that we have happening at the moment.

LOUI: Right. At the moment, it always changes. Stay tuned. So, one question. We just have a couple of minutes left. But of course, I love that you guys talked about potential barriers within that lesson on sound energy. And what were some of the barriers, if you remember, what were some of the barriers that were discussed? And what were the workarounds for that that you suggest or that you come together? [Kelly's Twitter page showing her photo and her avatar pointing to a wall with instructional ideas]

KELLY: I think one of the original things that she did, or ideas that she had come up with was she knew she didn't want the students to just stand up and present their information because she's not one of the barriers would be just not as much engagement with the listeners and also some students may have some barriers in anxiety of standing in front of a group of other students to share something but they could share their learning in a lot of those other options that were given. We also talked about some barriers could be time, but what she found is because the students were so engaged with what they were doing, the project ended up not actually taking as much time as she had originally anticipated because they were very engaged in what they were doing and wanted to share their trailer that they made or they were excited about building in Minecraft, so they wanted to be able to create that screencast to share. So just kind of thinking about some different options. I know she had done similar things in the past but just wanted to really look at it this year and in take a look at some different choices. She also did create a rubric. So, the students knew ahead of time, what they were working on and kind of had the goal in mind some of the vocabulary and things that they needed to show their learning and comprehension of as they were working through the project.

LOUI: Excellent. Excellent. Well, this has been a fabulous conversation. Kelly, thank you so much. And thank you for giving us a visual of the work that you guys do there. I really appreciate it.

KELLY: Well, thank you and thank you for having me. I appreciate it. [The UDL in 15 Minutes logo]

LOUI: You're very welcome. So, for those listening to this 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 the UDLapproach.com/podcasts. And finally, if you have a story to share about UDL implementation for UDL in 15 minutes, 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 develop expert learners.