

Dakota Hudelson Transcript

UDL in 15 Minutes

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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 Dakota Hudelson who runs the 7th grade writing and literacy lab at the Northside Middle School in Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation in Columbus, Indiana. Today, Dakota is going to share a broad swath of experiences all connected to how he sees UDL as a way to promote social justice while encouraging the growth of expert learners. Hi Dakota! How are you?

DAKOTA: Hi Loui! I'm doing wonderful. How are you?

LOUI: I'm great, thank you! Thank you so much for being on the podcast today.

DAKOTA: Yes.

LOUI: And would you go ahead and share with us your teaching background?

DAKOTA: Absolutely. So this is my fourth year of teaching. I do, I have taught all four years at BCSC and have loved it immensely. I came to BCSC kind of really by chance. I was in a program at Indiana University, Bloomington called the Community of Teachers. It's a bit of an alternative program to the traditional teacher experience, but it got me into the classroom much faster. I originally was going to student teach in Bloomington, but then my cooperating teacher, with about two weeks left of student teaching, got a job in Chicago. I was in a flurry trying to find somewhere, ended up at Central Middle School in BCSC, and it was the best thing that's happened to me in my entire educational career!

LOUI: Oh my gosh! That is quite the story! That's awesome! [laughter] So, you you landed in a district that's internationally known for their long-term implementation of UDL. So, how do you think that focus has benefited your adoption of UDL and and then have there been other resources that you've used?

DAKOTA: Yes, well I will say that I love how much professional development BCSC has available. And, I had not heard of UDL, well I'd heard of it before I started at BCSC, but I knew nothing about it. And being there certainly was a great, great thing for me. I've learned so much. They, we have amazing UDL facilitators at our district that come regularly and help us teachers with implementing UDL. That has been invaluable. I have

loved every single facilitator I've gotten to work with. We have workshops regularly available that helped us with implementing UDL and it has truly helped me just in so many ways adopting this pedagogical mindset and being the best teacher I think I could ever be.

LOUI: Well that's awesome! I, so I will share, so I got to be the UDL facilitator there. I was there their first one back in the day like 2007/2008 and...

DAKOTA: Wow.

LOUI: But we do the Summer Institute every summer and I get to come back down and be a part of that and, boy, I'm telling everybody in the podcast listening audience, it is an incredible week! And it's BCSC teachers but, yeah they've opened it up to some people every once in a while, so there's some pressure for BCSC. Maybe they'll open the doors a little bit more too, [laughter] because it's a great week!

DAKOTA: Yes.

LOUI: All right. So I know you have a lot of different stories that you're going to share. We had talked about several different examples. You have one about large print materials, and then teaching MLA first without and then with UDL, and then designing a lesson about Puerto Rico for your class, but with students with disabilities exclusively in mind, so go after it! We'd love to hear these stories!

DAKOTA: Yes, absolutely! So really, the three examples that you mentioned were very big, large kind of like "Ah-ha" moments for me whenever I was implementing UDL in my in my teaching because, you know, it's the more I've learned about UDL, it really truly is a mindset. I think of it sort of as, like, almost like an ideology really, in approach to education. It's a totally different world view, a totally different way of looking at students, of looking at a lesson, it's a different way of thinking about what it means to be in public education and truly serving every child, every child's needs. But these few examples you've come up with were ways I thought, "Oh, these were amazing things that I was able to do for all of my students!" So one example was media literacy. And media literacy has become more and more important in education especially as all of our students are jumping on to the Internet as young as 9, 10, 11 years old. They're being, you know just besotted with ads on every site, at all times, and every part of their life. And we were doing an analysis of advertisements. And whenever I do advertising, it's always a focus on, you know, what are they trying to convince you when we're, when they show you this add? What do they want you to feel? What do they want you to think? What are they trying to make you think that you need in your lifetime? And we

were going through, looking at all these different print ads and video ads. Looking at the different rhetorical techniques they use. Ethos, pathos, logos. More specific persuasive advertising techniques. And I always have been making one large copy of anything we do for a student of mine that has some vision issues and really benefits from larger print materials. So, I thought well you know I'm gonna have these print ads available up on the screen, and I planned on printing out copies of these print ads for all of my students, and I was going to make a large copy of all the print ads we were looking at for this one student. It kind of just hit me as I standing there the copy machine I thought, "This... all my students would benefit from this! This is not just something that this one student could use! Everybody would benefit from having a larger version of a print advertisement in front of them!" And so, I thought, "Gosh, I've got the paper, I've got the idea." I made them for my students and it was, it was great! Students were pointing things out, um, during the lesson that I hadn't noticed in the advertisements myself. When they had the larger version in front of them, they were able to see more details than I ever anticipated, and it enhanced our discussion, it took me to a level that by myself I wouldn't have been able to get it to just because I was thinking about, you know, the needs of all of our students and the students that had particular intensive needs.

LOUI: And what I love about that is your example really hones in on, under Representation, Perception. You know, just the basic ability to perceive that information and that's at the access level. It's a primary level, but it's a wonderful example of just starting there and how that can blossom for every single student! That's awesome!

DAKOTA: Yes, it was great! And it's, in really media literacy every year I teach it, it's just been getting better and better, um, and it's UDL that has made it better. It's, it's thinking about all these students, um, making sure they can all access the content. Because I, the way I think of it is they have the right! It's public education! They have a right to access this information in every way possible so they can go on to meet their own human potential and so that's, that's why it's important! It's always important to think about everybody's needs.

LOUI: Ooo! I'm right there aligned with you! Absolutely! Now I'm excited to hear about the MLA example because you kind of have a, a without and a with. So,

DAKOTA: Oh, yes. LOUI: so let's hear about that!

DAKOTA: Right, so MLA formatting is, it's not exactly the most fun thing to learn and it's not exactly the most fun thing to teach, right? [laughter] I think, there's only so many, there's no options really you can give. When it's MLA format, it's here, you have

to do it a certain way. It's a prescribed method. You must do it. And so, when I first taught MLA format to my students, I thought I was doing a, this was last year, I thought I was doing a really good job of implementing UDL in this lesson. I thought, "Oh you know what? Instead of doing what my teachers did in junior high and just giving them written instructions on how to set up their paper in MLA format, I'm going to sit down and I'm going to show them on the overhead projector how to do it and we'll do it at the same time!" And I thought, "Ooo! Look at me! I'm real UDL here [laughter] And so, yeah. Really? I was all full of myself then we go through and we do it, and I mean I was having all of these problems, you know? I've got students who are getting left behind, students who didn't really catch me doing it the first time, I find myself repeating myself over and over. It was, it was not going as well as I had expected and I thought, "Wow! Here I put in this extra piece!" So I took this to a UDL facilitator, Chelsea Lanam. She's absolutely wonderful! And she's now a Dean so I do miss her, but I love our current facilitator, but I sat down with her and I said, "You know, I had a lot of trouble with this and it didn't go as well as I expected." And I knew we were gonna have another essay coming up in my writing class, we do several essays throughout the year, so there'd be another chance to hit on it, and she said, "Okay, well, let's take a moment and let's look at the guidelines. Let's look back and see what you could have done that you hadn't done before. She pulled out a UDL, um, the chart with all of the different guidelines and checkpoints, we started going through it, and I realized, you know, there are there are other ways I could have represented this. I, I thought I was doing a great job by just showing them on the screen, but really there's more. I could have done so I went back I sat down. I took some time and I wrote out, in depth, every single step to setting a paper up according to MLA format, and I didn't just say, you know, you need Times New Roman twelve-point font. I said, set your paper up according to Times New Roman twelve-point font, here's how you do that step-by-step, you click on this button on Google Drive. You find the right font, you know. You click on this one to find the right font size. And I took screenshots of every single step and I started get a packet going where I put the requirements for MLA format, and then I explained step-by-step how one sets a paper up that way and I included screenshots with it. And so when we got to our next essay, I went ahead and I demonstrated on the overhead again, for the students, how to set a paper up according to MLA format, but I also provided them this mini packet that had every single step with written instructions and pictures. We had so fewer problems doing at that time and I think a part of it was students had done it once before, but having the extra written instructions, having the screenshots, meant that if a student didn't catch me doing it the first time, maybe they, you know, weren't quite with me at that moment, they had it right there in front of them. If they weren't able to get the entire thing done in class they had a really detailed guide to take home with them later. The MLA formatting was truly a bigger success.

LOUI: And what I love about that is that you've really, again, pulled in so many more aspects of the guidelines! I mean, you're helping them just, just shooting off two of them, Sustaining their Effort and Persistence, so like you said, the students are going back now and they're, they're sticking with it maybe longer, or they're getting deeper into it. And they're able to Self-Regulate themselves through the process. And then, just the Executive Functioning! They're able to plan and strategize through that because you gave them a new way and a deeper way to perceive the information. It's fabulous!

DAKOTA: Yes, and what's really amazing is, so this year when I have, I have a fresh crop of students, you know, students that had not done MLA formatting before and I had a great opportunity. I thought, no I want to do it better at the beginning. So this year when I taught MLA formatting, I actually sat down early, I made a video of myself going step-by-step on MLA format, recorded it using screencastify, and I posted that to ItsLearning, and ItsLearning is our LMS at BCSC. I had this page with all these different resources for essays and I included this video. I including the written instructions, and the first time I taught MLA formatting I gave the students this packet with the step-by-step guide and the pictures and it went beautifully. I had no complaints. I would say the vast majority, with a couple of small exceptions, have their paper set up exactly the way I expected and the way the MLA requires and it was because I started out with all of these different things in mind. The different options for perception, the... all of it was truly, it was a better experience for the students it was a better experience for me! LOUI: Oh it's fabulous! Fabulous! Okay, we're gonna squeeze in the story about Puerto Rico within the next like minute and 30 seconds. Go!

DAKOTA: Yeah, so the Puerto Rico, this was a lesson I was doing when we were focusing on evaluating whether or not evidence provided is really supporting a claim. And that's a seventh grade skill. Students need to be able to read a claim, read the evidence given, and say does that evidence really support this? Puerto Rico was in the news. You know there were, there hurricanes wracking that land. The federal administration's response to it was on a lot of people's minds. I had students that were from Puerto Rico that have family there, and so I thought, let's talk about this place, you know? It's a, it's a territory of the United States, it's not a state. What's going on here? And we read several different articles on it from newsela. We were going through and evaluating evidence of whether or not Puerto Rico should be considered, stay a territory, whether or not Puerto Rico should become a state, and whether or not Porto Rico should gain independence and be its own individual country again. We went through and we had different sources with different authors who have provided evidence supporting all three claims. As students were walking around the room, their goal was to look at evidence that had been provided for a claim and I had, you know, these different claims on the wall - Puerto Rico should be

a territory and stay territory, and then evidence below. And then students had to evaluate, "Does this evidence actually support this?" And so I had some students in there that definitely had intensive needs I think maybe struggling to understand a lot of what Puerto Rico is and was, and so I included images on the evaluation and I said, "Here's the evidence. I want you to circle the picture. Does this picture...is this evidence showing that Puerto Rico should be a state, should be a territory, or should be independent?" I had a symbol for all three of those and the students, it was much easier to graph that. Like, when they could connect the evidence to an image, you know, this is definitely supporting the idea of Independence or being a country, and they were connecting the evidence, those images, it was a much more successful lesson. I had a student that was there, he had some very intensive needs and after class he was talking to me and said, "This was so great! I learned something today. I learned something about Puerto Rico." And it really brought, tears to my eyes. I thought, "Oh my gosh, you know, he learned and that was that was the goal! To learn!"

LOUI: That is so awesome so I, and again you, it's just ringing all the way through the framework, but I'm going to point out two others that we haven't talked about yet, but I was hearing wonderful examples of Comprehension! So how you broke down the issues about Puerto Rico for your students to be able to explore in different ways, and then use the symbols, so Language and Symbols, but embedding that within the assessment style! So you would think just Action and Expression, but you were bringing in, of course, Representation into the assessment! So some people kind of get confused about that, right? And they don't think the two could ever meet and they do! They do! And you just gave a great example about that! Oh! I hate this! So we have to bring it to a close because we have hit our 15 minutes but, oh, you did such a great job with just sharing these wonderful rich, rich stories Dakota! And I I know people are going to be so excited to see the pictures of your students and and what you've been talking about! So thank you so much!

DAKOTA: Yes, so thank you for having me on Loui. It was, it's wonderful to talk with you. I love talking about UDL!

LOUI: Yay! Thank you so much! So for those of you who listening to the podcast, you can find supplemental materials like a image montage with closed captioning and that montage audio descriptions, and a transcript, and the associated blog at my website www.theudlapproach.com/media. And then finally if you have a story to share about UDL implementation for UDL in 15 minutes, you can contact me through theUDLapproach.com And thanks to everyone for your work in revolutionizing education through UDL and making it our goal to develop expert learners!