

UDL in 15 Minutes Transcript
With Lindsay Hicks

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 the Association of Educational Service Districts Inclusionary Practices Project where nine coordinators, one in each region of the state, work closely with the 140 school leadership teams to implement UDL and improve and increase inclusionary practice. Today, I'm talking with Lindsey Hicks Frazier, an inclusionary practice project lead and who works through ESD 101. Lindsay is going to share how one district's leadership aligned around inclusive practices and how their professional development includes everyone, from teachers to bus drivers. Hi, Lindsay, how are you?

LINDSAY:

Hi, Loui. I'm fine. How are you?

LOUI:

I'm wonderful. Thank you so much. So can we start with your background and I'd love for you to introduce yourself by sharing your educational background and why you latched on to UDL.

LINDSAY:

Okay, so well my background is varied, but I got into teaching when my children were born and became a special education teacher. Starting in California before moving to Spokane, I taught in the high school for some years. Always feeling that our students with IEPs, that were being pulled out of the general education classroom, were a little too much and I had concerns about missing out on core classes with their peers. So before I even knew officially about inclusionary practices, my heart and mind were already there.

LOUI:

That's awesome. Yeah, I hear a lot of people say something similar to that like they're looking out and they're saying there's something just not quite the way it should be. I don't know what it should be, but it just doesn't feel quite right. So I completely understand where you're coming from. So, I understand that you've been working with a small and rural district that really took on inclusion and that adoption was at the leadership level. So, before we get started about that, could you offer some demographics about that district?

LINDSAY:

Okay, so this district is Valley District which is about 40 miles northwest of Spokane. They consist of an Early Learning Center, a k to eight school, a liberal arts high school and the Columbia Virtual Academy. I've been working with the k to eight schools since the beginning of this school year. They've got approximately 187 students enrolled in

that school with about 17 classroom teachers. They have a new principal Leoni Johnson and a new superintendent Dr. Mandi Rehn and they are rocking and rolling.

LOUI:

Wonderful. How did they get started on this journey?

LINDSAY:

So, I was contacted by the special education director Ken Davis with a view to connect him with the district. They got new staff and new leaders. And they had this vision of getting involved with inclusionary practices and really wanted me to provide them with some PD.

LOUI:

That's impressive to come in and say, hey, here we go. This is what we want to do. This is what we all want to do it sounds like.

LINDSAY:

They were very driven with it. It was fantastic. And they got a hold of me late in time, really. I mean, this was just the beginning of this school year. So the project had been running for a while by then.

LOUI:

And they heard really good things, so they came calling! So I understand that professional development has been designed to support everyone in the district and what does that look like? How do you provide PD to teachers and bus drivers in one sitting?

LINDSAY:

Well, the situation in Valley is kind of unique. I think that's because they're all on this journey together. Admin to bus drivers. Valley's vision statement is where every student becomes a lifelong learner and they really model that as leaders on staff. We started on some lengthy PD before school actually started covering the concepts of inclusion practices, and how this is a lens for everyone. When we think about inclusion, social emotional well being and students belonging starts from the staff. Everyone has a part to play. The meetings now are monthly. And what I love about this is that it's the teacher leadership team that discusses with the teachers about what their needs are, with regards to the inclusionary practices. And then they reach out to me and ask me specifically to cover certain topics, and I meet with them every month. So they really are leading the PD and I'm just the facilitator with the resources and the information and that's how it should be. What we have here is a classic example of educational staff having a voice and that in turn is what's modeled and practiced with the students. You know, one of the tenets of UDL is giving the student's voice and choice and what better way to embed it in school culture than by practicing it with teachers and leaders.

LOUI:

So, is this staff new to inclusionary practices, or is this something they've been working with for a while maybe in a disjointed way?

LINDSAY:

I would say it's new. I mean, one or two of them have heard about inclusionary practices, but it was new, they needed to know the concepts of it, what it meant. They were the lengthy trainings that we were doing at the beginning of the year, where everybody was there, all staff were there. And then the classroom teachers really wanted to get into the nuts and bolts of it and really started talking about how that looked in practice and where they could go from there on.

LOUI:

What are some of the topics that they've asked you to come and facilitate?

LINDSAY:

We've covered lots but they were really interested in this idea, this concept of student voice. And that started right at the beginning with the lesson planning. We were looking at how to just tweak their lesson plans to include student voice a lot more and to give the students choice. And it's funny, I was actually up there yesterday, and I was asking the teachers, you know, what results they were seeing. Were they seeing any movement? And it's so funny, they use this wonderful term that it's hard to see sometimes when you're in the trenches. And I said to them, come on, you've done some wonderful things, tell me about them. And so the PE teacher was telling me, she does this thing now, when she needs to test knowledge or to see what they're learning. Their students typically, historically, have had to demonstrate the physical activity. And now she allows the student's choice of being able to write it down or to be able to express it to her and tell her about it. And it's wonderful because it just opens it up to all the students you know. Those that feel embarrassed about PE or dressing down or having to know the answer physically, but they understand the concepts of what they're meant to be learning. They now have that choice to tell her about it and show their learning.

LOUI:

That's fabulous.

LINDSAY:

It is fabulous. The students love it. The students absolutely love it. Another teacher was explaining how the biggest issue for her and she laughed about it because she's giving up control. I have to tell myself to give up control here and she says that the biggest thing for her is giving over to the students and allowing them to have more voice and choice in the direction of the learning. Which is but again, she's reporting some wonderful results and the student's engaging with it and loving it.

LOUI:

Yeah. And I always think that's so interesting, that comment in and of itself, the giving up control because really, as designers, we still have the ultimate control. We're the

ones who are designing the environment. But by shifting what you guys are talking about the voice and the choice to the students, then we're opening those pathways to communication, and action, and activity on the students behalf rather than just having that always on teachers plate. When I hear that phrase of giving up control, it makes me pause and think, ooh, how can we dig into this more and really communicate the fact that you still have so much control. Because you're the one making all those decisions about how you want your environment to run.

LINDSAY:

Yeah, exactly. And I think you know, offers up so many more pathways for enjoyment as well, to have the students engage in that way and to kind of make those choices and just switch it off into a different direction. I think that can bring so much more fun with it.

LOUI:

Yeah, I think so too. So I don't want to forget this part, because we talked about it in the introduction, but the bus drivers have some people who aren't in the academic setting. So I mean, how are they involved in this? What does that look like?

LINDSAY:

Well, I think this started at the beginning with the long training where all the staff were there, and I had one of the bus drivers come up to me and she said we would love to get involved in inclusionary practices. And so Leonie Johnson, the principal, said, yeah, we can absolutely do this and where we think that they've got an opportunity here is with social emotional. You know, very often the bus drivers are the first to see the student as they get on the bus to come to school. That first point of engagement is very often key. And they have such a huge part to play in this teamwork. So, they are very interested in covering some of this work. We have yet to find a day that works. But it's definitely on the cards and we will be doing it. I just love the fact that everybody was there and everybody wanted to do their bit in this teamwork.

LOUI:

So they were there for the introduction of it?

LINDSAY:

Yes.

LOUI:

And then came up and said we want to be part of this? Brilliant.

LINDSAY:

Absolutely. It's just full engagement from the whole community there. It's quite wonderful.

LOUI:

That's awesome. So when you're doing the facilitated meetings and bringing this information to the teachers, are you doing this mostly by either grade level or teams or are these all staff type gatherings? What's that look like?

LINDSAY:

These whole staff in the k to eight school, the leadership team decides on the subject as I've already said. They contact the principal, the principal gets a hold of me and says, hey, you know, the staff really wants to know more about this. So they give me a bit of planning time. But it's quite a wonderful environment. Everybody's there. So the other thing that I've noticed with them as a staff as well, and this really came out yesterday, they discussed how they feel that they're really beginning to build trust with each other and that vulnerability is key to moving forward as a team and all reaching the same goal together. And it's quite wonderful to see them all talk and discuss and connect together and laugh together. They really have got something quite wonderful. I'm not sure they realize how wonderful they've got it. But I keep telling them you just have got something very special here.

LOUI:

Right, right. So when they see that vulnerability, when they see that trust, what are some examples of those things?

LINDSAY:

Well, yesterday actually came by the principal, she said, we've heard you share what you feel like it's working in your classroom. I want you to share what you're seeing with somebody else, which was really nice as well. And the special ed teacher and one of the general ed teachers were talking about how they come together to share the children and you know, the children with IEPs and how they were working and planning goals together. And the special education teacher said that I just love the work he's doing and the effort he's putting in to reach all the students. Just this wonderful moment of sharing and joint appreciation. Very, very nice.

LOUI:

Yeah. That does build a type of energy. Some people may be like, oh, come on, Loui. I'm like no, no, it's real. That does. That builds an influence within the community that then leads to positive change when that influence is based in something like shared vulnerability and shared trust.

LINDSAY:

Absolutely.

LOUI:

Yeah. I'm also curious about if this district has said, okay, we're really rockin' and rollin' in this k-8. We want to see how we can bring this into the liberal arts high school or are they looking at expansion? Are they just thinking okay, we just want to get this really set here k-8, so then we can possibly look at replication?

LINDSAY:

But it's funny she said that because I actually met with the Virtual Academy. This was a new area. So this was a meeting with the teachers. Now this is a purely Virtual Academy, but they service students nationwide. So this isn't just Washington students. They serve as any students at all that want to be in their Virtual Academy. They have a very good setup there. I met with the teachers and we were talking about how we can bring inclusionary practices into a situation where typically, a lot of the time it's one on one. So whereas it's almost the opposite, you know, whereas normally in the classroom, how do you get that personal connection with the student who you've got a lot of personal connection with the student, but let's think about the other tenants of inclusionary practices and UDL of how do you bring those students in and start meeting those needs? And requirements of UDL and enhance the student's learning. So we are talking still and engaging and thinking about the future and so I'm, I'm looking at that space there. That's definitely the next direction. I've got my eye on the high school as well.

LOUI:

Wonderful. Well, Lindsey, thank you so much for bringing this story to UDL in 15 minutes. It's been a valuable dig and we've been able to go a little deeper than some of the other podcasts have been able to over the course of my 90 plus podcasts at this point to really discuss what's going on in that one building. So, thank you so much for bringing that.

LINDSAY:

My absolute pleasure.

LOUI:

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