

**UDL in15 Minutes**  
**With Kathleen Lenihan and Courtney Sund**  
**The 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 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 140 school leadership teams to implement UDL and improve and increase inclusionary practice. Today, I'm talking with Kathleen Lenihan, the Inclusionary Project Coordinator for the ESP 105 and Courtney Sund, the Special Education Director at Highland School District. Kathy and Courtney are going to talk about how Highland schools are keeping the steps small to see big changes by Kathy and Courtney. Welcome.

COURTNEY:

Hello!

KATHY:

Thank you so much for having us, Loui. We greatly appreciate your time today as well.

LOUI:

Oh, you're so welcome. So I'd love to hear a bit about your background in education and how you came to know UDL. So who would like to get started?

KATHY:

Hi, Loui. I'm Kathy Lenihan. I'm the inclusionary projects coordinator for ESD 105 in Yakima, Washington. My classroom experience comes as a kindergarten teacher for many years, but I also worked in an ALE setting where I was working and teaching with students in K-12. What I noticed was that these students did not fit the traditional educational setting, that one size fits all, just wasn't working, and I knew we could do better. So in my current role in the Special Services Department I'm working with two specific grants, one for early childhood special education, and our IPP project, which we're talking about today. My unique role helps us bridge these two concepts between preschool and the K-12 system. And UDL fits perfectly in there because we honor that learner variability and that flexibility. Today, I asked Courtney Sund to join us as she facilitates both of these projects in her district.

LOUI:

Thanks Kathy, so much. Courtney, let's hear a bit about your background in education and how you came to know UDL.

COURTNEY:

Awesome, thank you. I started my teaching career in 2010. I have been in the special education setting, working with kindergarten through 21 year old students from moderate to severe disabilities. And I have loved every minute of it. I have grown so

much but unfortunately UDL didn't really come into my life until 2019 when I left the classroom and moved into a coordinator's role. And now I feel like it's the solution to so many of our instructional hiccups in life. So I get to coach teachers and paraprofessionals and principals in how we embed UDL principles and guidelines into our instruction at every tier of student needs.

LOUI:

Wonderful. So Courtney, can you also share some Highland school district demographics with us?

COURTNEY:

Yeah, I went ahead and pulled that off of our date Report Card website. So it's not current for this school year, but according to last year, we had 1101 students enrolled. We had 48% female, 51% male. We have a primary demographic of Hispanic students. 19% of our students are white. 27% of our students are English language learners. 86% of our students have low-income backgrounds, and then we serve a population of about 12% of our students qualifying for an IEP.

LOUI:

Ah. Okay, all right. So you guys have had a theme of 1% change for 1% movement across the district, and can you describe what you mean by that?

COURTNEY:

Yeah, change is hard. So what we have been really focusing on is finding little practices or little changes that over time build up to be a big impact. So we're looking for easy ways that we can embed UDL in all of our tiers of instruction. My personal favorite way to change instruction is looking at the engagement principles, because that's the relevancy and the why we do the work. And I think it also builds into the social emotional work that the district has done the last few years as well.

LOUI:

Fabulous! I'd love to hear an example within engagement of maybe one little change that you guys have suggested or seen activated.

COURTNEY:

I can speak for myself directly. When I talk to teachers about lesson plans, I ask like, what's the relevancy? How did you tee this up as a life important skill for this kid when they're 30? We'll even talk about where's the choice in our ninth grade ELA class. We have a co-teaching section, and they took their Greek mythology unit and changed how students were able to pick which Greek gods they wanted to focus on. They got to pick how they wanted their output. So actually also leading into action and expression. So there were posters, there were papers, there were poems, there was I want to say there might have been even videos.

LOUI:  
That's awesome.

COURTNEY:  
Yeah.

LOUI:  
That's a great example. Thank you. It just helps people you know, they like to hear okay, what's this 1% mean and those are great examples. So part of what the schools have wanted is to take pathways that make sense to them. So what have been some of those pathways that schools have been taking?

COURTNEY:  
So we have done so many different things. I can start with any professional development that I plan and I deliver. I really pull out my guidelines, and I get the CAST website and I look through what are examples where people can have multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement. And then we decide are you working in a small group? Are you working by yourself? And then here's your time to independently work or group work, and then we're going to come back and share what we know, however you want to display your knowledge. So that's one way I've done PD. The other ways have been in book studies so people can choose a variety of books. Sometimes that's a discussion between the principals and they get to decide which direction they want to go in and then teachers can opt into that. We've also done a lot of action plan templates, where teachers have found what's relevant to them and most in need, and then we've broken that apart. So we have some firm goals with measurable flexible means of how we get there. Using self regulation a lot with our teachers and as well as our students, how do we embed that into our instruction. So practicing those coping skills of taking breaths, positive self-talk. One of my favorite pathways that teachers and staff have embraced is their professional learning communities, they have their PLC groups, where they have taken their unit plans, and have embedded UDL principles as part of their unit plans. And as well as their breakdown of their weekly lesson plans. And they have little icons that remind them of what does the student do if they can't see, can't walk, can't hold a pencil? To be intentionally mindful of different pathways that students can engage in learning, represent what they've learned, and express themselves and their learning.

LOUI:  
Great. Those are great examples and I am just in disbelief. You just started in 2019. You are rocking and rolling it. That's just awesome.

COURTNEY:  
It feels good to showcase the success of the staff and the students.

LOUI:

Absolutely. So, at the same time, at this date level, I think there's been some measurement tools that have been both created and then also have been used. So I think Kathy, you are going to share those with us, right?

KATHY:

Absolutely. So, we know as an AESD group that we needed to somehow find a way to measure the successes and the areas for growth within our districts in our school building teams. So, our group vetted and licensed two toolkits for district teams. The first one was around LRE self-assessment, and we know that we're looking at things like infrastructure, culture, leadership, instructional capacity, and we wanted to provide an opportunity for districts to choose their own pathway within this toolkit by providing protocols and resources and tools that they would be able to use. We also know that LRE only speaks to one component of this whole picture, right? And so we created another toolkit around classroom observation. And we were really excited because both of these toolkits were done in conjunction with input and review from our partners at our Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction at the state level. They also had input and review from our principals and superintendents' associations. So we really wanted to provide our teams with a way to measure the system changes in these classroom practices that will support inclusionary practices. You know, how are we doing and where's our room for growth? For example, let's go ahead and look at our classroom observation toolkit. It provides the criteria for classroom walkthroughs. We can also do peer to peer observations and or we could use it with PLCs and building leadership teams as they grow their practice. So as an AESD, we are really supporting the development of that culture of observation. We want them to use the data and we want to have that continuous improvement in our building schools. And we want to provide those options just very UDL-like, in those tools, those resources and those processes to support their needs, where they are as well as the strategic plans at the district level.

LOUI:

This is fabulous. So are those tools just available for schools to go and check out as they need to or you guys obviously are bringing them to the schools but then do they have access to them at all times?

KATHY:

Absolutely. We are opening this up to not only our teams within our regions across our state, but we're opening it up to all schools because we really want this work to move forward. And so we're happy to share those resources with you and have you post those. We've worked really hard on that. These are the first two toolkits we've created. We also have a couple others in the background that are being worked on at this time.

LOUI:

So wonderful. Thank you. I will definitely put that link with this podcast on the website. So that's just awesome. Thank you so much. My last question is, what are the next steps that you guys have with this? So what's your next 1% stuff that you think you'd

like to try?

COURTNEY:

I can speak to what we're doing right now in one of our buildings. We took the LRE assessment that Kathy just explained, and we went through, there's 40 look fors, and really, the diving is we want to do inclusion, but what does this look like? How do we do this? And so we went through the indicators from that and they scored it and so we've narrowed it down to two action items. And then we're going to create a collaborative Word document to track our action plan to lay out what the next six months look like for this individual school?

LOUI:

That's great. It's succinct, precise. You're going from data. Congratulations. That's just so awesome. Thank you both Kathy and Courtney for being part of this podcast. You guys have shared just a wealth of information. People are going to be so excited to see the tools but then also, Courtney, all the great examples you gave that are they're small enough that I believe all educators could just take them in their hands and go okay, I can do this one thing, this one thing and like you said, it's the 1% to make the big change in the future. So thank you both for being part of this podcast.

KATHY:

Thank you, Loui, for having us.

COURTNEY:

Yes. Thank you so much. It was a pleasure.

LOUI:

You're 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](http://UDLapproach.com/podcasts). And finally, if you have a story to share about UDL implementation for UDL in 15 minutes, contact me at the [UDLapproach.com](http://UDLapproach.com) And thanks to everyone for your work in revolutionizing education through UDL and making it our goal to develop expert learners.