

Until Learning Has No Limits
UNCG Advancement of Teaching and Learning
Innovative teaching Strategies Grant

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Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework for purposefully designing and implementing instruction to reach all learners through multiple means of representation, options for embodiment and expression, and opportunities for engagement. Many dance education settings strive for creativity and inclusivity, yet the context of the dance class--with fast-paced streams of information, open-ended, sometimes ambiguous prompts, flexible personal and spatial boundaries, and often challenging requirements for physical skills--can be overwhelming and inaccessible to many learners. Becoming aware of a particular student's needs, a dance teacher may modify a particular aspect of instruction to increase accessibility and allow that student to participate more fully. Such a solution--however effective for that learner--is limited, offering a reactive remedy that may only be of real benefit to a single student. A better approach would be a careful, proactive reconsideration of the instructional practices to ensure they are accessible and optimal for all learners, including those with and without disabilities.

In a 4- hour workshop with Dr. Marissa Nesbit, dance education students and myself will be introduced to UDL principles through a range of movement activities drawn from Dr. Nesbit's work with K-12 and university teacher education students. Workshop activities will include: (1) Supportive Evaluation- developing skillful seeing for inclusive analysis using peer feedback strategies and (2) Limitless Community- fostering collaboration and communication through mentorship and global connections.

Some of the key strategies and considerations in the workshop include: (a) observation- to discover the features and capabilities of the particular group; (b) confident environment – to maintain a conducive environment to develop the participant's choices, avoiding value judgments and prejudices that inhibit performance; (c) time – to allow time for each group for the generation and completion of their dance project; and (d) flexibility – to offer a wide range of opportunities for various stakeholders, with the ability to adapt quickly and creatively respond to unplanned situations.

This content is not currently being taught within UNCG dance education classes. UDL methods are valuable for students in our teacher education program as well as working in community engagement initiatives including Dancers Connect community dance program. In the coming year Dancers Connect will expand its class offerings to include movement classes for children with special needs. As a participant in the workshop, I will learn methods and skills, which will support future research and coursework. The students will come away with ideas and understanding of UDL use when building an inclusive dance session with people of varying ages and ability levels.