

Universal Design for Learning

The Arc Michigan supports the implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to ensure that learning goals are achievable by individuals with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand, attend, organize engage, and remember. (1)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) recognize the right of all learners to a high-quality standards-based education. The laws preclude the development of separate educational agendas for students with disabilities. They also hold teachers, schools, districts, and states responsible for ensuring that these students demonstrate progress according to the same high expectations.

Neither law adequately addresses the greatest impediment to implementation: the curriculum itself. In most classrooms, the curriculum is restrictive because its main components—the goals, materials, methods, and assessments—are too rigid and inflexible to meet the needs of diverse learners, especially those with disabilities. Present ways to remediate the curriculum's restrictions such as teacher-created workarounds and modifications and alternative placements are expensive, inefficient, and ineffective for learning. (1)

UDL enables all individuals to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. UDL aims to change the environment rather than to change the learner. When environments are intentionally designed to reduce barriers, all learners can engage in rigorous, meaningful learning.

UDL calls for:

- *Multiple means of engagement*, to spark excitement and curiosity for learning, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation,

- *Multiple means of representation*, to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge,
- *Multiple means of action and expression*, to provide learners alternatives to demonstrate what they know. (1)

While UDL individualizes learning environments to meet individual learner needs, the Personal Curriculum (PC) is a tool for modifying the rigor of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) by individualizing the state graduation requirements based on the individual needs of the learner. (5)

For students with individualized education programs (IEPs), MMC content may be modified to the extent necessary because of a student's disability if the PC team determines modifications are consistent with the student's Educational Development Plan (EDP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP), including the transition plan. (2)(3)(4)

School districts must provide information and develop a PC when requested but are not required to approve them. (4)(5)

UDL is consistent with federal law. UDL supports teachers' efforts to meet the challenge of diversity by proactively providing flexible instructional materials, techniques, strategies, and tools to accommodate the needs of all abilities of learners and eliminate unnecessary hurdles in the learning process.

The Arc Michigan supports the use of UDL in every school district, public school academy, intermediate school district, and by everyone who is affected directly or indirectly by the education of children in Michigan.

- (1) [CAST](#) (Framework for UDL)
- (2) [Michigan Department of Education - Personal Curriculum](#)
- (3) [A Parent's Guide to Personal Curriculum: Focus on Students with an Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#)
- (4) [The Personal Curriculum - A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum](#)
- (5) [MDE- Family Matters Personal Curriculum \(PC\) Fact Sheet](#)

Revised: 11/2023

