

Transcript — Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in action

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[0:00] Introduction

[Description: Light, inspiring piano music plays. A person with short brown hair and glasses wearing a gray pullover and a pink and white plaid shirt underneath sits in a classroom. A mic is attached to his lapel and he speaks directly to the camera.]

[On-screen text: Eric Crouch, Fifth-grade teacher, Double Churches Elementary School.]

Eric: My name's Eric Crouch, and I teach fifth grade.

[Description: A nameplate on a desk reads "Mr. Crouch." A tripod sits over it. Transition to Eric sitting at a table, talking with students and looking at colorful tiles. He speaks directly to the camera again.]

My journey as a learner is very different, I think, than a lot of teachers that I know. A lot of teachers that I know were very successful in school. And

unfortunately, I didn't have a lot of that success in school.

[Description: Different scenes of Eric talking to his students in the classroom interspersed with Eric speaking to the camera.]

And so, one of the things that I remember very well was being in a kindergarten class and having someone pull me aside because I couldn't get the work done, because I just didn't have the ability to do the task the way they wanted it done and the environment that it needed to be done.

I was very distracted and I couldn't really give my best effort. And I didn't really feel that there was a level of support that helped me get to a place where I could be successful.

[0:50] Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

[Description: A purple screen with white text.]

[On-screen text: Eric thinks he would have benefited from a classroom that had used Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

UDL classrooms are flexible in the ways students access material, engage in learning, and show what they know.]

[Description: Scenes of Eric talking to students who are seated at low wooden desks on the floor of a classroom. A whiteboard, cubbies, books, markers, posters, and a large floor map are visible in the classroom.

Transition to a close-up of a student talking and gesturing with their hands as they discuss an issue.]

As a student with attention-deficit hyperactive disorder, that clearly had a huge impact on me as a person. It also has a huge impact on me as a teacher. And so it influences every decision that I make in the classroom,

and it is something that I still work through and work with.

[Description: Eric speaks directly to the camera.]

So, as students come into my room, I want them to have that same feeling, and I want their parents to have that same comfort level.

[Description: Eric's students talking. Transition to Eric drawing two vertical lines on a digital whiteboard. Transition to Eric speaking directly to the camera.]

I want them to know that when they come in here, that although we may not be where we wanna be, we're going to work together to find ways in which we can show our understanding that makes sense to the learner. And find resources and tools that help them discover those passions through their learning that will allow them to be the best and most successful student they can be.

[1:45] UDL Principle: Representation

[Description: Purple screen with white text and a video clip of Eric talking to his students.]

[On-screen text: UDL Principle: Representation. Teachers provide information in more than one format, and in a variety of ways.]

[Description: Eric speaks directly to the camera. Transition to Eric speaking to a group of students.]

One of the ways that we represent information to kids in different ways is, sometimes, we find that kids don't take whole-group instruction very well. The attention, the focus, it's not there. And so, the best thing for me to do

is to pose a question.

[Description: Eric crouched down at a table, speaking to students seated around the table. The camera transitions between close-up shots of Eric and each of the students. He says to them, “You had a plan. Your plan worked. It just, you had a lot of sediment fall behind the dam. Now that you have that information, now that you’ve broken it, what do you know about that?” Transition to two students working hands-on with sediment. Then a pan of a pipeline made out of tubes and tape.]

And then from there, I will have either created resources or opportunities for those kids to have access points or entry points into the learning, whether that's a short video clip that I've recorded that gives them the next step.

[Description: Eric speaks directly to the camera. Transition to a group of students presenting in front of a digital whiteboard. Transition to Eric teaching and gesturing with his hands as he talks to his students.]

Or whether that's an opportunity for a small-group discussion to take place right there in the classroom. It then gives me an opportunity to come in and help them find those access points into where they're gonna start their journey because I really think it's important that they have a clear starting line to their journey.

[Description: Eric speaks directly to the camera and creates imaginary lines with his arms as he talks about a starting point and direction.]

They understand, “OK, this is where we’re starting, and this is the direction we’re going.”

[Description: The camera pans across a classroom with desks, chairs, a

whiteboard, cubbies, books, and posters. Then to a wall of different tools. Then to two black MakerBot replicators. Then to shelves filled with toolboxes. Then to a student taking a tape measure out of a drawer. Then to students seated at a desk reading books.]

So the way we set up our room, it has centers like that, where kids can access resources and materials. And we really think it's important that all kids have access to the different materials they might need. But also, that there are certain places where we do certain types of work.

[Description: Eric and a group of students watch as one student runs water through a gorge made out of sediment. Transition to Eric talking to two students and pointing to a posterboard with different images of sediment. Transition to a student working on a laptop.]

What we find is that some kids are more drawn to certain types of hands-on activities, whereas other kids need spaces that are a little less hands-on and a little bit more minds-on. Maybe that's a station where they can be at a computer and they can kind of stand and research.

[3:19] UDL Principle: Engagement

[Description: Purple screen with white text and a video clip of a student running water through a gorge with dams and sediment.]

[On-screen text: UDL Principle: Engagement. Teachers help students engage with learning by giving them choices and autonomy, and by incorporating their interests.]

[Description: Eric speaks directly to the camera. Transition to a group of students tamping down sediment with their hands.]

So, as a teacher, one of the most interesting thing you'll find is that

teachers like to have control. The issue that I've found with that was that when I gave up control, it felt like we were in this murky water. It was just not clear what was going to happen. But what I realized in giving up control was that I'm giving up control to the people who deserve to have the control.

[Description: A student running water through a gorge with dams and sediment. Transition to Eric speaking to the camera.]

And so when I came to the understanding that the students in the room who are responsible for learning the material, who are going to be responsible for taking jobs in our community at some point, they're gonna be responsible for being the nurses and the doctors that are going to be helping people, you know, change lives as they grow up and become adults, they need to be in control of this. And it doesn't need to be me telling them what they need to do. It needs to be them figuring out how they wanna do it.

[Description: Eric speaking to his students: "There's nothing wrong with intentionally putting something into place to try to keep the community safe. Why don't you research it before you commit to it, or de-commit to it, and see if there's any evidence that points to this being successful."
Transition to Eric speaking to the camera.]

Kind of to think about it like going to the gym. I was doing all of the work as the trainer and having the kids come in, and here I am lifting all the weights and then handing them a lighter set and saying, "Oh good, you did it. Yay, we all know what to do now."

[Description: Eric watches as a student runs water down a gorge built out of sediment. Transition to Eric speaking to the camera.]

Instead, now, I'm more of a trainer in the sense that I set up the room, I put out the weights. I have them ready for whatever exercises they're gonna be working on, but they're doing all the heavy lifting. I had this kind of "aha" moment and said, "What if I stopped influencing what the kids used and how they used it. And instead, had the kids come in and figure out where they learn best, with whom they learn best with, and in what part of the room they learn best?"

[Description: Different scenes of students reading books, working with Eric to build a valley, and walking through the classroom.]

And so, I began giving my students free choice, free seating options, wherever that might be. If it's standing, if it's needing to take a break and be in a different part of the room, it was fair game.

[5:26] UDL Principle: Action and Expression

[Description: Purple screen with white text and a video clip of a student talking.]

[On-screen text: UDL Principle: Action and Expression. Teachers allow students multiple ways to interact with the content and to show what they've learned.]

[Description: Eric speaks directly to the camera. Transition to a student talking to classmates. Transition back to Eric speaking to the camera. Transition to Eric speaking to his students. Transition back to Eric speaking to the camera.]

One of the really neat things about watching kids explore their own learnings is to see how kids demonstrate their understanding. And so, I've had students create songs to explain a time period. Maybe that's the

Spanish-American War, and they take specific details and write a song, and then they sing it or compose it or record it at home, and then share it with the class. And that is just such a special way to connect to the learning. That's the way they understand, and that's where they feel most comfortable, so then that's a great opportunity for you.

[Description: Eric speaks directly to the camera and gestures with his hands as he speaks about layers and mimics the shape of a cake.]

But I've also seen kids bake cakes in different layers to explain the beginning, middle, and end of a story, so that they can decorate it with all of the settings and all of the characters. But then what happens in each layer and have chunks taken out that showcase all of the different things that happen in a story because that's how they understood it.

And to me, if I were to just say, "Oh, let's do a cereal box and you're just gonna do the beginning, middle, and end on the back and the cover on the front, and on the sides you're gonna list the characters," I would have lost the opportunity to really see how special their thinking was and to see how special their creativity was.

[Description: Eric speaks to two students as they discuss images on a posterboard, "So eventually, what do you think was going to happen?" The student responds, "This was gonna fall down and this probably would have fallen down, too." Eric responds, "So, if that didn't fall, do you think this would have happened as quickly?"]

[Description: Eric speaks directly to the camera. Transition to a student drawing on a digital whiteboard. Transition back to Eric speaking to the camera.]

Being able to give back and support my students in this way is one of the

most rewarding and special moments of being a teacher. I have been right where you've been, and I think we can work through this in a way that will really empower you to better understand who you are as a learner and to give you an advantage that I didn't have as a student.

I truly believe that our students, all the problems that we have in our world, are trapped inside of our students' passions. And if we can pursue those passions, we can solve those problems. And so, really getting to know our students is one of the most important things that we do because it helps us and it helps reveal to us the things that students are really, really exceptional at.

And if we can bring those exceptional gifts and talents into the classroom setting and allow them to use that in order to showcase their learning and understanding.

[7:46] The effects of using UDL

[Description: Purple screen with white text and a video clip of a sign in the classroom that reads, "Learn to ask great questions."]

[On-screen text: The effects of using UDL.

1. Students learn how to take charge of their own learning.
2. Teachers are building a community of belonging.
3. Teachers are prepared to meet the needs of all learners.]

[Description: Eric speaks directly to the camera. Transition to Eric talking and interacting with students seated around a table. Transition back to Eric speaking to the camera.]

One of the interesting things about changing the design to a more universal design was to see how well kids learned...their learning. Like, and I know it sounds really complicated and really simple at the same time, but what happened was the kids start to take an interesting look at where they sit because they have a choice to sit wherever they want. They have an interesting understanding of how that dynamic plays into who they sit next to and for what subjects they work with those people.

And so, some kids will switch up where they sit between math and writing because they need to be closer to the board for math, or maybe they need to be further in the back for writing so that they can have that privacy that they need.

[Description: The camera pans across the classroom and pauses over a sign that reads, "Learn to ask great questions." Transition to Eric speaking directly to the camera.]

Everything about our class is designed around our students and their desires. By working to better understand each other, not only does it build community, but it helps solve the needs of those learners.

[Description: Eric speaking to a group of students. Transition to Eric speaking directly to the camera.]

So, being flexible is again, more than about just where the kids sit and how they sit, but it's about a mindset of saying, "I'm willing to allow my kids to explore this because it might be better for them than what I could think of."

[Description: Eric speaks directly to the camera. Transition to different scenes of students working on projects in the classroom.]

I can't really think of a better way to honor the student and their learning

than to give them that opportunity to showcase just who they are as a learner and who they are as a human.

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