

Full Participation of Students with Autism in Related Arts



What Does the Law Say?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 “ensures a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided to children and youth with disabilities” in his or her Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). All children have the right to learn in the LRE:

LRE means that, to the maximum extent appropriate, school districts must educate students with disabilities in the regular classroom with appropriate aids and supports, referred to as “supplementary aids and services,” along with their nondisabled peers in the school they would attend if not disabled.

(IDEA, 2004)

How Does this Apply?

Related arts classrooms are a part of a student’s LRE. The most common related arts classes include art, music, library, and physical education. Meaningful experiences for all students are most commonly found when the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework is at the foundation of these classrooms (Draper, 2022). UDL emphasizes the truth that “every student can learn, but not every student learns in the same way” (IRIS, 2009, 2023).

What is Universal Design for Learning?

UDL is a framework designed to support a curriculum and a classroom that functions in both a flexible yet effective manner for all learners.

UDL is organized around these three principles:

1. To support effective learning, provide multiple means of **engagement** by offering options for generating and sustaining motivation, the *why* of learning.
2. To support recognition learning, provide multiple means of **representation** by offering flexible ways to present *what* we teach and learn.
3. To support strategic learning, provide multiple means of **action and expression** by offering flexible options for *how* we learn and express what we know.


(Rose & Meyer, 2002)

Practical Implementation of UDL in a Related Arts Classroom

"Just as universal design in architecture is about making physical structures 'smart' from the start so that retrofitting is either eliminated or less necessary, making instruction 'smart' from the start includes pedagogical and technological features as different, but not necessarily separate, choices" (King-Sears, 2009). The table below includes several methods for the use of UDL in related arts classrooms.

Multiple Means of Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Provide student choice of instrument in music.» Provide student choice of medium (chalk, markers, crayons, paint, etc.) in art.» Provide student choice of warm up in P.E.» Provide student choice of book genre in library.» Across all settings, activate background knowledge when teaching new concepts.» Across all settings, utilize synonyms for new vocabulary to tap into prior knowledge and lived experiences.» Across all settings, give immediate feedback – for both correct and incorrect answers – as well as guidance on error correction.
Multiple Means of Representation
<p>In all related arts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Give the students the option of independent work, small-group, or large-group instruction.» Provide captions on all videos.» Include graphic organizers for activities.» Have options for visual and auditory directions.» Use games to teach content and recruit engagement.» Utilize various modalities of instruction to capture unique learning styles and needs (e.g., technology, modified books, posters, etc.).» Recruit a peer buddy (or buddies) to work alongside students.
Multiple Means of Action and Expression
<ul style="list-style-type: none">» In music, allow students to either perform in front of the class or record his/her work for later viewing.» In art, allow students to work in different areas of the room on different projects.» In P.E., allow students to select the order in which they perform a task or a series of tasks.» In library, give students options for how to navigate through the stacks.» Across all settings, provide options for response (e.g., written, verbal, white boards, answer cards, etc.).

This is not an exhaustive list, but it serves as a starting point.

 Questions to Consider When Planning for UDL in Related Arts
How can I collaborate with general and special education teachers to increase accessibility to all?
How can I embed choice into my instruction?
How can I activate background knowledge into my lesson?
Am I differentiating my instruction to teach to all learners?
Am I giving my students a chance to set goals around their learning?
Can I connect my content to real-world situations?
How can I embed choice in student feedback?
Do I have options for where and how students learn (e.g., desks, carpet, small group, independent, etc.)?
Do I know how to accommodate different learners and learning styles?
Could I incorporate visual aids and supports into this lesson?
Am I presuming positive intent with all learners?
Can I create predictable routines within my classroom that could aid in student success?
Where could potential barriers lie within my classroom and my instruction?
Do I have a plan for formative (ongoing), summative (post-instruction), and student self-assessment?

Resources

- » CAST (2024). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 3.0. Retrieved from <https://udlguidelines.cast.org>
- » Draper, A. (2022). Music education for students with autism spectrum disorder in a full-inclusion context. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 70(2), 132-155.
- » Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004)
- » King-Sears, M.E. (September, 2009). Universal design for learning: Technology and pedagogy. *Learning Disability Quarterly*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/27740372>
- » Roberts, J. & Webster, A. (January, 2020). Including students with autism in schools: A whole school approach to improve outcomes for students with autism. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, DOI: 10.1090/13603116.2020.1712622
- » Rose, D. H., & Meyer, A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal Design for Learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- » The IRIS Center. (2009, 2023). *Universal Design for Learning: Designing Learning Experiences That Engage and Challenge All Students*. Retrieved from <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/udl/>