

# Uncovering UDL: Engaging All Abilities in Your Inclusive Classroom (Dr. Lynn LeVatte)

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**Lynn LeVatte** 0:09

So they really were not.

You didn't have access to to this type of learning before, so the instructions were very explicit and we had to kind of walk through some of the very, very basics that maybe you and I were just like, oh, just, you know, click the on off button click the power button and it was like, where is the power button?

So if you've never used that before, you would really wouldn't.

Wouldn't know umm.

And so we had some support from parents, of course, because they were.

They were home as well, but some of the parents had never used zoom.

So, you know, we were all learning together, which was actually one of the benefits I think of the of the program.

Umm, so we looked at a little bit of the challenge, but then you know, how would we address that in terms of incorporating some URL strategies that would be some best practices for us.

So the big thing?

We're visual supports, so that was critical, especially for our students that were non readers.

So we had, I would actually, I had print off of course you know everything was closed.

So I printed off some of the icons that we would see on the screen and I would hold these up and we would just kind of play around with those.

Uh.

Unfamiliar learning environment, so transition planning was really, really necessary for us in terms of scheduling and time management.

So one of the things that I learned from, you know, the beginning of COVID, we started the session and we would have our sessions planned Tuesdays and Thursdays and different times.

But what we really needed was the transition to prepare for those online sessions because we're we're creating a brand new routine for students that in a typical learning environment at school had all of those supports built in.

So the scheduling, the visual scheduling, the routines.

So now they're now.

You know, students are home and we don't have that anymore.

So the transition planning was really necessary for, for myself and also for me to communicate with the parents that this program is going to be Monday, Wednesday, Friday at 3:00 o'clock.

So students that had smartphones, they were putting it in, we were, you know, walking through.

How do I schedule this on my phone to get a reminder?

So we were learning not only zoom, but we were also practicing using those skills with different devices as well.

Umm.

Expectations unclear.

So these are some of the things that we have really had to kind of focus on is that we had clear and concise directions about using the device, where to find the power button.

What does this look like when we see the camera up top and there's a red line going through that?

What does that mean?

So we're able to kind of build in some of the assessment pieces and you know it's like all that means that we can't see you or the little button next to the X with the red phone handle.

Oh, that means?

Well, I'm not sure what that means.

I think that means that we're off and that's to hang up.

So if you don't want to be in this call anymore, you push that and then you won't be here anymore.

So we were learning about these icons as a visual context.

The visual support for the students.

Whoops, sorry, I can go back there.

So this is one of our our first we of course where we were collecting some some images through our journey for a two year project that it started as one year and kind of continued on to your #2.

So we would interview and we would invite guests from our community, musicians, politicians, educators to come in and and zoom with us.

And so we we were building communication skills.

We were getting used to a platform that we had never used before, but most importantly, I think we were enjoying the technology and and enjoying the social skill development that we were able to to pull from this experience.

Umm.

And of course, what did that look like for the different abilities?

So we had some students that were non speaking nonverbal.

We had some students that had communication disorder delay and we had two students that, you know, we're very proficient and very social and we're, you know, queuing a lot of the questions.

So everybody within the program, you know, when we would devise the questions that if we had guests coming in, we would all make sure that everybody was participating in a way that they were comfortable online.

And sometimes that took practice because you know, as you mentioned, when you when you pull up the screen, if there's six individual faces on the screen, it was intimidating for people that weren't familiar with that environment before.

So we were learning to kind of find that with the with the grid view and and different ways that we could kind of maneuver and manipulate how things were looking on our end for each each student.

So as I mentioned, we started with zoom.

That was kind of our project, the zoom timers and you will see the students here have jackets that they designed as part of the project.

So using some creative artwork and using some of the the information that they gained from the project, we were able to kind of design jackets and they were very, you know, everything from selecting the colors to the design and you can see the little Zoom logo and so they were very proud of the progress and and the learning that they had during that period.

So of course the the next progression we you know, they wanted to learn more and and thankfully through our our funding we were able to provide laptops for the students and have research assistants to help us with that.

So again, looking at what teams versus what zoom would look like on a screen power button, the different icons, how you would log in, what's your password, the security features.

So those were all things that the students were learning based on their ability.

Some students required additional support.

Additional visuals, for example, to assist with with that.

And nonverbal communication was was a really I I think it was something that we really didn't plan or didn't, you know, we we knew it was important.

But for those students that were non speaking or had limited communication skills, nonverbal language and communication was, you know, was an amazing piece for this because all of our guests, when we would end the conversations or end and our sessions which were between 25 and 35 minutes, we always finished with the thumbs up or kind of a clap.

So we did a lot of those pieces that you know, if we weren't able to use other mediums for communications such as their speech or language, we couldn't express how we felt or we wanted to thank a guest, we would give them a thumbs up.

So the students that maybe couldn't speak, they felt included in the in the conclusion when we would wrap up with our guests because they were able to do something to express, you know, the joy of that they really, you know, loved having this person come and visit us.

So you know that was a big part.

We also learned basic computer skills which prior to this project, the students had limited limited ability and limited access using using computer skills and zoom.

Umm, so the last few slides I think I'm just going to show a few a few demonstrations here.

So we would kind of change.

You can see in this the top the top two photos.

Here we would change some of the views, so we would minimize some of our guests. So it didn't seem so daunting for some of our participants who are a little shy and sometimes you would see them duck out of the camera range because they were shy and it took them a little bit of time to kind of get used to seeing each other in that in that presence.

So you know, one of the things that we learned about the computer, the iPad, about the power connection, but using a step by step guide.

So we kind of had a a walk through and a checklist that we would do at the beginning of each session so that everybody would have that routine followed and that seemed to work really, really well for us and it was something that they, the students would expect every session that we did.

So they knew we have to go through look for the icons.

We have to make sure we have our power on.

We have to make sure that we have our password, you know, and it was really funny because one day when I when I sent the the note for the meeting and for some reason I was on a different device and our regular password wasn't there and I was getting, you know, a message like you changed the password audience.

So it was, you know, it was really interesting.

So when we did the password, it was kind of a an activity where we would use some memory recall skills too.

So we had a very basic password that everybody would remember.

Uh, so just kind of as a summary and a wrap up of the project, we incorporated all abilities within this project really kind of promoting the premise of universal design for learning that everybody was included in all areas of the project.

We had various learning needs within our program.

We had students that were in the Learning Center for about 90% of the time of their day.

We had students that were in the in their learning Centers for 40% and that were in a general classroom alongside their peers.

So we had lots of different variety there, but we tried to focus on common language that we could use, whether it be verbal or nonverbal communication skills that allow students maybe that didn't have the language skills to still express how they felt or what they wanted to do.

And we also incorporated, you know, aside from the technology piece, but we incorporated creative art.

So the students had opportunity to do some painting and do some clay work and things.

That was kind of built in Umm, we practice differentiated instruction which is you know very aligned with udl practices.

So if one thing didn't work out and then it was kind of, you know, brainstorming, you know, how could we use this to have this student understand?

Because everybody was working at it at a different a different level.

But the final two pieces practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, and reinforce, reinforce, reinforce, so positive reinforcement.

You know, some of the students.

Did you know at times especially there were Internet issues.

You know, we're a little bit frustrated if we couldn't get on, if we couldn't log in or something, we're, you know was happening with zoom, but it was just that positive

reinforcement and then the practice.

So for us to do that, you know it it really helped our our program and I think it really built the confidence for the students as well because they they felt that they were accomplishing the the program and we were learning you know lots of new materials.

We were learning lots of new technologies as well, so I think that's about it for me, kind of in a nutshell of what we did during our period and you know using virtual learning for students that really had never experienced it before.

It was a wonderful experience for us, the students that I have now, the six we still zoom, you know, once a month and they've actually taken taken that this concept and they've now pulled in other friends from different communities and they'll do a zoom call together.

It's it's the boys group we had we had, we had five teenage boys and one girl, so the five boys are now kind of their, you know, they kind of do a boy chat and they they pull in some of the other it's they're hangout.

And so they're just super excited about doing that.

And now they've continued on where they'll find individuals on social media that have common interests, whether it be music, and they'll start doing interviews with them on a zoom platform.

And I'm kind of the intermediate person that kind of aligns that.

So it's really kind of given them a skill that they're continuing on, you know, for the rest of their the rest of their lives.

So it's really kind of building building it and they're growing, umm, you know, each week I'll get a call then.

Do you think this person would zoom with us next Wednesday at 4:00?

O'clock so you know.

So that to me, I mean I think that's a somewhat of a success for them, but it's giving them an option that perhaps you know we've seen a lot of negativity with COVID for us, you know there were lots of you know downfalls.

But I think one of the one of the big pieces was it it really opened the doors for communication for students that maybe otherwise would never have a chance to experience technology the way they do.

So I'll I'll kind of leave it at that and thank you very much for your time.

And if anybody has any questions, I would be more than happy to to answer those.



**Robert Power** 12:27

For Lynn, I wanna thank you for that presentation.

And you said something right at the end there that sort of reflects what I've been thinking about for a while through this presentation here.

But they they've developed some skills that they're gonna carry forward for the rest of their lives.

And it struck me, you know, how critical these skills are, especially in a place like Nova Scotia and rural Nova Scotia where so many people don't have access to doctors.



**Lynn LeVatte** 12:48

Absolutely.



**Robert Power** 12:51

And what's the government solution? Right now?

Virtual medical appointments through through Maple, and it's usually through a zoom call, so these students are now set up and and able to to navigate that going forward.



**Lynn LeVatte** 12:56

Yeah.

Yeah, that's right. Mm-hmm.



**Robert Power** 13:04

And so that, you know, not not only that, but, you know, vital skills that they could use for remote work should they choose to, to pursue that when they get older or remote learning when they get older.

It also struck me, too, the lessons that you learned through this it it seems like you you've you've really figured out a pattern, a UDL based pattern for how you could approach teaching people who are complete novices to this technology, how to use it.

And you know, they're they're transferable lessons that we can use with other sectors of society, like folks at the Horizon Center or folks or folks in some of the seniors

homes who may need to use this technology for socialization or for work or for medical appointments or for anything.

 **Lynn LeVatte** 13:55

Yeah, absolutely.

And we had one one case experience from one of our young boys.

He was in grade 10 at the time when he started the project, and within the first week, you know, he was he was an only child and he was very involved with his grandparents.

But because of COVID, you know, he he lost that connection.

He lost that contact.

So when we started this project, he said.

I'm going to get my grampy on this zoom and so the next week we came back and I said so how did you make out?

And he said, well, it took a long time, but he finally got it.

I had to show him everything.

So he taught his grandfather how to zoom, and he was so proud.

And then it it really kind of built that connection because now he was able to to have that situation with his grandfather and his grandmother on their laptop and continue their chats and they would do, you know, play games and stuff.

So he was very proud of that, that, you know, he's now sharing this new knowledge with his grandfather who, you know, he said my grandfather didn't even know how to turn on his computer.

So yeah, so it was, uh, you know, it was we were.

We were pretty excited, but it it is.

You know, we think of a virtual, you know, medical appointments.

We think of like work placement continuing education, having these basic skills opens the door for everybody and and you know we we learned with some basic pieces and I mean we're still learning.

So it's not something that we just have to shut down because covid's done, it's something that we've been able to really, you know, enhance and kind of continue to build as as we go.



**Robert Power** 15:29

And we've seen what a great levelling field, uh, distributed learning through



technology can be and remote work through technology can be.

It's really open doors for a lot of people, so thank you very much, Lynn, for your efforts on this over your presentation.