Universal Design for Learning in Inclusive Classrooms

Predictability and Commonality in Student Variability

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework designed to improve and optimise teaching and learning based on student variability – that is, the variance in student characteristics and the unique constellations of strengths and challenges that they bring with them when engaging in education. All students are unique in how they learn and bring with them a different learner profile. UDL provides an organized process or approach for proactively responding to student variability by highlighting the flexible ways students can access content, engage with teaching and learning, and demonstrate what they know and are able to do.

To support the application of UDL, teachers first need to know their students and how they learn. This allows them to analyse, predict and respond to student variability in an authentic and proactive way.

To support the process of identifying students and how they learn, the following mapping task can be utilised:

**Predictability in Variability**

1. Use a piece of paper to write down the variability that exists in the classroom. This can be general demographic information, and/or ‘like’ groups of students, and/or individual students.
2. Identify the strengths and assets of the student/group variability that you have listed.
3. Identify the predicted barriers that may be experienced by the student/group variability that you have listed.
4. Identify ways that the barriers can be reduced or removed, and ways that the strengths and assets can be enhanced.

**Commonality in Variability**

Throughout the mapping task you will be able to review the responses and identify commonalities between students/groups of students. Identifying the commonality in the variability will allow for student strengths and challenges to be responded to through an inclusive class culture that focuses on the value and contributions of all students, and on providing appropriate scaffolds and strategies that support equitable opportunities for access and participation.

Identifying the commonalities in the variability also helps to focus on a reduced list of key practices that will have greater reach and impact across the class.

An example of the mapping process is provided over the page...
Example of Predictability and Commonality in Variability Class Mapping

Variability

- Student with disability
- Student who is an English language learner

Strengths/Assets

- Adaptability and perseverance
- Language and culture

Barriers

- Complex/multi step instructions
- Written responses
- Attention whilst listening

Responses

- Plain language, single steps, checklist, visuals
- Alternatives to writing, use of assistive tech
- Mini lessons, chunking, active engagement

Commonality in the variability

Plain language, single steps, checklist, visuals
Alternatives to writing, use of assistive tech
Explicit instruction, Frayer model, semantic mapping

UDL is not about creating more work, but improved work!

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