Integrating Universal Design for Learning in a Special Education Teacher Preparation Program

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To more effectively prepare special education teacher candidates to provide appropriate access to general education curriculum for all learners, with and without disabilities, a university program infused course content and field experiences with explicit training in the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is an evidence-based framework wherein instruction enables all students to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning through accessible instruction, assessment, and technology. The UDL framework proposes that educators strive for three kinds of instructional flexibility: to represent information in multiple formats, to provide multiple pathways for students' action and expression, and to provide multiple ways to engage students' interest and motivation (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

The purpose of this paper is to report on the effectiveness of the program's integration of UDL methods and practica experiences and candidates' ability to implement these methods with their students in the schools. UDL related content and field experiences were integrated in all courses. Candidates, supervisors, and instructors were surveyed after each semester regarding their understanding and use of UDL principles. Candidates completing the redesigned program were also interviewed. Results include positive responses from both instructors and university supervisors in their increased understanding and implementation of Universal Design for Learning into courses and candidate supervision. Through their teaching practice and lesson plan development, candidates demonstrated better understanding and implementation of UDL practices with students in the schools.