



# Universal Design for Learning

Jodi Pilgrim and Kris Ward, CSOTTE, 2016

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## Background

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, reauthorized the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law promoting equal opportunity for all students. The ESSA encourages states to design assessments using principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and promised to award grants to local education agencies who use UDL and who adopt technology that aligns with UDL (ESSA, 2015). UDL is referenced numerous times throughout the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) law, and it is necessary educators understand Universal Design for Learning. This presentation provides an overview of UDL as well as ways to scaffold literacy for student success.

## Universal Design for Learning

UDL's framework for classroom instruction featured opportunities for constructing lessons accessible to all, rather than focusing on the weaknesses of students. Lesson design with UDL is comparable to a construction project that considers all aspects of "building" a comprehensive plan. This accessibility aligns with the Americans with Disabilities Act, signed in 1990, which made discrimination based on a person's disability illegal (ADA, 1990). The federal legislation was intended to prohibit individuals with disabilities from being excluded from accessing employment, public buildings, schools, and goods and services--all of the normal, everyday activity of a person without a disability. However, it quickly became apparent that people without disabilities would also benefit from this legislation. Curb cuts, escalators, elevators, large restroom stalls, automatic doors, and similar accommodations prove beneficial for individuals such as parents pushing strollers, persons on temporarily on crutches after a fall, and people carrying large loads of goods who lack an extra hand to open the door. The concept of planning the construction of a building with the people "in the margins" (CAST, [www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.VgqzHn1RqrY](http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.VgqzHn1RqrY)) in mind ultimately provides access for all individuals. Consider a spectrum of a population in which people in the margins include those with lifelong disabilities who need consistent assistance accessing daily living. When a building is constructed to accommodate for the needs of the people in the margins, all of the needs of the people in the middle are automatically met.

## Presenter Information

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Dr. Jodi Pilgrim, [jpilgrim@umhb.edu](mailto:jpilgrim@umhb.edu), 254-295-4188

Dr. Kris Ward, [kward@umhb.edu](mailto:kward@umhb.edu), 254-295-4572



"WHERE TECHNOLOGY EXISTS, TECHNOLOGY TOOLS ALLEVIATE BARRIERS TO LEARNING BY ALLOWING 'ALTERNATIVES TO 'ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL' ACADEMIC MATERIALS THAT USED ONLY ONE FIXED MEDIUM — PRINT"

RALABATE, 2011, PARA. 8).