

Prompt: How has your understanding and aspiration for your practice around meeting the needs of ALL learners evolved during the semester? What/ Who/ has contributed to your thinking and how>

This course has been extremely beneficial to me. Throughout my undergrad at Saint Michael's, I was drilled with the philosophy of differentiated instruction and UDL, but never taught how to actually implement it. I had many ideas that I wanted to carry into student teaching to try them on an actual group of students but then the pandemic hit and that went down the drain. Then I got my first job as a first year teacher during the thick of the pandemic, and I was just trying to keep my head above water so I could breathe, and that seemed near impossible at times. Due to the unfortunate circumstances, I had to fall back on plans that made me feel like the teacher I never wanted to be. I wanted to differentiate for my students and give them choice within the classroom, but I could not find a way out of the hole I was in while being in an environment that did not really foster the idea of UDL. This is where Rose's quote, "The hardest part of learning something new is not embracing new ideas, but letting go of old ones" (Rose, Page 15) really strikes home for me.

Last year, while I felt like I could tread the water and feel comfortable in the position I was in, I still found that I was falling back on old habits from my first year. About halfway through the year, I started working with All Learners Network and started branching into the idea of doing math menus because I saw them as a good avenue to student choice and engagement. The only issue is that they have not really been adopted into middle school and high school formats. I worked with my mentor but we ran into many roadblocks as well as throwing my students for a loop whenever we would move away from our regularly programmed class. I saw the benefits when students would embrace it, but it really drove me to want to change for this upcoming year. I started this course pumped to learn new tools, but then felt very overwhelmed in how I would actually implement them into my classroom in a way that makes sense. Then from reading many articles, like the UDL dinner party analogy, there were many quotes on how this is not an automatic switch that will happen. A quote I really enjoyed was from Novak that read, "It isn't a framework you can implement overnight, but once you see it working its magic in your classroom, you will become just as hooked as I am." (Novak, UDL Dinner Party). This has made me relax that I do not need to change the world overnight and that I can take time to tweak and adapt to the changes while getting to know my new students during this upcoming school year. I have been storing ideas from this course in my head while working out how this could work in my classroom. It was not until I was at work one day this summer while I was on the archery range and had a second to relax and think where it finally hit me that I could do this and thought of a plan to use in class. This plan is what I outlined in my final unit design and it is the format that I hope to implement during the school year. This plan makes me proud and I finally feel like I am stepping into the shoes of the teacher that I have envisioned for myself. As I have been really excited about this next chapter in my teaching career, I am still anxious about the challenges I will face.

I worry about the perception of my teaching within my school. I work in a very "old school" type of system, where many teachers have not leaned into the idea of UDL and differentiated instruction. They may think I am wasting my time by uprooting my entire curriculum and classroom set up to try something new. I am also worried about students not buying into the idea of math menu and my set up and not taking it seriously. Lastly, I am worried

about the parents' perception of my teaching approach. I think that Kenneth summed it up really well in his reflection from module 8 in which he said, "The group of parents I feel will be the most challenging to this idea will be ironically the parents of the younger students in high school. The reason for this is solely due to them wondering why. Getting the parents to understand the why of their children has been taught a certain way for the majority of their schooling and now they are expecting the same thing in high school then boom we are changing the learning style". Even though I do have some anxiety about the perception of others, I do know I have the support of my core team who will back me on my ideas. I have also run the ideas of other educator friends in my life and they really liked the approach that I would be taking.

The moment this summer that I realized that I really could do this was when I was working with a camper on the archery range. The camper was working on his archery levels and was trying to shoot at 30 yards to get 100 points with 30 arrows. He was getting discouraged that he was not hitting the target and became extremely frustrated and angry. I approached him and my first response to his demeanor was "hey bud, I think we really need to drop this negative attitude". He immediately turned around to me and was shocked. I told him the science behind it is that if you tell yourself that you cannot do something, you are not as likely to achieve it and succeed. I also told him how when we tell ourselves uplifting comments, even if we do not fully believe them, we are more likely to succeed. On our way back to the shooting line after retrieving arrows, I asked him if I could watch his form and help him out and he said yes, but in a half hearted sort of way. When he was picking up his bow to start, I could tell that he was still discouraged and angry. I told him to look at me and take a deep breath and then say "I am going to try my best to hit the target, I got this!". He laughed at me and I told him I was serious and made him say it. The next round he hit 4 out of his 6 arrows on the target. I then walked with him to retrieve his arrows and asked him what was different from last round compared to this round. He continued on about his form because he needed to fix his elbow position and hand placement. I then pointed to his head and asked what else. He then mumbled under his breath and said his mindset. For the remainder of the day, I reminded him to take a deep breath and told himself to give words of encouragement instead of beating on himself. Every time he stepped up to the line after that I could hear him whispering to himself, "I got this". He then was able to complete his archery level with 8 additional points on his last day of camp for the summer. I told him that he just learned about growth mindset and he told me that he is going to try it out at school when he gets frustrated. This camper taught me that I have the capability to help change the minds of people who may be stuck in their rut and help them succeed.

Kelsey,

Based on the above feedback, I have submitted a grade of A to UVM for your participation in our class. I appreciate your juggling the fast and furious pace of a summer class with the other commitments that summer often brings. Your students are fortunate to have an educator who is committed to their professional learning and interested in designing instruction that meets each of their needs.

Module 1

Kelsey, you shared how far technology has come in a short time from the robotic voices of the first Kindle to a very much improved experience. As someone who started using technology in education in 1980's, I can't agree more. It's actually an honor and a privilege to have seen the changes over the years.

Module 2

Kelsey, your suggestion that we have think about guidelines for the use of audio books made me wonder if the choice of the word "guidelines" means "it depends on the student or the context"

audio book choice

The following are great questions for your audio book choice Option 2

How do we get students to understand that they aren't less than because they use audiobooks?

Do you ever see a day where a curriculum option that is solely audiobooks is offered?

I enjoyed meeting Jason and Francis, your Not so Average Profiles and hope that they provided you with the WHY of many of the learning tasks during the semester.

Padlet Learning Profile

Nice job adding to our class Padlet about learning profiles. Thank you for your transparent post about the impact an IEP had on your learning journey and how that experience contributes to a heightened awareness of what your students on IEP's might be experiencing. Thankfully Vermont's commitment to personal learning plans provided so many flexible pathways for students, that students are no longer limited by being on an IEP.

Mod 4 VT

Your voicethread post about the fact that students motivation is under a teachers control really demonstrated your commitment to your students, especially when you offer more hands on project based learning with choice.

Module 3 eBook

I loved meeting Blue and could totally relate to the therapeutic nature of processing loss through making something. I can't tell you how many hours I put in with my mom's project and how many times I've watched it and rewatched it. I'm glad you created something so personally meaningful.

Module 5 FlipGrid

Great advocacy for using DESMO where you can use them as a digital graphing calculator that would add fun to learning.

Module 7 Mote

I'm sorry that Mote didn't work out for you. I have never tried it on an Ipad. Were you able to download the IOS app? <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/mote/id1568351949>

Module 9 Ed Puzzle

Thanks for giving Ed Puzzle a try during Module 9 . As many of you noted, along with all the Potential offers, there are some features that could be added to allow for more differentiation possibilities, from the visual elements, to lack of different type of questions, to inability to edit recording, lack of translation ability for ELL students, and lack of interactions between teacher and student. Personally I did not like that it forces ALL students to have the same experience, but as so many of you noted used alongside other strategies and tools, it offers the type of scaffolding many students need.

Module 11 Assistive Technology

It looks like this semester has helped you consider many ways that everyday tools like Google Classroom, Wakelet, and EdPuzzle can be used to remove barriers to learning and making learning more accessible. Taking a look at specialized tools with your special educator might also be needed for some students.

Book Discussion

I sent my feedback to your book discussion by email

Course Project

I noticed that you have included more choice and voice through the use of math menus and have made a commitment to move beyond workbooks for your students.

I wonder how what those math menus will look like and how you will manage student choices throughout the process. Will the choices be made visible through Google classroom or other LMS? Or will you have other methods that allows the students to view the math menu choices and communicate their selection to you.

I noticed that you use both small group and whole group instruction to help students understand the content, along with individual conferences.

I wonder if the software programs that you use have any video instruction of the content that will allow the students to review the concepts as needed or if you have playlist that might do that.

I noticed that your content has so much potential for manipulation and movement and that you do use dance as a modality in one of your lessons.

I wonder if you have opportunity to use robots or maker tools as ways to increase hands on learning application for these concepts. I've been wanting to work with a math teacher on

aligning things like coding, robots, or the use of 3D printers and laser cutters, etc to geometry. It feels like a perfect match. (maybe we can work together on this sometime)

I notice how brave you are to take on the switch from a workbook to a more flexible pathway for your students to learn.

I wonder if you will have support for the time it takes to do this from colleagues or school leaders. It is HARD WORK to redesign curriculum while you also teach it and handle the feedback, assessment, and class management. I hope that you are able to pace yourself and set realistic goals that include self care.

I would love to follow up with you at some point in the future to see if computational thinking through coding and robots or making might be something you'd like to look at together.

Orange East is lucky to have you as a middle school math teacher.