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Hey, everyone, this is Katie Novak, and you're listening to the education table, a micro podcast where we answer your questions about inclusive education in ten minutes or less. And we are back after a brief little summer hiatus. And I am super excited for this episode because we are exploring the revised version of the UDL guidelines. Version 3.0 is in the house, and we're going to talk about what the changes are and why those changes are so important for both educators and learners. As always, I'll start with a story, get into the research, and then we'll talk about key strategies for implementing these new guidelines into your practice. Let's get started. When I was a teacher, I used to post a do now on the board.

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My middle school and high school students would come rolling in at all different times in the four minute passing period, meaning that some students had a head start on the do now, some would be done before class started, and then inevitably, I began rushing everyone who arrived on time. I was like, let's go. You know, they're already finished. And research shows that I'm not alone in this practice and that it creates significant anxiety for students. And I never really thought much about it until I read Mitch Weather's executive function in every classroom, which is a fantastic practical book. He shared that one of the most important routines that we can create is the expectation that we start together.

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If we want students to build relationships and find balance and recognize that it's okay to enjoy downtime, and if we really value community, it's a really small shift to wait until class starts to reveal the bell ringer and then say, okay, everyone, you're here. Welcome. Let's dive into learning together. So I read this and had this big aha. And it was a great reminder that really small changes can have a large impact. Now, I started with this anecdote because I wasn't familiar with Mitch's work on executive function until I I read the draft of the new UDL guidelines, which cited his work. As soon as I learned more, I was hooked, because executive function is one of the really big shifts in the new UDL guidelines. So now let's dive in to some of the big shifts.

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So, as I shared, one of the really big shifts was how executive function is addressed. In the previous guidelines, executive function was a single guideline, and now it is integrated throughout. The framework aligns much more closely with how neuroscience views executive function because it's so much more than strategy development. It's also about building knowledge. It's about emotional capacity and that interconnectedness is really important for learning. So that is the first change. The next change is the UDL guidelines. Now, the goal is not focused on expert learning, but rather building learner agency. And this came from a lot of feedback in the field where people felt the term expert implied an endpoint and really excluded the idea that learning is an ongoing journey. Also, the term expert learning doesn't really appreciate the value of collaborative and collective knowledge.

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As a dear friend of mine, George Coro says, the smartest person in the room is the room. So the goal of UDL is now developing learner agency, which means we really want students to be self aware and self directed and have opportunities to co create their learning environment so that they're able to succeed in really flexible and adaptable environments. The third major change is the removal of the word provide. It used to be that the principles were about providing engagement, providing representation, providing. All of the guidelines were about what teachers could provide, but that tended to be interpreted that UDL was just something that adults did, but rather UDL is about how we can co create learning experiences along students.

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So teachers could always say, well, yes, I provided that like a checklist, but it really missed the point that the true measure of UDL is whether or not every student learns. So now we're going to make sure that we're designing with students opportunities for students to sustain effort and persistence. We're designing with students opportunities for students to communicate their learning. Now another big shift is the focus on student voice, and particularly how student voice is really important for us as practitioners to listen and reflect and recognize the barriers that bias and exclusionary practices create. And a lot of these shifts are about really moving away from teacher led to student led as a pathway for inclusive practice. So the guidelines very much incorporate a focus on reducing bias and giving students more opportunities for voice and choice and autonomy.

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So to sum up the changes, there is a renewed focus on executive function and what that means for learning. There is a recognition that we need to build agency and not just try to focus on expertise or an endpoint. We are looking to co design options with our learners. And the last is that we really want to recognize and elevate the importance of student voice as a means to remove and minimize bias and exclusionary practices. So let's dive into some concrete strategies to incorporate these changes in your teaching practice. Consider the following number one, foster learner agency with goal setting and reflection. Have students set personal goals at the beginning of every unit and have them regularly reflect on their process.

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You could do universally designed reflection journals where students can write or draw or record multimedia to reflect on their learning experiences and their challenge and achievements, and really encourage students to be reflecting on what is it that they really need to know and do and how is their journey in working towards that. Really have them think about their learning experiences and what they're learning about themselves as learners. And as with all things UDL, always be sure to provide options and choices. So some students might want to write in a journal, others might want something digital and using voice and audio and things like that. Second strategy really think about the value of jigsaw activities for collaborative and cooperative learning.

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A jigsaw is when you divide students into small groups, with each group responsible for learning a specific aspect or a topic, and after researching and learning about that topic in whatever way students choose, then they regroup so that they can share what they've learned. So as a teacher, you can provide feedback while students are working in their topic groups to make sure that they're all prepared to teach peers. But when we allow students to decide how they're going to learn and how they're going to share what they're learning with their peers, we are really optimizing the design of multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and then action and expression. You can also download a template for the jigsaw activity in the show notes if you want some support on how to do this.

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Now, the last strategy is, as I shared in the beginning of this episode, start together. Establish a really clear opening routine to create a predictable environment which is so essential for students executive function development. Starting together is just a great strategy to make sure that every single class starts with a unified focus, a shared understanding of the day's goals, and an opportunity for everybody to build that community. So, in conclusion, the updates in the UDL guidelines 3.0 represent a significant shift towards cultivating learner agency and creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments with our learners. By focusing on student voice and choice and autonomy, we have a much better chance of ensuring that every learner is successful. Thank you as always, for joining me at the education table.

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Be sure to check out the show notes for more resources on the UDL guidelines 3.0, and if you enjoyed this podcast, be sure to hit subscribe and stay up to date on the latest insights and strategies. Until next time, everyone onward.