Hey everyone, this is Katie Novak and you're listening to the Education Table, a micro podcast where I answer your questions about inclusive education in 10 minutes or less. In today's episode, I'm talking about concrete ways to increase teacher efficacy with Universal Design for Learning, or udl. I will share a personal story about my journey from being a novice runner to completing a 50 mile race. We'll explore research on personal and collective teacher efficacy, and then I'll give you four practical strategies to drive this work in your own school or district. So let's dive in. When I first started teaching, I was assigned to coach cross country. There was only one small problem with this. I had never in my life run more than five miles. I was not a natural long distance runner. But over time, I was committed to improving.

And 20 years later, I just completed, I would say not even completed. I rocked my first 50 mile race. Now, what this journey has taught me is that practice and persistence and with support, we can become really great at things that maybe weren't initially so good at. And I honestly feel the same way about teacher efficacy, that becoming a really effective teacher doesn't happen overnight. It can take years of really consistent practice, trying new strategies, reflecting on what works, getting feedback and trying again. And just when we feel like we have it down, boom, new kids and suddenly we have to start over. But ultimately, the key to growth, whether we're running or whether we're teaching, is really making the time to practice and refine and repeat. So let's dive into the research about why this is so important.

Now, research makes a really distinction between personal efficacy, which is an individual's belief in their ability to succeed, and collective efficacy, which is a shared belief among a group of educators that together we can meet the needs of all kids. And according to John Hattie's research on visible learning, collective teacher efficacy has a massive impact on student achievement. With an effect size of 1.57, which is almost like four years of growth, it is one of the most powerful influences teaching. But just like I did not go from running five miles to running 50 miles overnight, collective teacher efficacy doesn't develop instantly. It's not like you just hire a group of people and then magic, we're going to do an awesome job together.

It requires a lot of really intentional professional development, intentional collaboration, shared goals and a shared instructional vision and so much time to work together. But ultimately, when teachers do believe in their ability to really work with all students because they have each other, there much more likely to see really positive results. From students. So what can we in our schools and districts do to build this efficacy? Let's dive into four concrete strategies. One, choose only a few focus areas a year and give teachers time to practice. Just like with running, the only way to get better at teaching is through practice and reflection. And instead of overwhelming teachers with a billion new strategies at once, we have to pick just a couple of focus areas a year. This gives teachers time to implement strategies, practice them consistently, reflect and refine their approach.

So it's really important while we're doing this to create opportunities for teachers to observe each other, get feedback from each other, and make adjustments along the way. It is not about doing everything perfectly. It's about steady progress. But we really need to be focused to do this. Well, number two is if you are in any sort of leadership role, we want to model those practices that we want teachers to implement. One of the most effective ways to build teacher efficacy is to model the instructional strategy so that they can experience them as learners, so they recognize the value. So during professional development, during faculty meetings, make sure that you're demonstrating UDL saying, this is why I'm providing this flexibility. I am just practicing this too. I would love your feedback. Let's reflect and make this work together.

Because we want leaders to be a part of that collective efficacy. We really need to help educators experience what a flexible learning environment looks like. We want to give them lots of opportunities for learning and sharing what they know and ultimately giving them an opportunity to actually do the work instead of just watching leaders do the work. So this helps them to think about, okay, so now I've experienced it. How can I translate this to my own practice now? Number three is we have to provide ongoing professional development. It is not enough to have a professional development event to share something in a faculty meeting, to host a webinar. Teachers need so much support in practicing during collaborative planning time or doing instructional rounds. So we can share. Here is a practice.

But now we want to give you lots of opportunities to use that practice to ask teachers for feedback. And when we're giving teachers this time to observe each other, to ask their students for feedback, for even asking us for non evaluative feedback, it really helps to build collective efficacy. Instructional rounds are great because it really creates a positive intent to walk around and see what is working, what are teachers doing that are truly engaging learners? And then how can we replicate that in our own environments? And if you're interested in facilitating instructional rounds, head to the show notes to find a protocol to get you Started. And number four, embrace the data. Data is a really powerful tool to help teachers recognize what they are doing that is working and what they are doing that may need some shifting.

And so when we're looking for data on student engagement, when we're looking for data on teachers and students working together in the classroom, right. We have to measure what matters. And so if we're saying we want the classroom to be more student led, do we have data that shows how much time are teachers, you know, spending to create this student led? Right. The data matters. And it goes beyond simple academic test scores. But looking at instructional data and the experience of kids in the classroom looking at perception data and asking students about their levels of engagement, all of this we have to collect, and then we have to have time to look at that and do something different.

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So as an example, when I was a runner, I noticed that the couple of times that I started doing marathon distance, I, like, hit a wall at mile 17. And that didn't mean, like, oh, all you can run is 17 miles, you're done. It meant that my refueling strategy needed to change. And so I started reading blogs. I started talking to people in my running group, Shout out to the Squana Cook River Runners from Groton. They're amazing. And I started experimenting with different techniques. And essentially it was just, I need time to figure out what's going to work for me. And this is the same thing that teachers need. They need to say, okay, this is where my kids are as learners. This is what their current level of engagement is.

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This is what's happening in my classroom, and I know that I'm capable of doing better. And so let me read some blogs, let me observe some colleagues, let me ask instructional coaches and my colleagues for ideas, and then let me figure out what works best so that I can move this data. And so ultimately, we have to be really planful and really intentional about building teacher efficacy, because it does not happen by accident. So increasing teacher efficacy with UDL is about modeling, it's about providing ongoing support, and most importantly, it's about giving teachers the time and the space to practice and grow. By focusing on teacher efficacy, we really can empower teachers to learn from each other and implement UDL with confidence because they have each other. And ultimately, this allows us to create more inclusive environments for our students.

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So thank you so much for joining me at the education table. Be sure to check out the show notes for more resources on supporting teachers in implementing udl. Until next time onward.