

3

# BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

for **TALE**



WITH **UNIVERSAL DESIGN**

FOR LEARNING

TALE Academy   
MODULE 7 - SESSION 3



In this session, we will directly reference learning from Module 3, Sessions 2 and 8. We encourage you to review those sessions before engaging in this one.

# FROM OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO DESIGNING EQUITABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

One of the top lessons we learned from the pandemic is how to actively and creatively overcome barriers to learning. Ask any school leader and they will likely tell you that one of the first barriers was technology. School and district leaders drove house-to-house delivering laptops and tablets. They partnered with internet providers to get hotspots out to their communities. They built online classrooms overnight with Google Classroom, video conferencing apps, and Bitmoji classroom. Within a few short weeks, New York State's educators constructed an entirely new infrastructure for learning.

As extraordinary as these efforts were, we know that the shift to emergency remote teaching (ERT) only exacerbated existing inequities in our public schools. And for every barrier we removed, such as connecting students to digital learning, we encountered even more barriers, such as student and family readiness to use digital tools, accommodating student and family schedules with synchronous and asynchronous learning, identifying and supporting students' social emotional needs, and much more. Fairly quickly, the heroic efforts of our educators became eclipsed by public frustration with these barriers.

*229 years to build a statewide system of public schools - 2 years to rebuild the state's public schools as remote or hybrid*

*Let's put in historical context the enormity of the work educators did during the pandemic to rebuild our schools as remote/hybrid learning environments.*

**1791**

The first public school in New York opened its doors.

**1812**

Two decades later, a public school system was established.

**1867**

Then it took another half century until public schools became completely free (prior to this, many schools charged parents fees).

**1920**

There were still more than 8,000 one-room elementary schools across the state.

**2020**

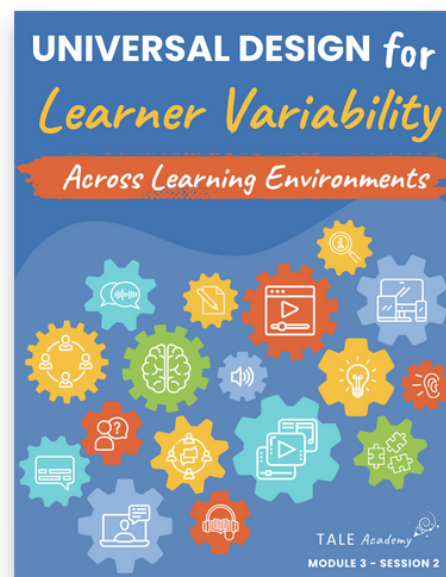
Over the next 100 years, our state's public school system evolved, consolidating school districts and erecting new school buildings until more than 2.4 million students were enrolled in more than 4,300 public schools.

# FROM OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO DESIGNING EQUITABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (CONT)

We could easily just abandon what we created during ERT and return to the pre-pandemic schools and systems. We could see the two years of the pandemic as a blip on the historical trajectory of education in New York State. Or we can consider these last two years the early stages of a new era in education. If we opt for the second perspective, which is the mission of the TALE Academy, then the next step is to build a strong foundation for this transformation.

*To this end, we propose establishing the foundation for a new era in education through universal design.*

As we learned in [Module 3, Session 2](#), “universal design” originated in the field of architecture. The first step of universal design was to identify barriers to access, such as entrances to buildings that made it challenging or impossible for someone in a wheelchair to enter. After identifying these barriers, architects redesigned buildings so that they would be accessible to all individuals, regardless of their ability. In the world of education, universal design for learning (UDL) engages in the same process, but in relation to the construction of learning environments.



If we make UDL central to creating the “new normal” of education, we can design more equitable learning environments. In this session, we will look at UDL from the teacher’s perspective, then consider UDL from the school leader’s perspective. We will then explore strategies and resources that school leaders can use to put UDL at the center of their work to redesign learning environments.

# THE TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE ON UDL

UDL guides the development of flexible learning environments and learning spaces that can accommodate individual learning differences.

*UDL focuses on three domains:*



## Engagement

UDL provides multiple means of engagement by recruiting interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and supporting student self-regulation.

1



## Representation

UDL provides multiple means of representation in terms of perception, language and symbols, and comprehension.

2



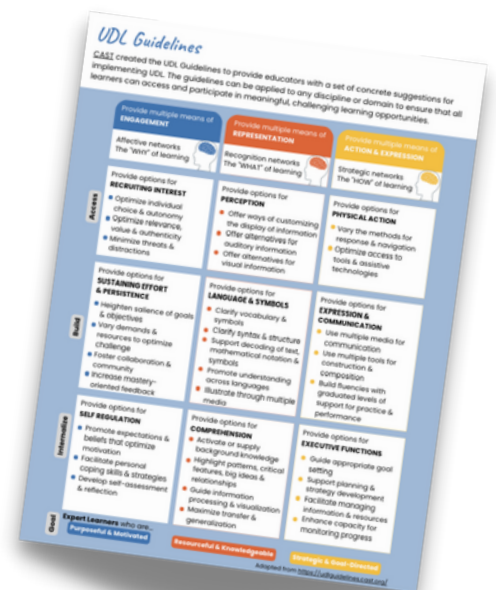
## Action and Expression

UDL provides multiple means of action and expression through physical action, expression and communication, and executive functioning.

3

The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) has developed a series of resources, including UDL guidelines, to help teachers implement UDL in their classrooms. The UDL guidelines offer a set of concrete suggestions that ensure that all of our students can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning experiences.

**RETURN TO MODULE 3, SESSION 2 TO REVIEW THE UDL GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDED TEACHER APPROACHES FOR IMPLEMENTING UDL IN THE CLASSROOM.**





# THE SCHOOL LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE ON UDL

In a 2018 study of barriers to the implementation of UDL in schools, researchers found five main issues. Four of the issues related to the need for general education teachers to better understand the value of UDL, be fully trained in UDL, and collaborate with special education teachers to implement UDL effectively. The remaining issue was the need for administrative support, specifically school leader support. One special education teacher described a common sentiment expressed in the study: "It is hard to feel effective with implementing new practices like UDL when it is either not supported or your principal is not aware of what you're doing." Another special education teacher shared a particularly disappointing situation:



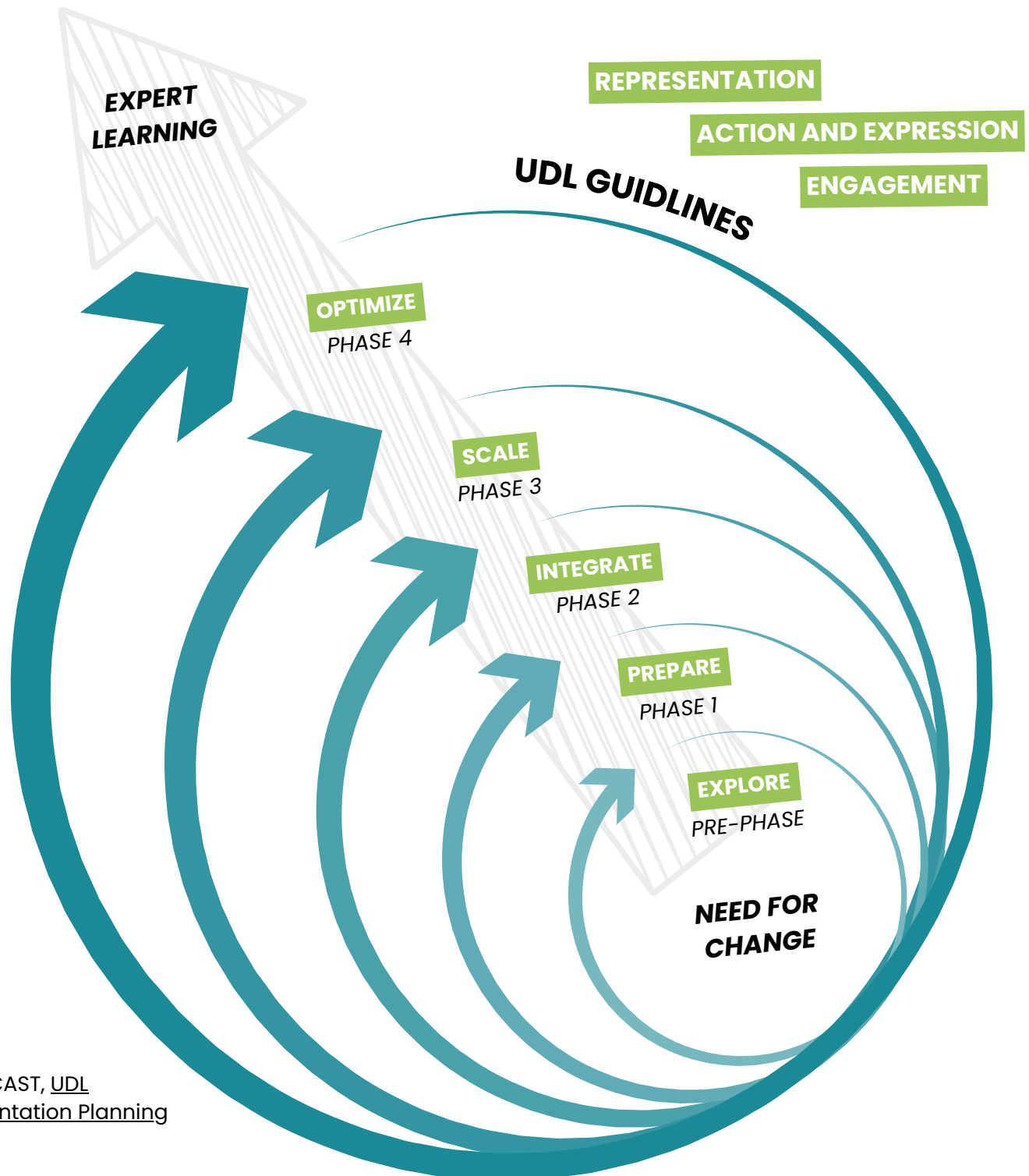
*My principal once told me to forget what I learned in my teacher program. That I was in the real-world now and that I needed to follow along with what the general education teacher was doing in the classroom. When I told him that he's excluding students with disabilities from instruction, he told me my job was to work with them [only the students with disabilities] and my co-teacher's job was to make sure the other students [general education students] passed their assessment test. I tried to tell him that I learned how to use UDL and it was a way to include all students in learning, but he clearly did not want to rock the boat. So I just gave up. I didn't want to lose my job.*



# THE SCHOOL LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE ON UDL (CONT)

So what can school leaders do to support teachers' implementation of UDL and avoid these problems? CAST provides a phased process for implementing UDL schoolwide (below) with specific tasks at each phase. On the following page, we've adapted their phased process to note how TALE strategies and resources can support UDL implementation.

## *Schoolwide UDL Implementation Process*



Source: CAST, UDL Implementation Planning

# THE SCHOOL LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE ON UDL (CONT)

## UDL IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

## TALE STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

### **PRE-PHASE - EXPLORE**

1. Investigate UDL as a potential schoolwide decision-making framework.
2. Build awareness about UDL with key players within and outside the school.
3. Determine willingness and interest of staff to begin schoolwide UDL implementation.

- Use online, asynchronous training resources to support staff exploration of UDL. Along with the resources provided in the TALE Academy, consider linking to [CAST](#) and [Understood.org](#).
- Establish professional learning communities that integrate general education and special education teachers to focus on collaboration. (See Module 3, Session 8 for more on collaboration.)
- Recruit interest by using the online resources provided by [Learning Designed](#) (under "Resources," select "UDL Guidelines" and "Recruiting Interest").
- Use online polls and surveys that allow staff to provide anonymous feedback on their exploration. Consider using [CAST's UDL Implementation Readiness Indicators Tool](#).

### **PHASE 1 - PREPARE**

1. Create a climate that is flexible but maintains high expectations for all.
2. Map needed resources and processes (i.e., specific personnel, structures such as planning time, materials, curriculum, and professional development).
3. Define a strategic vision, plan of action, and expected outcomes.

- Use free online [mind-mapping tools](#) to involve all stakeholders in the mapping of needed resources and processes.
- Use online [idea management software](#) that helps you collect, analyze, focus, and implement organizational brainstorming. You can use this software to go from "ideas" to "vision."
- Use online [project management software](#) to turn the vision into a living action plan where you can assign roles, view deadlines, and track progress.

*\*Note: the word "online" above is intended to connote cloud-based tools/software that support collaborative processes.*

### **PHASE 2 - INTEGRATE**

1. Create individual and schoolwide structures and processes to support implementation and evaluate its effectiveness.
2. Develop educator expertise and apply UDL to instructional practices and decision-making.
3. Foster collaboration and support to integrate UDL broadly.

- Create online structures that allow for [asynchronous collaboration](#) so that staff do not have to meet "live" (in person or online) for every aspect of implementation.
- Support staff in earning CTLE credits and [microcredentials](#) to develop expertise in UDL.
- Consider using online [curriculum mapping software](#) that allows collaboration, sharing, and mentoring.
- Consider using the UDL Progression Rubric provided in the [UDL Playbook for School and District Leaders](#) to continuously assess where your staff are in terms of integration.



# THE SCHOOL LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE ON UDL (CONT)

## UDL IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

## TALE STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

### PHASE 3 – SCALE

1. Promote ongoing professional growth by supporting a UDL community of practice that is responsive to individual and systemic variability.
2. Expand effective practices, processes, and structures through advanced professional development and technical assistance.
3. Enhance an integrated, schoolwide approach to UDL implementation through continuous evaluation of gaps and needs.

- Use [professional learning communities \(PLCs\)](#) to engage in the [PDSA cycle](#) with a focus on UDL implementation.
- Support teachers in advancing their understanding of UDL by participating in online PLCs that extend outside the school.
- Partner with [BOCES](#) to establish networks and/or encourage extended learning through [professional organizations](#) and [universities](#).
- Revisit and renew the strategies you used in Phase 1 so that all staff members can help identify gaps and needs.

### PHASE 4 – OPTIMIZE

1. Enhance a schoolwide culture that maximizes improvement of teaching and learning practices in a way that reflects and aligns with UDL principles.
2. Predict, prepare for, and respond to potential internal and external changes that could impact UDL implementation in the future.
3. Maximize improvement by embedding processes that respond to variability that exists within the school.

- Practice UDL with your staff by providing them with choices and multiple modalities to engage in professional development, collaboration, and curriculum development. (Check out Chapter 4, “Modeling UDL Through Professional Learning,” in [The UDL Playbook for School and District Leaders](#).)
- Use [game-based learning](#) and [simulations](#) to engage teams in change management related to UDL.
- Encourage staff to document and peer review the processes and practices they have used to effectively respond to learning variability in your school. (Check out the peer review protocol in [The Power of Protocols](#).)

## The Big Picture

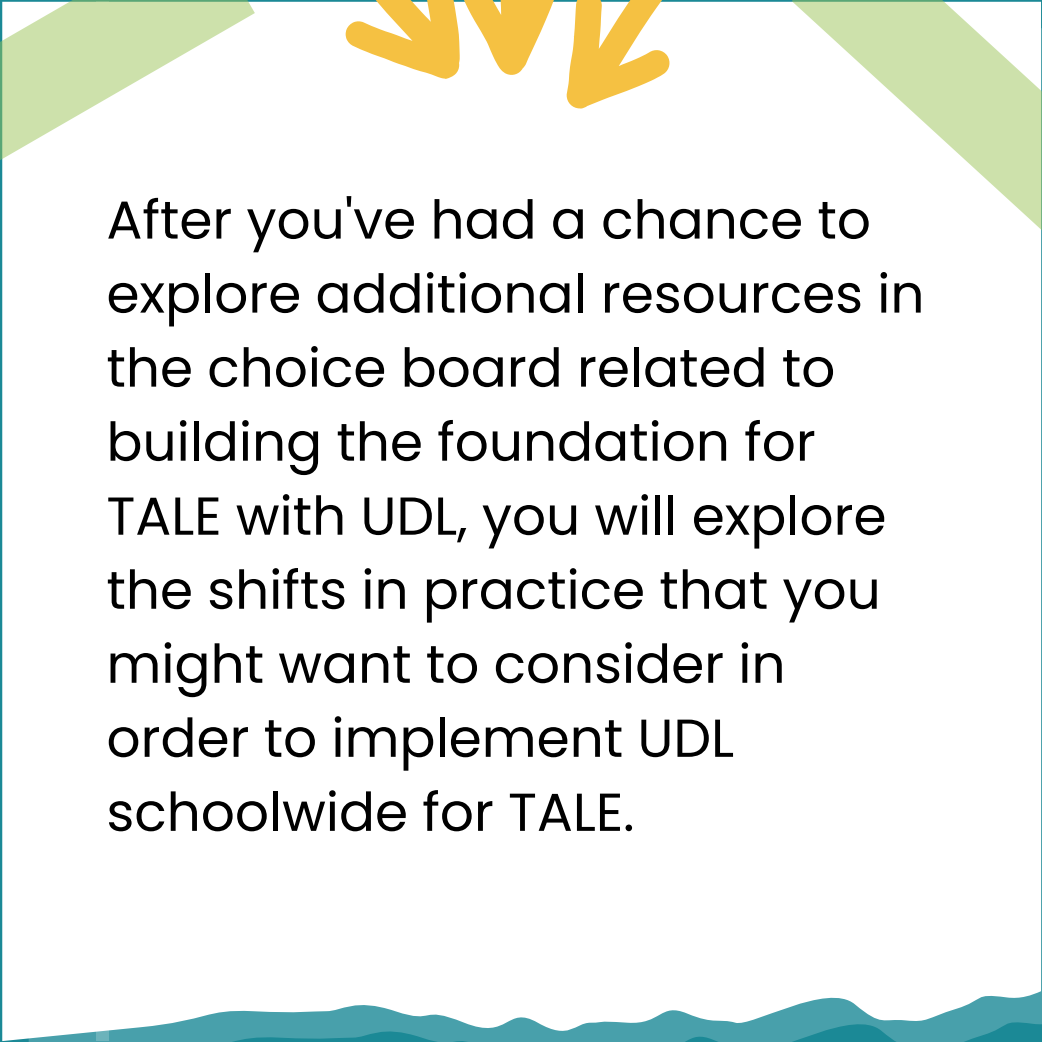
Implementing UDL is an intensive process that requires the commitment of all members of a school community. What is unique in this moment is that UDL implementation can be easier if done within a TALE framework. Indeed, a [2021 article by Kavita Rao](#) published in [The Journal of Applied Instructional Design](#), recently noted that “online learning environments that inherently require the use of digital tools as a means for delivery and instruction present many opportunities for incorporating and applying UDL.”

The shift to UDL as the foundation of equitable learning environments will require strong leadership. And it won't happen overnight. But if we use a TALE framework, it certainly won't take the two centuries of public education design and development that predated the pandemic!





# Your Turn!



After you've had a chance to explore additional resources in the choice board related to building the foundation for TALE with UDL, you will explore the shifts in practice that you might want to consider in order to implement UDL schoolwide for TALE.

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# About Us

## **The TALE Academy**

The TALE Academy is a series of virtual learning experiences available to all New York State educators and offers a rich array of resources on topics related to teaching across learning environments (TALE). The TALE Academy is built upon the work New York State educators carried out during emergency remote teaching (ERT) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and extends it toward the future. TALE invites educators to think beyond online learning to consider a broader perspective on teaching and learning that encompasses teaching across multiple environments (in-person, remote, and hybrid).

## **The Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE) Project**

The TALE Academy is part of a broader New York State Education Department (NYSED) initiative known as Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE). In July 2020, NYSED was awarded funding through the United States Department of Education's Education Stabilization Fund-Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant to implement TRLE – a three-year project to build the capacity of teachers and educational leaders to effectively implement remote/hybrid learning for all students. Launched in the depths of the pandemic, the first phase of the TRLE project focused on getting resources to the field through partnerships with Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and school districts across the state. The second phase, which began in February 2022, focused on aggregating lessons learned and emerging teaching and learning strategies to address a broader field of practice: teaching across learning environments.

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