

The Far North Literacy Development Consortium

Annual Report 2022–2023



CAST
Until
learning
has no
limits®

Table of Contents

- 1 The Far North Literacy Development Consortium**
- 2 From Understanding to Application**
- 9 Impact of the Work**
- 11 Partnerships & Connections**
- 12 Goals & Next Steps**
- 13 Letter from CAST**

● The Far North Literacy Development Consortium

The Far North Literacy Development Consortium (FNLDC) is an innovative three-year project addressing the significant need for inclusive literacy practices across the far northern region of California. The FNLDC represents an exciting partnership between CAST (Center for Applied Specialized Technology) and four committed county offices of education, including Butte County Office of Education, Plumas County Office of Education, Shasta County Office of Education, and Modoc County Office of Education.

Through this collaborative effort, CAST and the Far North are centering inclusive literacy practices, recognizing that literacy possesses the inherent capacity to empower learners across disciplines.

The project leverages the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework as a means of designing inclusive literacy instruction. UDL is a compelling educational framework based on research in the learning sciences that guides the development of flexible methods, materials, and environments that embrace variability, minimize barriers to learning, and develop students' own expertise in how they learn.

This multi-year project provides participants with innovative and robust professional development, coaching, protocols for application, and communities of practice. These dynamic professional learning opportunities are designed with UDL to model the design process to participants.

This past year, participants focused extensively on putting the UDL guidelines into practice,

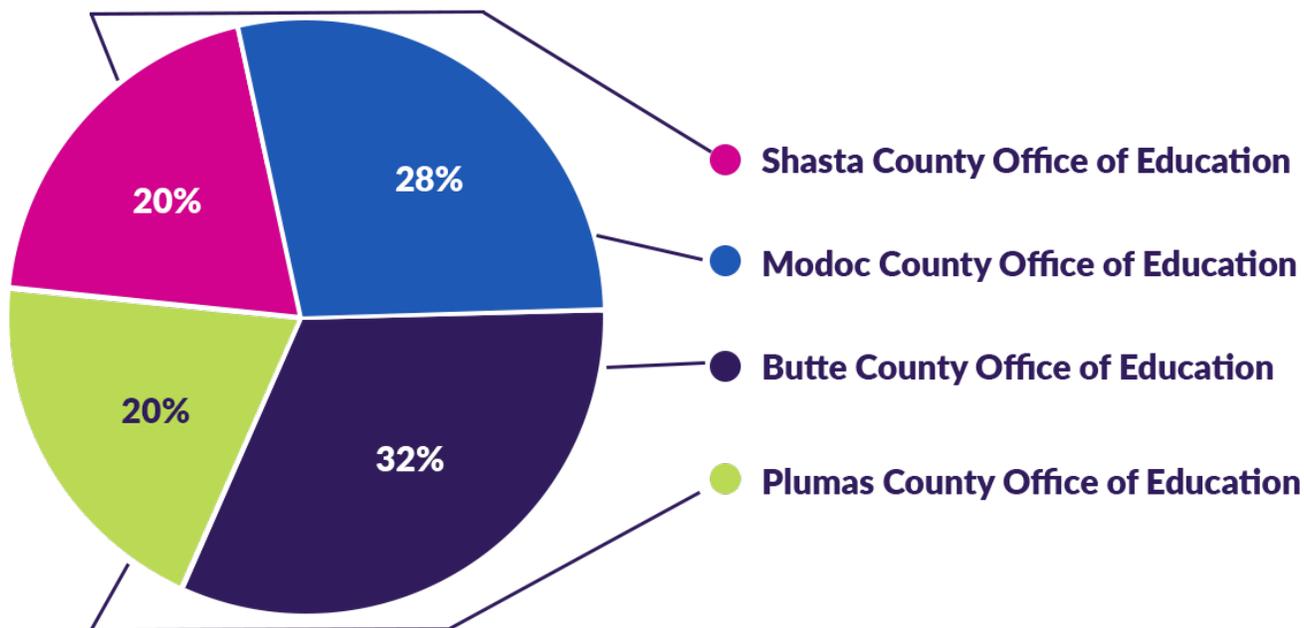
observing one another, setting personalized goals, collaboratively designing and reflecting, and sharing strategies with one another.

As participants continue to deepen their understanding of the UDL guidelines and their application to literacy across the disciplines, they experience what it means to be an expert learner. Expert learners are purposeful and motivated, resourceful and knowledgeable, and strategic and goal-directed. In essence, they are learners who are experts in the process of learning itself. Engaging in learning in this way provides participants a rich and powerful experience. Consequently, participants are inspired to consider new, innovative possibilities for supporting all students in the Far North.

Overall, the FNLDC educators are not only expanding their own knowledge of UDL, they are also poised to sustain UDL implementation across their counties. These committed educators will become coaches of UDL and will train others, extending the reach of the grant far beyond three years. As the impact of this work spreads, the entire Far North region will become leaders in setting the example for how UDL can bring about transformative change for all learners.

Participant Overview

Four county offices of education are represented in the FNLDC: Butte County, Plumas County, Shasta County, and Modoc County. The participants consist of county office administrators, school principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers in grades 4-12. In the second year of the grant, there were 46 total teachers, 9 county coaches, and 2 support staff representing 11 total school sites.



● From Understanding to Application

Participant Overview

Fall 2022 Kickoff with Shelley Moore and Lesson Planning

Year one of the FNLDC was dedicated to building a solid foundational understanding of UDL. In year two, participants took the exciting next step in their UDL journey by applying theory to practice.

September 2022 marked the official kickoff for year two of the FNLDC grant. Participants from all four counties gathered at the Shasta County Office of Education in Redding, California, to first hear from internationally renowned educator Dr. Shelley Moore.



Originally from Edmonton, and now based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Dr. Moore is a highly sought-after special education teacher, researcher, speaker, and storyteller who has worked with school districts and

community organizations around the world, supporting and promoting equity for all learners. Unsurprisingly, Dr. Moore's keynote was personable, engaging, and hilarious. She inspired those in the room to reflect upon their personal "why" when it comes to inclusion. She made many connections to UDL and the role it can play in the classroom when designing instruction that is responsive and welcoming to all learners.

The following day, participants dove into an all-day Lesson Design Workshop. Collaborating in their teaching teams, as well as across schools and counties, teachers rolled up their sleeves and applied their understanding of the UDL core principles to their respective contexts. Throughout the workshop, participants were exposed to different tools to choose from in order to scaffold the design process. The Lesson Design Guide, for example, walks designers through setting clear, challenging goals, designing an assessment plan, selecting or creating materials, outlining the instructional methods, and considering the overall learning environment. This process, through repeated practice, becomes more automatic as educators refine their UDL lens.

Participants were also introduced to the journey mapping tool as another option for the design process. Journey mapping is a design thinking tool for gathering information on the user experience. Often in the classroom context, the users are the students, and the journey map provides insight into what activities or methods worked for them and where there were perhaps unintended barriers in the design. Equipped with this feedback, educators are better poised to create new options to help reduce or minimize those barriers for their students. The goal of using this protocol is to develop design skills so educators become more competent and confident in creating universally designed lessons and environments.

Feedback from Participants on the Two-Day Kickoff (in their own words):

"Shelley Moore was incredibly inspirational! She was just as engaging and genuine in person as she is on film."

"Shelley was inspiring and very real. It was a great way to get us in the mindset of UDL."

"Shelley has so much knowledge about inclusive practices and is so passionate about her work! I am spending a lot of time diving more into her videos and resources!"

"I can't believe how inspired I felt on a Friday afternoon/evening. Shelley's use of humor combined with vulnerability made me feel excited and motivated to make positive changes in my classroom, but also on a larger scale."

Virtual Workshop Series for Teachers

Having established a solid foundation in the core principles of UDL in the first year of the grant, educators in year two were poised to apply their understanding to specific literacy practices.

Teachers participating in the grant teach a range of subjects and grade levels. Fortunately, we know that literacy is not exclusive to the ELA or ELD classrooms. In fact, best practice suggests that literacy practices be infused within all content areas to support students in acquiring discipline-specific knowledge, developing inquiry skills, and communicating content knowledge with others. Using UDL, teachers can universally design learning experiences across the curriculum that minimize barriers to learning while supporting literacy and content development. When it comes to supporting literacy instruction through a UDL lens, there are four areas teachers explored deeply: meaning making, understanding across languages, domain-specific vocabulary and symbols, and fluency and automaticity. In addition to these reading skills, writing and assessment were also explored as key topics.

Teachers learned new strategies and shared ideas with one another. This powerful exercise of approaching literacy through a UDL lens to clarify goals, anticipate barriers, and design options helped guide teachers to recognize the successes of the strategies and approaches they were already employing, as well as consider more flexible means to be able to reach all learners.

I used to think...	Now I know...
That vocabulary was embedded within my math lessons as they were created by the company.	That I have to explicitly teach vocabulary skills, because students' math literacy hinges on understanding concepts.
Students need to learn how to survive in the world.	We need to identify how we support each student's learning and [that] means [supporting] each student to accurately reveal their knowledge and abilities
That reaching all students – making the lessons and curriculum available – was an overwhelming task.	That I have to allow the students opportunities to choose how they will be learning, to share information amongst themselves, and to allow students to lead lessons.
My lesson plan had to be rigorously stuck to and planned more to the minute.	That I have a much better sense of how to predict barriers, plan for them, and recognize greater options than I had in my toolkit before.
That UDL practices were overwhelming, and I didn't know how to start.	Asking students what they thought of a lesson was also helpful.

I used to think...	Now I know...
Agree with the above, but especially in MATH!	I DO have options that I can provide, as learned through discussions with other math teachers, like how to demonstrate understanding of a math unit via teaching a younger class in a video, through a paper test, or through a portfolio.
That some of my assessments included no flexibility. For example, student work could only be scored a certain way.	That students can demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways, not just the ways I would choose. I need to be more open to this.
That creating lessons to meet every child's needs was impossible.	That I can identify barriers and design my lessons to be inclusive of all students. I've seen students who didn't used to engage do so, and do well! There are strategies.

Schedule of Sessions

Dates	Topics	Recording Link
9/28/22	Introduction to Instructional Rounds	Recording 1
10/26/22	Instructional Rounds Debrief	Recording 2
11/16/22	Literacy Across the Disciplines	Recording 3
12/14/22	Literacy Across the Disciplines: Mean Making	Recording 4
1/18/23	Writing	Recording 5
2/15/23	Assessments	Recording 6
4/26/23	Revisiting Literacy Across the Disciplines	Recording 7
5/23/23	Year-End Event: Reflections	Recording 8

Virtual Workshop Series for Administrators & Coaches

Committed to designing and fortifying systems that will support and sustain UDL implementation, year two's virtual workshop series for administrators and coaches focused extensively on designing a vision for UDL implementation followed by practice in continuous improvement cycles.

According to the theory of continuous improvement, educators can make strides toward long-lasting change by starting with small shifts that yield meaningful results. Rather than one-size-fits-all quick fixes that overemphasize fidelity of implementation, continuous improvement cycles are dedicated to learning through ongoing reflection and iteration. The PDSA cycle, or Plan, Do, Study, Act cycle, is a framework to support leaders to study their current systems, identify high-leverage points of change, and plan specific, tangible changes to test and refine through iterative cycles of study.

In order to support leaders in this process, administrators and coaches referred to the UDL School Implementation and Certification Criteria (SICC). The SICC provides helpful indicators and a range of examples of what successful UDL implementation looks like in practice. Just as CAST rejects the myth of the average learner, so too does it reject the notion that there is an average school system. Consequently, UDL is leveraged to design relevant, context-specific changes that best meet the needs of the school system. Employing the SICC, leaders also self-assessed their respective sites according to the four primary domains of UDL implementation: school culture and environment, teaching and learning, leadership and management, and professional learning. Next year, the leaders of

the FNLDC will dive more deeply into the SICC as they continue to iterate upon and customize an implementation plan that will sustain and scale UDL for years to come.

What progress have you made in implementing UDL?

"I'm very optimistic based on the most recent IRs [Instructional Rounds]. Teachers have goals, and new admin coming in will support PD!"

"My team of teachers have grown confidence and competence as teachers implementing UDL strategies and helping inspire/grow the love of reading. Looking at the SICC, they have made great strides in teaching and learning."



Schedule of Sessions

Dates	Topics	Recording Link
9/27/22	Introduction to Instructional Rounds	Recording 9
10/26/22	Instructional Rounds Debrief	Recording 10
11/15/22	Designing a Vision	Recording 11
12/13/22	Self-Assessment	Recording 12
1/17/23	Designing an Change Idea	Recording 13
2/14/23	Continuous Improvement Cycle	Recording 14
4/25/23	Continuous Improvement Cycle Part 2	Recording 15
5/23/23	Preparing for Future Implementation	Recording 16

Instructional Rounds

CAST's UDL instructional rounds is an interactive classroom observation protocol adapted from the instructional rounds created by Harvard professors Richard Elmore, Elizabeth City, Sarah Fiarman, and Lee Teitel. CAST's version acknowledges teachers as the experts on their own learning, supporting them to develop the agency to identify their strengths and set goals for their own improvement. Unlike most classroom observation protocols that focus on feedback to individual teachers, the goal of instructional rounds is to identify trends across classrooms, so the entire team can set collective goals for improvement.

In the fall, FNLDC participants had the opportunity to engage in their first set of instructional rounds, with CAST-facilitated debrief sessions. Teachers and their county coaches observed one another, collecting

data on how practices of expert learning were being supported in the classroom. Participants took detailed notes on what teachers and learners were saying and doing in each classroom. During the debrief with a CAST implementation specialist, these data were categorized according to the UDL guidelines to identify schoolwide trends in practice. Educators discussed successful practices across classrooms, and then identified goals for next steps in building universally designed lessons.

In the spring, participants had another crack at instructional rounds, this time either under the facilitation of their county coach or with the support of a CAST implementation specialist. Many more schools were prepared to engage in the process, and by the end of the school year, all of the participants had the opportunity to engage in at least one set of instructional

rounds, including the corresponding debrief and goal-setting.

In all, participants found instructional rounds to be highly effective. They shared that they appreciated having the opportunity to observe their colleagues in a structured, non-evaluative format, and that they could reflect deeply on their own practices. For many, the UDL guidelines “come alive” when educators are tasked with matching the guidelines to observed classroom practices.

Quotes on the Benefits of Instructional Rounds:

“Instructional rounds were so helpful in making learning goals and lesson design tangible.”

“It has allowed an opportunity to reflect on my teaching independently and with others.”

“I can see the value of providing multiple means of engagement, accessing of information, and communicating knowledge.”



“It is always very beneficial to see how other teachers are handling the art of teaching. I always learn from watching my colleagues.”

“We are in agreement about the importance of student self-reflection. We see that as a goal for next year.”

“Love that they give us time to reflect and talk with the whole group.”

Lesson Design Study

An exciting new protocol was introduced this past year. Inspired by Japanese lesson study, the Lesson Design Studio (LDS) provides an opportunity for a group of educators to come together to collaboratively design a lesson that one of the teachers then teaches. In the process of collectively designing, the participants are tasked with identifying potential barriers to learning and building options that minimize those barriers. When the volunteer teacher then teaches the redesigned lesson with students, the rest of the team observes, journey mapping the learning experience from the perspective of one of the students in the class. This data, along with student interview responses, is then collectively analyzed to consider replicable parts of the design that successfully helped learners reach the goal and new design ideas to use for future lesson planning.

In the spring of 2023, the teaching team at Quincy Junior and Senior High School in the Plumas Unified School District graciously agreed to prototype this new iteration of the Lesson Design Study, and the Quincy team

knocked it out of the park! Their enthusiasm for thinking critically about lesson design, as well as their sharpened UDL lens, made it a fruitful and productive learning experience for everyone involved.

● Impact of the Work

How UDL has impacted Far North participants (in their own words):

Increased Confidence in Application:

Thanks to the ongoing support of the FNLDC, participants expressed an increased sense of confidence when applying their understanding of UDL to their practice.

“I feel more confident in my choices as an educator to do what is best for ALL of my students.”

“FNLDC has given me the language and confidence to embrace giving students choice in how they engage and perform in their academics.”

“I have a much better sense of how to predict barriers, plan for them, and recognize greater options than I had in my toolkit before.”

Proactive Design with UDL

Participants shared that they are more consistently using the UDL design process to set clear goals, anticipate barriers to embrace variability, and design options when they proactively design learning experiences. In doing so, they have received positive feedback from their learners.

“I have shifted my mindset when I am planning lessons and assessments. I now think about eliminating barriers when I plan. I offer choice almost always.”

“Variability in access and demonstration of knowledge is now part of my process of planning.”

“Now I know that I can identify barriers and design my lessons to be inclusive of all students. I’ve seen students who didn’t used to engage do so, and do well!”

“Now I know that I have to allow the students opportunities to choose how they will be learning, to share information amongst themselves, and to allow student-led lessons.”

Embracing Variability

As part of the design process, participants expressed ways in which they have embraced variability.

“I now understand how UDL can facilitate learning for diverse students.”

“We need to identify how we support each student [...] to accurately reveal their knowledge and abilities.”

“I need to get my students more involved in the process of becoming more active in their own learning.”

“[I know now] that students can demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways, not just the ways I would choose. I need to be more open to this.”

Commitment and Dedication:

Participants described a renewed sense of commitment to their application of UDL. Their comments truly reveal a dedication to iterative design and lifelong learning.

“I loved seeing teachers think deeply about their design in new and iterative ways.”

“At one point during the workshop I looked around and saw everyone truly engaged and working together. Loved it!”

“I appreciate the teachers who participate with fidelity.”

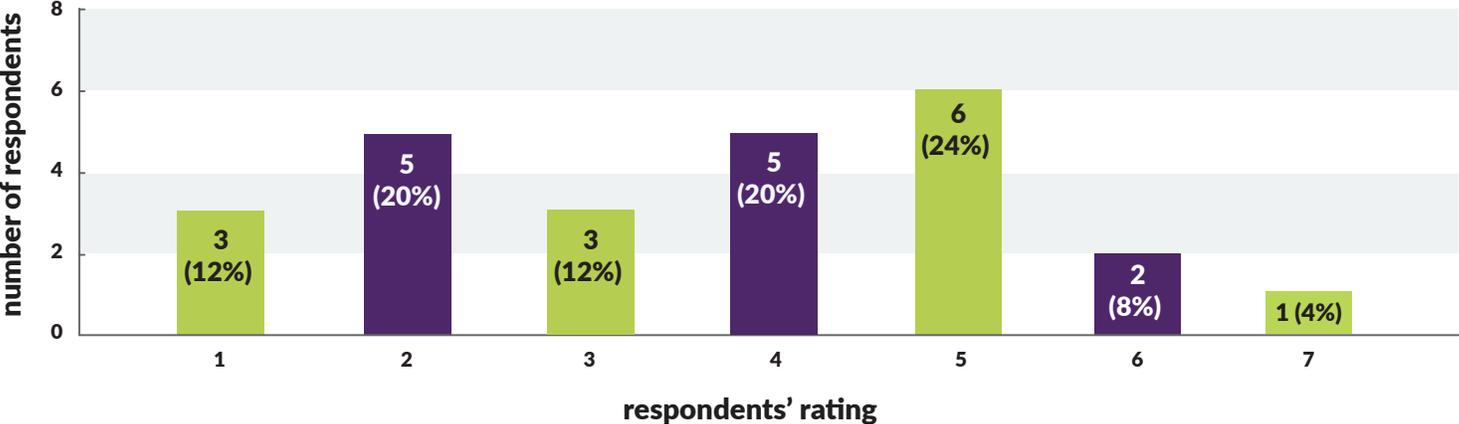
“[I appreciate] teachers who have overcome obstacles and continue to seek best options for our students and fellow staff.”

“I appreciate the dedicated time to focus on literacy and UDL.”

Not surprisingly, an end-of-the-year survey showcased similar trends. Through this survey, participants self-reported significant gains in their knowledge of UDL from before they started participating in the FNLDC grant to now. Not only were participants feeling more confident in their understanding of UDL theory, they also expressed increased confidence in their ability to apply UDL to their daily roles (see graphs below).

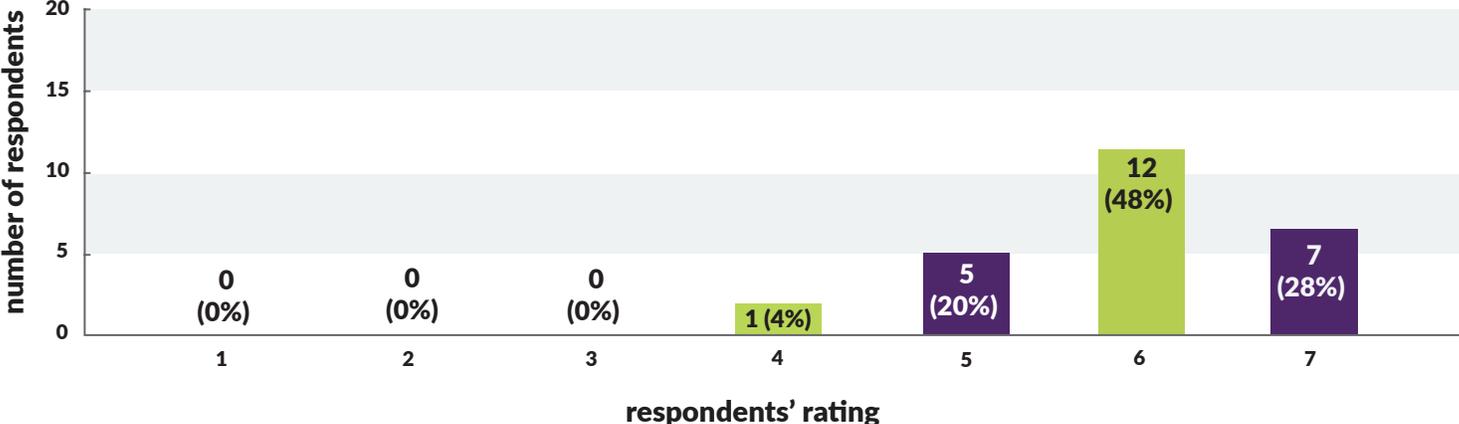
How would you describe your knowledge of UDL BEFORE you joined the Far North Literacy Development Consortium?

25 responses



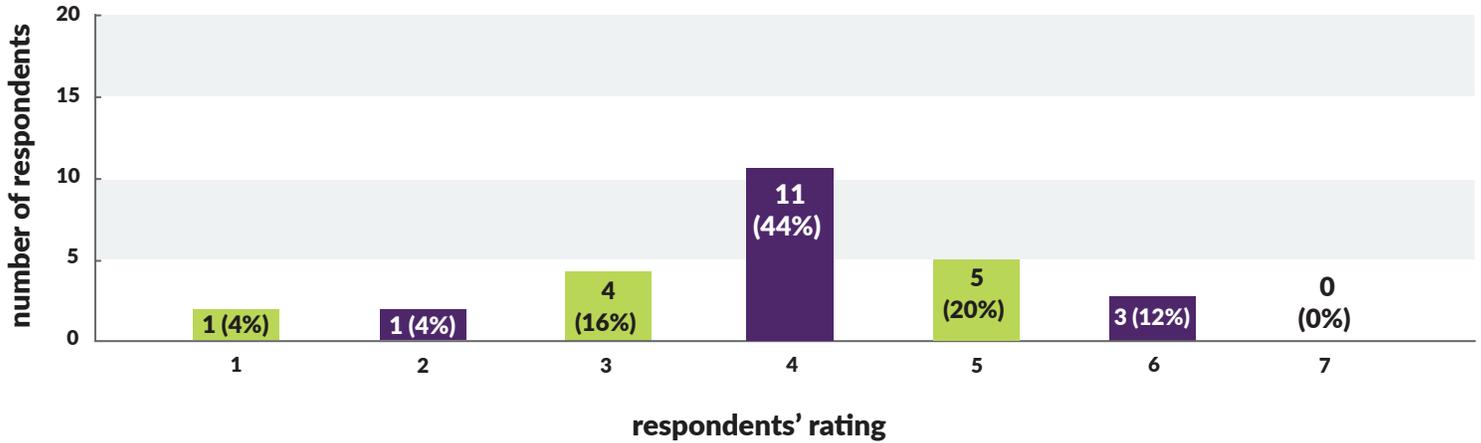
How would you characterize your knowledge of UDL right now?

25 responses



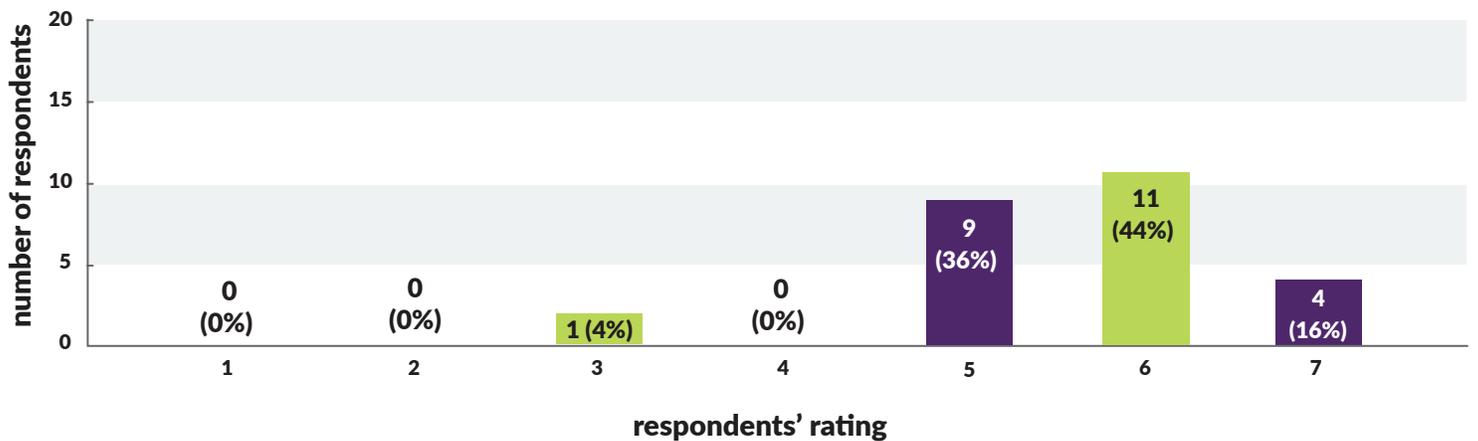
Prior to you UDL training, how often did you integrate UDL?

25 responses



At this point in your UDL training, how often do you integrate UDL?

25 responses



Partnerships & Connections

The FNLDC grant runs parallel to other significant projects dedicated to Universal Design for Learning across the state of California. The [California Coalition for Inclusive Literacy \(CCIL\)](#), specifically, shares similar goals and a capacity-building model to ensure the successful, long-term implementation of UDL through and beyond the life of these grants. CCIL is a collaboration between [CAST](#), the [California Collaborative for Educational Excellence \(CCEE\)](#), and the [California](#)

[Department of Education \(CDE\)](#). The project currently works in partnership with six county offices of education including Fresno, Los Angeles, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, Placer, and Sonoma, as well as two Geo Regions (VALCO and CCFAC). The overlap and partnerships between FNLDC and CCIL mean there are future opportunities for participants on similar UDL journeys to connect with one another, learn from each other's experiences, and build capacity across counties.

● Goals & Next Steps

Year one of the FNLDC was dedicated to setting the foundation by deeply exploring the core principles of UDL. Equipped with this understanding, year two provided the opportunity for participants to extend their knowledge by applying their understanding to their daily practice. The third, and final, year will focus on sustaining systems of implementation, as well as preparing participants to coach others on UDL.

Summer 2023:

- [2023 UDL Summer Symposium](#)
- Intro to UDL “Boot Camp”

Fall 2023-Spring 2024

- 2-day Kickoff with [Jonathan Mooney](#) & [Dr. Catherine Lemmi](#)
Small-group differentiation
- Lesson Design Studio
- Coach-Led Instructional Rounds
November
May
- New Credentials: Credential facilitator program for COE, administrators, and coaches

Ongoing: One session per month

- Coaching Academy Virtual Workshop series for COE, administrators, and coaches
- Monthly interactive workshops for teachers

Fall 2024

- Closing Event

Letter from CAST

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the educators at the Butte County Office of Education as well as to each and every participant in the FNLDC for their ongoing commitment to Universal Design for Learning and inclusive literacy.

Year two proved to be a productive and momentous one. We set rigorous goals and accomplished a lot! From in-person visits at each and every school site, to multiple Instructional Rounds, to launching the Lesson Design Study and introducing CAST's Schoolwide Improvement Criteria, we have made significant gains in building a solid foundation for ongoing UDL implementation in the Far North. I am thrilled to continue co-designing systems of support and ongoing professional development to sustain this significant momentum of professional learning and student success.

What a privilege it has been to experience another year of this unique and inspirational grant. I can not wait to continue the journey!

Dr. Sylvia Rodriguez Douglass
CAST Implementation Specialist



Stay in touch.

We'd love to hear from you!



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