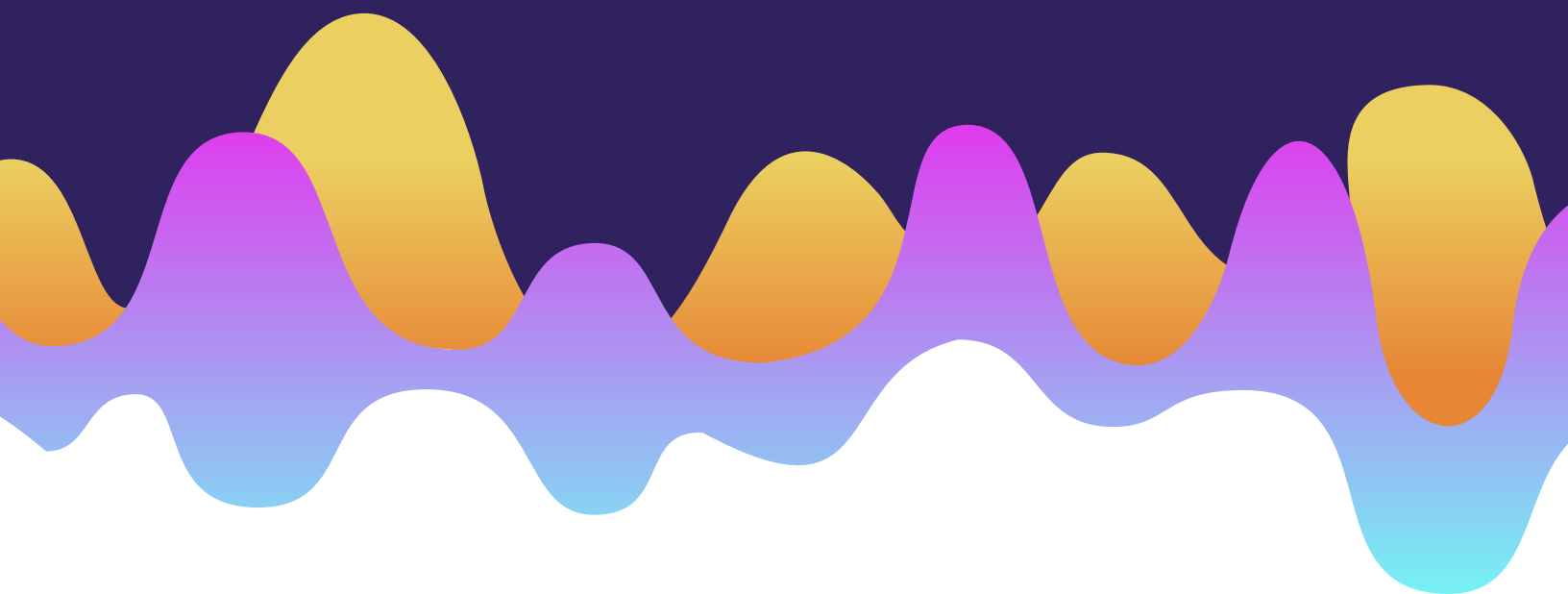


The Far North Literacy Development Consortium

Annual Report 2021-2022



CAST
Until
learning
has no
limits®

Table of Contents

| | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Grant Overview |
| 2 | Far North Project Key Activities |
| 2 | Overview |
| 4 | Participants |
| 4 | Impact of the Work |
| 6 | Partnerships & Connections |
| 7 | Goals & Next Steps |
| 9 | Letter from CAST |

Grant Overview

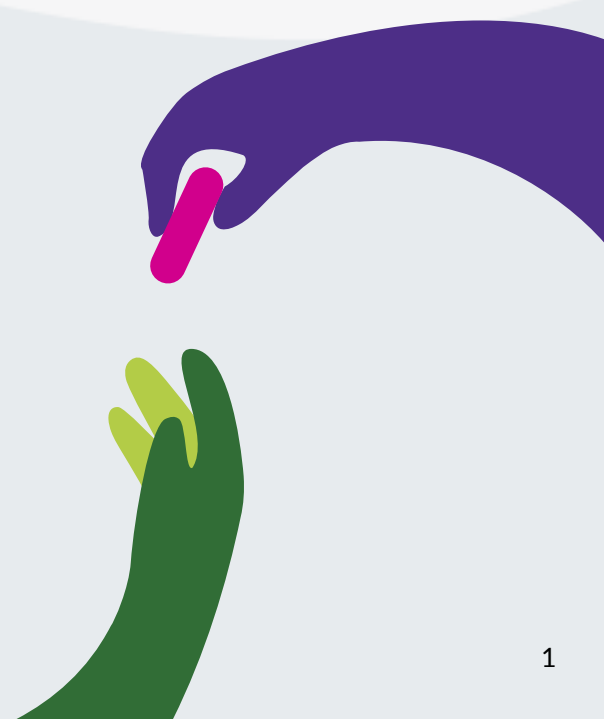
The Far North Literacy Development Consortium (FNLDC) is a ground-breaking, three-year project that focuses on deeply training school-based and County Office of Education staff to lead the implementation of inclusive literacy instruction. The project emphasizes literacy because of its inherent capacity to empower learners across disciplines. The project also leverages the [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) framework](#) as a means of providing 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, and develop expert learning in our students.

A pivotal component of UDL instructional design is recognizing and anticipating potential barriers in the learning environment. For those living in the Far North, the barriers included rural and remote schools with limited access to resources, significant economic hardships for families, as well as the layered traumas of the global pandemic and local wildfires.

In response to the pressing need to address and minimize these barriers, [the FNLDC partnered with CAST](#) to provide innovative and robust professional development, coaching, and communities of practice. These professional learning opportunities model Universally Designed strategies to allow immersive experiences for educators to experience the impact of UDL themselves while building their own knowledge and practice. After each

and every session, participants walk away feeling UDL's powerful potential for increasing engagement and positive learning outcomes. These experiences, in turn, support participants to design literacy instruction that centers the experience of their most vulnerable learners.

Overall, the FNLDC educators are not only expanding their own knowledge of UDL, they are also poised to lead UDL implementation across their counties. These committed educators are designing lessons, choosing materials, and improving instructional practice in a way that intentionally mitigates or removes barriers to meet the needs of all learners. In the coming year, they 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.



● Far North Project Key Activities

Overview

Through a two-day intensive introduction to UDL in the fall of 2021, educators participating in the FNLDC were introduced to the UDL foundational concepts and the UDL Guidelines. Educators received support to deepen and apply their understanding through a series of online modules called Beyond the Basics (BTB). These asynchronous learning modules invited participants to explore core content at a pace that worked for them.

In addition, the participants received support from monthly, synchronous sessions to debrief the course content (exploring the “what” of UDL) as well as monthly interactive workshops (dedicated to the “how” of applying UDL to practice). Topics ranged from how to support students to become experts at how they, themselves, learn, to Learning Environment Inventories, a protocol used to examine the learning environment for UDL-aligned strategies.

In the early spring, CAST was fortunate to visit each participating school site in-person. The sense of community was palpable as administrators greeted teachers and students by name, and classrooms were designed to make students feel seen and supported.



Digital Learning Series & Workshops

What? DLS

December: Launch

January: Engagement

February: Representation

March: Action & Expression

April: Expert Learning

May: Wrap Up

How? Workshops

Daily Reflective Practice

Journey Mapping

Learning Environment Inventory

Looking at Student Work

UDL FAQ

UDL Personal Planning

June, one of the school sites also bravely dipped its toes into the Instructional Rounds process, with teachers visiting each other's classes to gather data on classroom practices. In the fall, these teachers will debrief their observations to highlight the aspects of UDL that teachers are already finding success with and to identify goals for future practice. CAST finds over and over again that the Instructional Rounds process has a powerful impact on participants' ability to look for UDL in action and see trends across their school site. Even more exciting is that all participating schools will go through the complete Instructional Rounds process twice in year two.

As a way to celebrate the first year of the grant, the FNLDC was honored to welcome [Allison Posey](#) as a guest speaker for our closing event. Allison is a curriculum and design specialist at CAST. Before her work at CAST, she was a life science teacher in middle school, high school, and community college settings, teaching genetics, anatomy, physiology, biology, neuroscience, and psychology. She received a degree in Mind, Brain, and Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is the author of [Engage the Brain: How to Design for Learning That Taps into the Power of Emotion](#) and co-author of [Unlearning: Change Your Beliefs and Your Classroom with UDL](#). Allison spoke of her experiences in the classroom and wove her extensive knowledge of the learning sciences into the discussion. Her deep expertise in UDL and her knowledge of implementation science resonated with participants. After the event, one administrator shared how inspired they felt by Allison and how her presentation fueled their excitement for year two!

In addition, the end-of-year celebration also included an official launch of the [FNLDC website](#). Organized by principle, the website houses the shared resources the grant participants employed over the course of the year. These include protocols like the learning environment inventory – a tool to examine the learning environment for design options that help reduce or minimize barriers to learning. In addition, participants can access the Digital Learning Series modules as well as the recorded discussions at each debrief and workshop. In year two, the website will continue to serve as a repository of resources and content for grant participants to access beyond the life of the grant.

Looking ahead to year two of the FNLDC, the participants are primed to hit the ground running. Year two will be a year to extend and apply our understanding of UDL—seeing it in action and designing and reflecting on the design process.

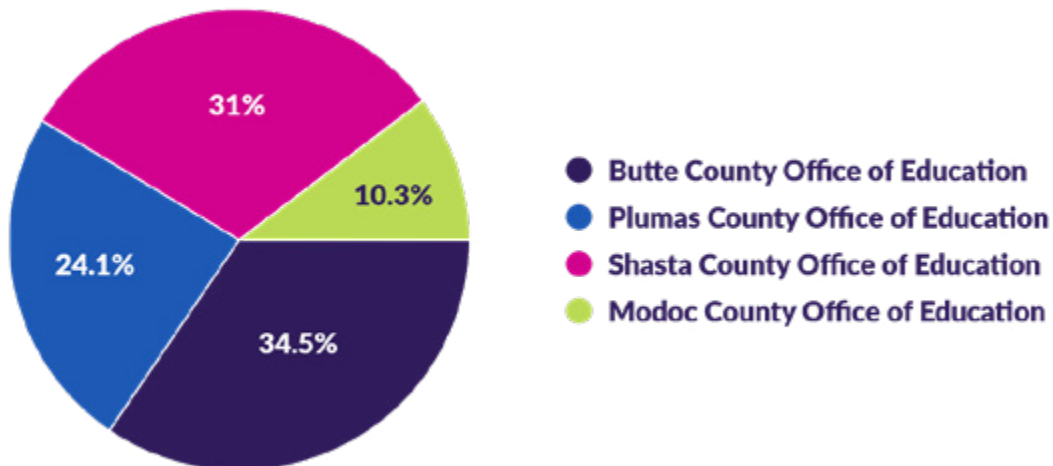


Participants

The participants in the FNLDC represent four counties from Far Northern California: Butte, Plumas, Shasta, and Modoc. The participants consist of county office administrators, school principals, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers in grades 4-12.

Which county office are you affiliated with?

29 responses



Impact of the Work: How UDL has impacted Far North participants

(in their own words):

"I have become a more creative and thoughtful educator."

"I have become very aware of UDL practices and their importance in the classroom. This awareness presents me with new approaches in the support I provide to teachers."

"Since attending the workshops and the meetings, I find myself considering the UDL Guidelines with every new lesson I create."

"I am more aware of learner variability and work to provide options that reduce barriers."

“It has made me more aware of my students and their individuality, needs, and strengths.”

“Barriers are real for students, and we can’t teach in denial. So always think about lesson design.”

“I have met wonderful, passionate educators who are committed to improving our systems for our children and I’m so glad we have this opportunity to join forces!”

“I am inspired by the learning and growth of each team member and of the team as a whole. “

“I am looking forward to next year. My team is already working on new ideas for our entire school.”

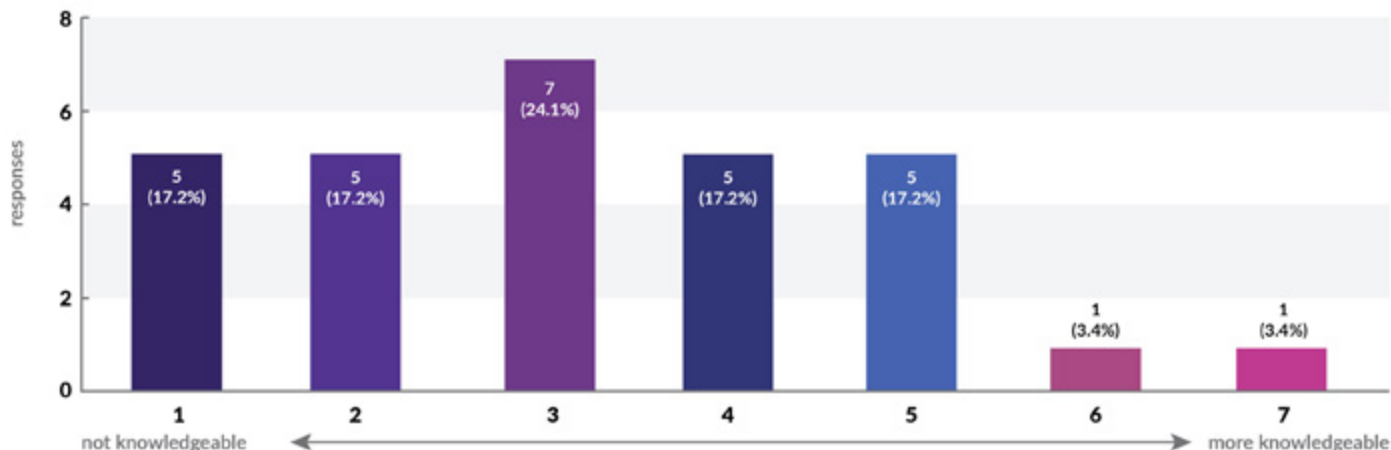
“I’ve been more intentional about practicing the concepts in my work with teachers and colleagues.”

I think this past year may have convinced me that an emphasis on accessibility could be a more effective and perhaps compassionate path to higher student performance.”

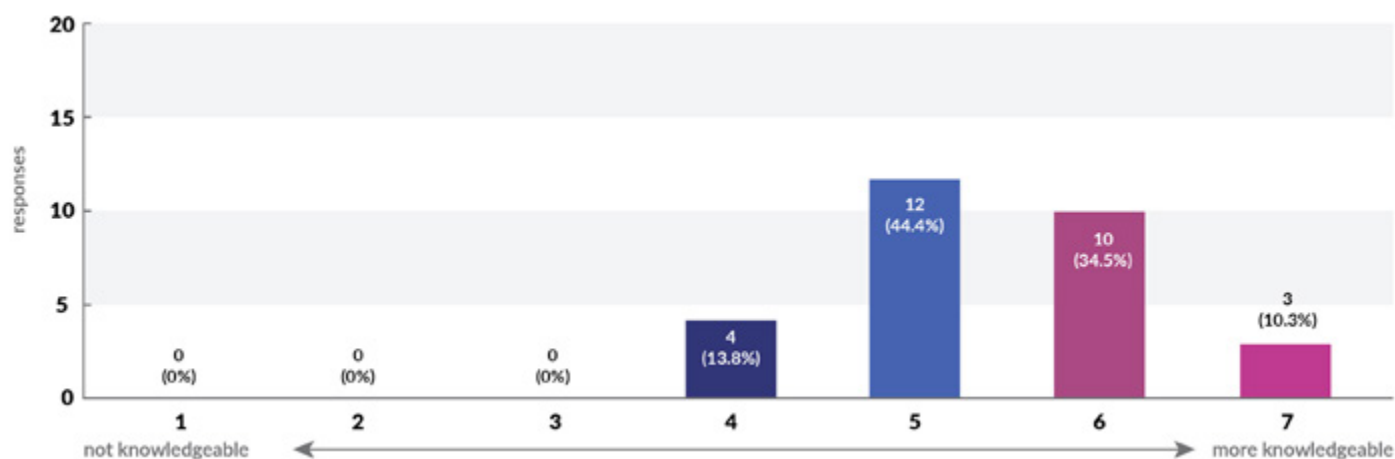
“As a result of our time together, I have come to appreciate the tremendous work our County Offices of Education engage in and have appreciated the collaboration and growing relationships.”

“UDL is less likely to take root when teachers are overwhelmed and have little to no time to collaborate about design.”

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



How would you characterize your knowledge of UDL right now?



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 five county offices of education which include: Fresno,

Los Angeles, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, and Placer. The overlap and partnerships between FNLDC and CCIL mean there are future opportunities for participants on similar UDL journeys to connect with one another and learn from each other's experiences. A community of practice is planned for the 2022-2023 school year to bring educational leaders together to support their implementation work. FNLDC and CCIL projects will have an opportunity to build connections and come together in their efforts to support and sustain UDL implementation across the state.

● Goals & Next Steps

The first year of the FNLDC was dedicated to learning the central tenets of UDL—both its conceptual foundation and its application to the learning environment. The second year of the grant will be an opportunity to build on this knowledge as participants step into the exciting role of training others in UDL. The teachers, coaches, and administrators will experience the thrill of spreading knowledge and awareness of UDL to their colleagues within and across school sites.

Year two will undoubtedly start with a bang as the kick-off event welcomes guest speaker [Shelley Moore](#). Shelley

Moore is a highly sought-after teacher, researcher, speaker, and storyteller and has worked with school districts and community organizations around the world, in supporting and promoting equity for all learners. Shelley is also a huge proponent of UDL, and her work is often incorporated into CAST's training materials. Shelley will address how UDL can be leveraged to design curriculum to meet students where they are and not just where they "should" be. This theme underscores CAST's belief that a UDL-designed curriculum is flexible and responsive; at CAST, we ask if the lesson is ready for the learner, not if the learner is ready for the lesson.



Focusing on the student perspective was a huge focus for this year's symposium. Far North participants attended the [8th Annual CAST UDL Symposium](#) with exposure to three full days of keynote addresses and breakout sessions on the importance of learner voice in lesson design. Sessions included presentations by students themselves and well-known researchers and practitioners in the field.

Beginning in the fall, all of the Far North participants will engage in UDL lesson design through in-person application workshops and consultancy protocols. These hands-on, interactive meetings are designed to support participants as they practice designing with UDL. These convenings—which will allow participants to collaboratively brainstorm, reflect, and offer feedback—are so essential for any

practitioner, but especially so in the Far North. Given the remote nature of many of the rural communities, the participants will benefit from networking and sharing their experiences with others on a similar trajectory.

Participants will also engage in deeply reflective practices to iterate upon their design. The team will utilize protocols like journey mapping, in which a student's experience is mapped over the course of a lesson or learning experience, and Instructional Rounds where colleagues are invited to observe each others' classrooms for short increments and superimpose their observations on the UDL guidelines. Time and time again, these protocols have proven to be a hit with practitioners as they bring to life the UDL guidelines and highlight the ways in which educators are successfully designing with UDL as well as areas to focus their attention on for future design.

Finally, county office administrators, school principals, and literacy coaches will engage in a coaching academy workshop series to strengthen their facilitation skills. Integral to the long-term success of the grant is that participants are poised to train others in UDL in the coming years. Building this capacity will ensure UDL continues to benefit learners across the Far North well into the future.

A pivotal component of UDL instructional design is recognizing and anticipating potential barriers in the learning environment. For those living in the Far North, the barriers have included rural

and remote schools with limited access to resources, significant economic hardships for families, as well as the layered traumas of the pandemic and wildfires.

Through this timely and inspiring project, CAST and the FNLDC are positioned to address these barriers and provide a framework for making learning accessible again. UDL provides educators with the essential tools to take these first steps and rebuild learning spaces that are truly inclusive for all.



Letter from CAST

Over the course of the last two years, we witnessed dramatic changes to our educational system. The global pandemic unequivocally altered the cadence of our students' educational trajectories, disrupting the lives of every single student, family member, and educator. Fortunately, many educators remained steadfast in their commitment to their learners, and this year, together, we are beginning to shape a more optimistic future.

Four counties in Northern California—Butte, Plumas, Shasta, and Modoc—have been on the cutting edge of this change. Not only have they had to overcome great hurdles in the face of the pandemic, they also had to deal with an unprecedented tragedy specific to the area. The series of wildfires that ravaged great swaths of Northern California since 2018 have left countless communities devastated and altered the landscape of these counties, physically, psychologically, and emotionally.

Despite these challenges, California's Far North has persevered. These close-knit, rural communities have come together to uplift one another as they look ahead. Their commitment to rewriting the narrative and increasing educator capacity to best support students never wavered. Specifically, educators in the Far North recognized the significant role that literacy across the content areas would have in addressing the interrupted learning of the last two and a half years.

As these counties join together, I am thrilled that they welcomed CAST to collaborate with them on this endeavor. Given the unique population of these counties, CAST has been able to share the UDL core principles with the goal of providing targeted, relevant literacy-focused learning experiences that are accessible to all.

As a UDL implementation specialist, I feel privileged to be an honorary member of the Far North. I am grateful to be learning with and from such committed and passionate educators, and I cannot wait to continue our work together.

Dr. Sylvia Rodriguez Douglass
CAST Implementation Specialist



Stay in touch.
We'd love to hear from you!



 **Find us Online:**

More about CAST's work at cast.org

Professional Learning Opportunities: castpl.org

Books & Media: castpublishing.org

 **Contact us at cast@cast.org**

