Critical Elements of UDL in Instruction

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) represents a paradigm shift in education that has the potential to improve outcomes for a broad range of learners. The UDL-IRN working with the Michigan Integrated Technology Supports (MITS) and in collaboration with CAST has identified four critical elements intended to serve as a foundation for UDL implementation and research. Educators aligning instruction to UDL must minimally include each of the four critical elements shown below.

Element 1: <u>Clear Goals</u>
- Goals and desired outcomes of the lesson/unit are aligned to the established content standards.
- Goals are clearly defined and separate from means. They allow multiple paths/ options for achievement.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of the goal(s) of the lesson and specific learner outcomes**.**
- Goals address the needs of every learner, are communicated in ways that are understandable to each learner, and can be expressed by them.

Element 2: <u>Intentional Planning for Learner Variability</u>
- Intentional proactive planning that recognizes every learner is unique and that meeting the needs of learners in the margins- from challenged to most advanced- will likely benefit everyone.
  - Addressing learner strengths and weaknesses, considering variables such as perceptual ability, language ability, background knowledge, cognitive strategies, and motivation.
  - Anticipates the need for options, methods, materials, and other resources- including personnel- to provide adequate support and scaffolding.
  - Maintains the rigor of the lesson- for all learners- by planing efforts (1) that embed necessary supports and (2) reduce unnecessary barriers.

Element 3: <u>Flexible Methods and Materials</u>
- Teachers use a variety of media and methods to present information and content
- A variety of methods are used to engage learners (e.g., provide choice, address student interest) and promote their ability to monitor their own learning (e.g., goal setting, self-assessment, and reflection).
- Learners use a variety of media and methods to demonstrate their knowledge.

Element 4: <u>Timely Progress Monitoring</u>
- Formative assessments are frequent and timely enough to plan/redirect instruction and support intended outcomes.
- A variety of formative and summative assessments (e.g., projects, oral tests, written tests) are used by the learner to demonstrate knowledge and skill.
- Frequent opportunities exist for teacher reflection and new understandings.