Universal Design for Learning; Transforming High School Learning Environments
A Phenomenological Analysis of Teacher and Administrator Experiences

Introduction
The Universal Design for Learning; Transforming High School Learning Environments (UDL-THSLE) Project is a multi-year project designed to support teachers and administrators as they build capacity in UDL implementation at César E. Chávez High School (Chávez). Chávez is located in the southeast corner of the Houston Independent School District (HISD) in the state of Texas. Chávez is home to over 3,200 students. See Table 1 for additional information about Chávez demographics.

62% Hispanic, 13% African American, 3.6% Asian, 8.3% White and 1.2% other
Eighty two percent of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch.
2014 graduation rates for four-year grads were 82.9% and for five year grads, it was 88.2%; English Language Learner population is 11.6%
Special Education rate is 8.3%.

Chávez began its journey with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) during the summer of 2014 when Region 4 ESC requested proposals from high schools willing to engage in a multi-year UDL implementation project. Region 4 ESC is one of 20 regional education service centers established by the Texas Legislature in 1967 to assist school districts and charter schools in improving efficiencies and student performance. Regional education service centers are nonregulatory, intermediate education units. School districts have the opportunity to voluntarily be served by and participate with a regional education service center through the provision of services such as professional development and technical assistance. Region 4 partnered with All In, a group of Maryland based educational consultants, to design and implement a multi-year UDL implementation project for high schools. Maryland is the first state in the nation to have legislation about UDL, and Region 4 was eager to partner with a group with extensive experience in implementation.

UDL-THSLE Design
The UDL-THSLE project had multiple professional learning opportunities designed to guide Chávez staff from UDL exploration to UDL integration. CAST (2012) has described five phases of UDL implementation: 1) exploration, 2) preparation, 3) integration, 4) scaling, and 5) optimizing. This model is based upon the work of Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman and Wallace (2005) and was designed to be a flexible, iterative process. In addition to learning from the work of CAST, the collaborative team from Region 4 ESC and All In Education relied on their own experiences with UDL implementation as well as the lessons learned by the Baltimore County Public School System and the Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation. Professional learning opportunities were designed with the knowledge that Chávez faculty would be at different places in the implementation process throughout the project. Much of the initial work took place in two professional learning communities (PLCS). There were requirements for the teacher professional learning community (TPLC), the administrator/leadership professional learning community (LPLC), and for the members of entire professional staff. See Table 2 for summary of professional learning activities conducted in Year 1 and Year 2. Insert Table 2. Here. At the end of the second year, Region 4 requested a comprehensive review of the UDL-
THSLE project in order to examine the experiences of teachers and administrators implementing UDL at Chavez. The purpose of this white paper is to summarize the results of this qualitative program review and make recommendations that will guide the UDL-THSLE project into its third year.

Literature Review

UDL is an instructional framework that supports the development of accessible learning for all students within a flexible educational setting (Jimenez, et al., 2007). The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) and the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008), describe UDL as a “scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice” (SEC. 103). Supported by literature from several disciplines, including educational and neuropsychology, the UDL framework draws upon neuroimaging studies to demonstrate that human brains are highly diverse (Meyer, et al., 2014).

The framework emphasizes providing scaffolding, removing barriers, and enhancing options for learning for all students. The framework includes three principles for addressing variability, “providing multiple means of engagement”, “providing multiple means of action and expression”, and “providing multiple means of representation” (Appendix 1; CAST, 2011). This flexibility allows teachers to design instruction that can meet the needs of a wider range of students than previously considered in traditional instructional design.

For many educators, UDL requires a shift in thinking. UDL strongly emphasizes the contextual nature of ability and asks educators to consider the learning environment and curriculum as barriers to learning, rather than focusing on perceived student deficits (Meyer, et al., 2014). In order to facilitate this change in perspective, educators must first engage in a conceptual change process in order to (1) fully engage in learning the elements of the UDL framework, and (2) be willing to implement a new instructional design and delivery methodology (Berquist & Sadera, 2013).

Research Questions

This research focused on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) implementation by building an understanding of the lived experience of teachers and administrators participating in the Universal Design for Learning: Transforming High School Learning Environments (UDL-THSLE) project. Understanding the experiences of teachers and leaders in this project has implications for future UDL implementation projects because it provides a lens through which to reflect upon current practices and a foundation for future professional learning opportunities.

One overarching research question guided this study:

● What is the experience of teachers and administrators implementing Universal Design for Learning implementation?

Four focused sub-questions facilitated deeper inquiry:

● What are the current beliefs, knowledge and practices of teachers participating in a UDL PLC?

● What are the current beliefs, knowledge and practices of administrators participating in a UDL PLC?

● How do administrators/teachers view their role and responsibilities in leading change?

● How do administrators/teachers respond to successes and challenge in regard to UDL implementation?
Research Design

This study was a qualitative inquiry grounded in phenomenological methodology. As defined by Moustakas (1994) phenomenology is a method that enables understanding and description of the commonalities in human experience—the essence of a phenomenon. Phenomenological research methods are appropriate for studying the lives of ordinary people and are focused on understanding social and psychological phenomenon from the perspective of those most involved (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Participants were ten teachers who participated in the PLC and 8 teachers who did not; plus 6 administrators who participated in the PLC, and 5 administrators who did not. Analysis was conducted using a modified vanKaam method, as described by Moustakas (1994). This method, based on three prescribed stages of analysis, facilitates synthesis from the individual experience to the collective experience.

This methodology enabled the researchers to understand and describe the common experiences for the teachers and the administrators in the UDL-THSLE project. Themes are presented that reflect the lessons learned from both the teacher and the administrator experience. The discussion will examine the similarities and differences between those in the PLC and those who did participate, suggesting next steps and recommendations based upon that analysis.

Lessons Learned from Teachers

1. Teachers were motivated to participate in the PLC by a desire to serve their students better.

   Teachers had been formally and informally exposed to UDL, and when offered the opportunity to participate in a PLC on the topic, some teachers volunteered to do so. Those that volunteered spoke of their excitement to participate and their personal motivations to do so. Teachers expressed desires to “motivate my students more,” “to look at […] their individual needs,” and “to connect the student[s] with the appropriate curricular materials and appropriate instructional methodology and strategies they need.” One teacher explained, “I wanted to […] look at longevity in terms of what I could contribute to the students on this campus […] I wanted to better serve them.” Teachers who volunteered recognized the individual needs of their students and were motivated by a desire to help them achieve. These findings suggest that teachers who will volunteer for such an experience are adept at self-reflection and assessment of their instructional practices, and have an intrinsic motivation for improving their practices.

2. Teachers not in the PLC learned about UDL by observing successful colleagues.

   Teachers who did not volunteer to join the PLC learned about UDL from administrators and other teachers in the building. They were provided with books and attended assemblies, but gained interest through and learned the most from other teachers implementing UDL practices. As one teacher explained, “we have a cohort that was doing training that disseminated a little bit.” Another teacher described reflected on using an assignment with her class that had been created by a teacher in the PLC, and described it as “one of [her] most successful things […] in regards to UDL.” These same teachers described how learning from colleagues had benefitted
them in learning about other instructional practices and tools. One teacher discussed using Kahn Academy after learning about it and seeing it used by another teacher, expressing, “We started talking about things that worked and things that didn’t work, and that’s when I started using it. My life’s totally different now, and it’s because of her.” These findings suggest that exposure to teachers who are working on implementation of UDL is a more effective change practice than formal learning through books and presentations alone.

3. Teachers in the PLC saw UDL as the center of all other initiatives, whereas teachers not in the PLC only saw it as related.

Teachers differed in their beliefs of UDL’s role in overall school reform. Teachers who were not in the PLC saw UDL as related to other initiatives, but not as the core of all initiatives. One teacher explained, “I think big picture we’re just trying to help our students the best way we can so [UDL] would fit into having our students be our priority.” Another teacher described the relationship between UDL and other initiatives: “I think administration made a real effort to take all the different initiatives [...] and tried to consolidate it and put it under an umbrella of 6 different things [...] and I think UDL fits under like three or four of those.” There is a belief shared among some teachers, mostly non-PLC teachers, that UDL is “one more thing.” In contrast, teachers who were in the PLC saw UDL as the center of all other initiatives, and a framework for approaching all work within the building. It is not “one more thing,” but as one teacher explained, “UDL describes how you think about something.” In another teacher’s words, “UDL kind of weaves [other initiatives] all together.” PLC teachers also referenced the Chavez Circle, and described its importance in driving school change with regard to UDL. Teachers explained, “I like how they [...] framed it this year as a Chavez Circle because all those pieces align with the framework of UDL,” and “if you’re doing UDL, you’re probably doing all the things you need to do for the other initiatives.” This difference in belief suggests the impact that participation in the UDL PLC had on teachers’ perceptions and understandings of UDL’s significance.

4. Teachers in the PLC have strong, precise definitions of UDL, whereas teachers not in the PLC exhibit more uncertainty.

Teachers who participated in the PLC are able to clearly articulate a definition of UDL that is consistent with current research in the field. As one teacher stated, “it’s really about removing the barriers from the beginning so that students are able to be engaged and learning and […] challenged.” Another teacher explained, “In the classroom [students, regardless of level] won’t see the difference and they will all feel comfortable and they will feel like they can participate at their own level without pressure.” Teachers in the PLC also see the impact of UDL on the roles of teachers and students in the classroom. Their definition of UDL includes the teacher as facilitator, and the students as leaders in their own learning, discussions, and activities. One teacher identified key considerations for recognizing UDL in the classroom: “Is this class run by the teacher or is it run by the students? Are materials and supplies accessible to students or are they dependent on their teacher?” These teachers understand that student-to-student relationships will be evident in classrooms implementing UDL, providing such examples as, “students are able to help each other find out what those things are that are keeping them from being successful.” They also described classrooms characterized by choice, variety, and
structure, with students working in pairs and working on different assignments. This is supported by self-assessments that facilitates students tracking their own outcomes.

Teachers who did not participate in the PLC use more general language in describing UDL. For example, teachers equate UDL with differentiation, and said that UDL is “for the most part, just good teaching practices,” and “about giving the kids the material in different ways, letting them demonstrate understanding in different ways.” Their description of classrooms where UDL is evident focus on teacher and student engagement, student choice, and small group or stations-based instruction. This contrast illustrates that while teachers not in the PLC have some basic knowledge regarding what UDL is and is not, they lack the depth of understanding that participants in the PLC have. These findings suggest that participation in the PLC has had a direct impact on participants’ knowledge and understanding of the complexity of the UDL principles.

5. Non-PLC teachers believe that UDL can address the needs of specific subgroups.

While teachers who did not participate in the PLC do not have strong, precise definitions of UDL, they do recognize the potential for UDL to address the needs of specific subgroups. Teachers shared that lessons designed with UDL principles engaged reluctant learners. One teacher described how in one lesson, a student who had not participated in any work all year became engaged. She explained, “If every single lesson could have been designed with choice and group work, I would have had him all year long.” Another teacher shared that he saw successes with students who had limited foundational skills: “I got a lot more work out of my kids when they knew it was okay if they weren’t there yet and other people were.” These findings suggest that these teachers are open to the benefits of UDL, and with support, could reach greater levels of understanding.

6. Teachers in the PLC implement specific UDL strategies and are cognizant of their impact.

Teachers in the PLC are transferring their definition of UDL to practice. Teachers are able to identify specific strategies they have implemented and made direct connections to supporting cognitive functioning. Further, they describe specific impacts these strategies are having on students. For example, teachers described providing multiple means of expression, which “was really engaging for students who had been such a struggle.” Teachers also provided color coded handouts, which “really help[ed] with executive functioning and organizing.” Another teacher described using word walls, and keeping them in the classroom even after the unit had ended. She explained that students know “they can go back and look at that if they don’t remember.” Self-assessment was also critical: using technology students “can check their answer and no one knows what answer they gave except for themselves.” Teachers attribute improved quality of work, attendance, and grades to these strategies. Teachers also notice affective changes in students. As one teacher described, “[Students] see you differently because when they see you’re really making the effort they change their attitude.” Another teacher described seeing students’ confidence build: “They’re more likely to request things in a particular manner that’s going to be more in line [with their needs]. It is evident that the support and deep learning that come with participation in a PLC have enabled teachers to not only use new strategies, but also recognize their specific impacts on students.
7. Both PLC and non-PLC teachers recognize structural barriers to scaling, but PLC teachers additionally recognize philosophical barriers.

All teachers in the study recognized the challenges that would be faced in expanding the work of UDL beyond the PLCs. Teachers who were not in the PLC expressed concerns about student behavior. For example, one teacher expressed, “There’s kids that […] no matter how awesome you are, there’s just a behavior issue […] I still don’t know how to deal with it.” Structural barriers were indicated by both groups, including large class sizes, student behavior issues, and time. The most significant of these was time, including time for planning, professional learning, and peer feedback. One teacher who did not participate in the PLC indicated that “We have a lot of time, but it’s like 10 minutes here and 15 minutes here […] if it was organized properly it might help a little bit.” PLC teachers echoed these sentiments: “When you’re trying to plan a lesson to reach all of these learners, and have multiple means of expression and representation, and different ways of getting them engaged, you have to have time. And we don’t have time.” PLC teachers connected this lack of planning time with the desire for opportunities to co-plan with colleagues who have the same understanding, thereby “lighten[ing] the load.” PLC teachers identified the additional challenge of being a “floater.” Moving between classrooms posed issues in access to resources, which will be a problem when scaling.

PLC teachers recognized additional philosophical barriers to implementation. They recognized that changes in the roles of teachers and students may present a challenge. One teacher explained, “It was difficult at the beginning for me to tell [students] it’s [their] choice […] In the beginning it was difficult for them also. They were used to the teachers telling them.” Another PLC teacher recommended that resources be provided for “training” students in this shift in responsibility, as “some kids don’t always know how to say [this works for me].” PLC teachers also reflected on the change in classroom environment, and how that may pose a barrier to implementation. Teachers explained that some lessons are “utter chaos:” “The first time you introduce the idea and give [students] the freedom to do something, they kind of freak out a little bit and you kind of freak out when you see what they’re doing.” They also emphasized that “noise is not bad,” but “it’s hard to persuade people that sometimes where there’s a lot of noise that it’s okay.” One teacher recommended, “You’ve got to be willing to know that it’s not a complete failure if it didn’t go as planned.” Overall, with regard to scaling, PLC teachers were concerned about initiative overload. As one teacher explained, “Having many different initiatives at the school that aren’t necessarily conflicting with the UDL framework, but that do require my attention to be taken away from that.” These additional responses from the PLC teachers indicate that participation in the PLC yields a more complex understanding of the challenges of implementation.

8. Both PLC and non-PLC teachers share similar needs, but differ in their perception of next steps.

All teachers in the study expressed similar needs for supplies and resources, human capital and support, and instructional models. Needs for supplies and resources for teachers both in the PLC and those who were not included money to purchase supplies for students and both
print and digital resources to support learning about UDL. Both groups also referenced having additional support personnel in the classroom. As one PLC teacher said, “The biggest resource is people.” Teachers not in the PLC requested co-teachers and teacher assistants, while teachers in the PLC requested more technical support, especially in large classes. Relatedly, both groups sought more personalized support for implementation, and connected that support with professional development. There is a strong desire for more lesson ideas and exemplars, and to have someone model their thought process. As one teacher not in the PLC explained, “I know what I’m doing but you want me to change how it works. I need to be able to talk through that process.” PLC teachers additionally seek opportunities to collaborate and get feedback from colleagues. One teacher requested, “I would love to [observe teachers] and how they’re implementing it in other schools because that’s how I learn the best.” They found value in the PLC, and in particular, the Saturday meetings. As one teacher reflected, “That talk, that constant sort of impetus to keep your fuel cells charged […] was very important to me.”

With regard to next steps, teachers not in the PLC identified few concrete actions outside of meeting the identified needs. The PLC teachers, however, recognized a need for administrative support. One teacher stated, “It hasn’t been forced as part of our daily agenda. It’s not an expectation.” Echoing that sentiment, another teacher was concerned that “there’s little to no follow-through, support, reminders, materials… there’s no scaffolding of it.” There is a desire to make UDL mandatory, and a rationale for doing so. As one teacher explained, “If UDL became mandatory in the school or even in the district, it would be beneficial for all the students. We might even have less drop-outs than we have had before because the kids could really engage in what we’re doing in the classroom.” This emphasis on administrative support for the initiative illustrates the impact of PLC participation on teachers’ ability to recognize UDL’s impact and their desire to see implementation expand.

Lessons Learned from Administrators

1. Administrator PLC members have a nuanced understanding of UDL and value professional learning designed in alignment with the framework.

   School-based administrators that participated in the UDL professional learning community were able to provide nuanced descriptions of the UDL framework and implementation. PLC members were able to see connections between student choice, accessibility, engagement, and the learning environment. Administrative PLC members understood UDL to be a lens through which to see instructional and environmental planning rather than a “thing to do” and discussed UDL as a driving educational philosophy or “mindset”. One administrator discussed UDL as a way to for students to “become lifetime learners and create themselves as a learner.”

   Administrator PLC members discussed UDL implementation in terms of guiding questions such as, “How are you engaging everyone?” In seeking to model UDL for their faculty, the Administrator PLC changed Professional Development activities. As one PLC member describes, “we got rid of faculty meetings.” “They design their own professional development for the day.” “There’s a schedule for the day and there’s three or four options for every section so there’s three sections we can do in an afternoon PD.”
2. All school-based administrators recognize the value and added benefit of allowing teacher PLC members to choose to participate.

Both groups of administrators saw a change in the teaching methods utilized by Teacher UDL PLC members. Both groups noted an increase in engagement among students and an added enthusiasm among teacher participants. Regardless of the degree to which administrators were involved in the UDL implementation project, school leaders endorsed the benefit of teachers participating in the UDL PLC. For example, a non-PLC member stated that, “I worked directly with two teachers that were involved and the feedback that I got from them was that it was very valuable. One in particular, it was a veteran teacher, he changed his whole style of teaching.” Both PLC and non-PLC Administrators seemed to agree that, as one PLC member described, “It’s a recipe for good teaching.”

3. Non-PLC Administrators realize that UDL is related to other school-based initiatives, but view initiatives as separate, while PLC member Administrators see UDL as the driving force of all other school initiatives.

Non-PLC Administrators were able to see basic connections between UDL and other school initiatives, but unlike their PLC-member peers, did not discuss UDL as the overarching initiative. Non-PLC members describe UDL as an additional school initiative that is related to all of the others. This understanding of connections appears to be driven by messaging from the Principal rather than personal understanding of UDL. As one non-PLC member noted, “The Principal set his framework and he created the circle for Chavez so all of our initiatives were placed in the circle and fit into one of the categories.” PLC members described UDL as “umbrella” or made statements such as “UDL is the center” under which other school efforts are aligned. The PLC regarded other initiatives as supporting the work of UDL implementation. As one PLC member describes, “I think UDL has kind of driven all of our initiatives to tie-in together. I think with UDL we’re able to combine everything.”

4. PLC member Administrators recognize the need to embed UDL into the school culture and reinforce that UDL is the driving philosophy of the school’s instructional goals.

The Administrative PLC members regarded UDL as a philosophy rather than a check-list or planning to-do list. They emphasized the conceptual shifts they made in order to embrace UDL and describe encouraging teachers to have a “change of heart” in order to embrace UDL. The PLC members acknowledged a “differentiation in terms of understanding” among the faculty. They stated that UDL needs to be seen as a school cultural lens as it has become within the school’s UDL PLCs.

5. Non-PLC Admin are skeptical that UDL will remain a school-based initiative.

While PLC members were planning to make UDL the driving force behind school culture, non-PLC members stated that they doubted UDL would have any greater lasting power
than other initiatives. This perspective caused them to feel less enthusiastic of making major shifts in practice than their PLC member peers. “A lot of people look at it as just one more thing, like it’s going to go away in a couple of years or when the grant’s over.” PLC Administrators saw attributed this type of thinking to a lack of understanding of UDL, as one PLC member stated, “They don’t understand that this will help them.”

6. Non-PLC Admin have misconceptions / shallow understanding of UDL.

Non-PLC members descriptions of UDL included misconceptions and demonstrated limited understanding of UDL. For example, one non-PLC member stated that they knew UDL was happening when they saw “collaboration” and “group work” within a classroom. Another example of UDL that non-PLC members provided was that of a “flipped classroom.” These examples of what the non-PLC members viewed as UDL highlighted the limited nature of their understanding of the framework.

7. PLC Admin members see UDL as the umbrella under which all other school initiatives fall.

As one PLC member stated, “I think UDL has kind of driven all of our initiatives to tie-in together.” Other initiatives are seen as supporting the overarching goal of UDL implementation. “Whenever we’re looking at initiatives on our campus we look at our circle (school-based UDL implementation tool) and there’s six different areas that go around it. We’re like okay this can fall into here, this can fall into here, and use the circle to place it in.” “UDL is the center because that’s instruction.” PLC Admin members see UDL as the umbrella under which all other school initiatives fall. Other initiatives are seen as supporting the overarching goal of UDL implementation. “If it doesn’t fall into here, why are we doing it?”

8. Non-PLC Admin use the UDL aligned feedback tool, but do so out of compliance, not due to philosophical need for the school’s instructional goals/culture to align with the framework.

Although all school administrators used the same tool for providing feedback to teachers, PLC members were more likely to use this tool because they believed it would support UDL implementation and have a lasting positive impact on student outcomes. Non-PLC members described using the tool out of compliance and the need for using the same evaluation criteria throughout the school.

Next Steps and Recommendations

According to Rogers’ (2003) seminal research on change, factors impacting the rate of adoption of a new initiative include its observability and trialability. Potential adopters must be able see the results of others implementation and try the change for themselves. Rodgers also indicates that interpersonal communication channels, such as personal contact with a change agent, will increase the rate of adoption in complex changes. The implementation of UDL is a complex change. Teachers must shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered pedagogy, and often must let go of long-held beliefs and practices. It is therefore recommended that administration in the UDL-THSLE project expand opportunities for PLC participation, expand
collaborative learning opportunities within the school, and create opportunities to observe UDL implementation in other schools or districts. Each of these recommendations gives teachers and administrators opportunities to observe, to try new practices, and to collaborate with others who have adopted the UDL framework, thereby increasing rate of adoption.

1. Expand opportunities for PLC participation.

   It is evident in the research findings that the teachers and administrators in the PLC developed a deeper understanding of UDL than their counterparts who did not. This is not surprising, as more than 25 years of research indicate that PLCs drive organizational change that increase academic achievement (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). Through a collaborative culture focused on learning, inquiry into best practice, an action orientation, a commitment to continuous improvement, and a results orientation, PLCs support the change process. The PLC provides a safe space for trying new practices, and an opportunity to observe others in the change process. Based upon the historical research basis and the findings of this study, it is recommended that school administrators expand the opportunities for PLC participation. This recommendation is consistent with the expressed thoughts, needs, and beliefs of the participants in the study. School administration should design a long-range plan for scaling the PLC so that all teachers and administrators become participants. This plan should also include how new hires will become a part of the PLC.

2. Expand collaborative learning opportunities within the school.

   Opportunities for collaborative learning should not be limited to the PLC. The findings of this study revealed that teachers learn by observing successful colleagues, but still need more collegial support and lesson ideas. To these ends, it is recommended that administrators expand collaborative learning opportunities to include instructional rounds and learning walks. Instructional Rounds are more formal: a problem of practice is identified based upon data, the current practice is observed, and the current practice is analyzed to determine next steps (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009). Learning Walks are less structured. There is a pre-walk meeting to set purpose, but no notes are taken during the walk to avoid raising teachers’ anxiety. After the walk, participants engage in a reflective conversation on what they observed and the implications for their own practice (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Both Instructional Rounds and Learning Walks emphasize a culture of collective learning for instructional change. Consequently, they support administrators’ need to embed UDL into the school culture and reinforce alignment between instructional goals and the building culture. Leading this learning also affords administrators the opportunity to foster risk-taking and protect those who take risks, thereby fulfilling the responsibility of Change Agent, as described by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005). It is recommended that teachers participate, minimally, in two of these collaborative learning opportunities each year (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

3. Create opportunities to see UDL implementation in other schools or districts.

   Teachers and administrators in the UDL-THSLE project who were afforded the opportunity to observe UDL implementation in other schools and districts found the experience extremely valuable. Additionally, both the teachers who participated in the PLC and those who
did not share a common desire to see UDL implementation outside of their own school. It is therefore recommended that administration create opportunities for site visits to schools more advanced in their understanding of UDL. This is consistent with recommendations for educational change from Fullan (2007). In his research, Fullan warns against confining learning to within the school implementing the change. Isolating the PLC also isolates their growth. Inter-school and Inter-district collaboration leads to deeper and more lasting change.

In implementing UDL school-wide, recommendations should take into account the relationship between teacher and administrator experiences.

4. Ensure that all school leaders to have a deep understanding of UDL in order to foster change in the school.

Non-PLC and PLC member Administrators differed in their understanding of UDL. While both groups used the same UDL instructional feedback tool and referenced the same UDL initiative implementation resource (Chavez Circle), the lack of a nuanced understanding of UDL among the non-PLC member administrators will make school-wide instructional leadership difficult.

5. Encourage administrators to focus on removing identified barriers to implementation.

Both teachers and administrators referenced a shortage of time and over abundance of responsibilities and initiatives as a barrier to implementation. The administrative team has already removed faculty meetings in an effort to focus on professional learning time with embedded teacher choice. Other creative solutions for creating protected time for teachers to collaborate and learn about UDL should be considered (Reeves, 2009, p. 65). While the administrative team has spent time communicating how the many school initiatives are connected to UDL, this message was less clear to teachers and administrators that did not participate in the PLCs. Some staff members commented that there were as many as sixteen independent initiatives within the school. The team should consider removing some of these initiatives in favor of a stronger focus on UDL. If the other initiatives are closely tied to UDL, the loss of the initiative should not negatively impact school outcomes. By removing the perceived burden of school-based initiative responsibilities, school leaders will enhance buy-in from administrators and teachers (White, 2009) (Reeves, 2009, p. 59)

Conclusion

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References


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