



(Sophomore Biology Major from Vancouver, Canada)

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Because of the diversity of current day classrooms many different methods of accommodation need to be used to help each individual child be able to perform to the best of their abilities in the **least restrictive environment** or an environment which will help them achieve their fullest potential. In one 6th grade classroom taught by Mr. Pruitt in the western part of the United States, this diversity is clearly defined. Within this classroom there are four different major groups of children. There are ESL/CLD students, students with **IEP's**, GT students, students with needs in reading and math, and students who are have challenges in their home lives. With this diversity **UDL, Universal Design for Learning**, a method of teaching has been used which will help all students learn equally and achieve their potential. Because **UDL** targets three different networks within the brain, the **strategic network** (how), the **affective network** (why) and the **recognition network** (what), by using **multiple means of representation, action and expression and engagement** it is the only method which can be used to provide a quality learning experience for all the children in the classroom.

Because of the nature of UDL the first groups of students, the ESL (English second language) and the CLD (culturally and linguistically diverse students), can be targeted in a way which will help them be more successful in their new cultures and with a new language. One of the ways which this can be done is through **UDL** by targeting the **Strategic Network** of the brain. The strategic network specifically targets the how of learning. The strategic network

has a lot to do with how we perceive and make connections while learning. This especially helps students who need help connecting with what they already know or in learning a new language. One example of this within a classroom is by using **Effective planning** in the area of an **anticipatory set** of a lesson; this is where Mr. Pruitt uses past knowledge of the students and connects it to the information that will be taught that day. Here Mr. Pruitt could use different **academic accommodations** that would customize the display of information such as giving directions both verbally and writing the instructions down. This way it will help the ESL and CLD students create connections.

Students with **IEP's** are students who have been referred to a special education program because of a disability. But at this school because there is not a strong special education program **inclusion** with these students, or having them within the classroom as much as possible, is very important. The IEP will help with that and the IEP follows strictly along with what is specified by the public law 108-446 also known as the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 or IDEA 2004**. Within this law it has already dictated what is necessary to be included in an IEP (Individualized education program). Because these children already have an IEP Mr. Pruitt has been meeting with the IEP team and specific goals have been made on how to help these students, as outlined by IDEA 2004. Many of these goals have already been incorporated within the classroom following the UDL planning method. But each of these students according to their disability need to be taken into account individually. Many of these students have **high incident disabilities** which are disabilities such as ADHD or speech and language disabilities which are seen often. Verses the **Low incident disabilities** which are the disabilities that are less than one percent of the special needs children such as children with Autism (like aspersers). Because of these needs different accommodations are made. One such way in which this has been planned for is for one of the students with ADHD. Within the **guided practice** (the part where Mr. Pruitt guides the class through their own practice which he has already demonstrated.) section of the lesson, which is planned with **Effective planning** Here Mr. Pruitt has helped to define vocabulary and other information and then within this guided practice a **Behavioral accommodation** is made by having the student with ADHD verbally repeat the information which has been taught which will affectively provide **multiple means of engagement** within the action and expression part of the lesson to help the student focus their attention. Other parts of the lesson where these children may need specific help could be in the **wrap up** section where Mr. Pruitt may go over the information or provide a reward to help the child with a learning disability. Also the **Assessment** part of the lesson is very important to

see where all the students are standing. Both pre/post assessments are useful and can be done by giving frequent but shorter tests/quizzes that will help Mr. Pruitt gauge more fully what the students with IEP's are learning.

The Gifted and Talented students in the classroom will also be affected by a UDL lesson plan. Because GT students can vary in so many different ways and can be gifted in one area or many Mr. Pruitt has especially used **Gardner's Multiple Intelligences**, which are different ways in which students may learn or how they may be intelligent in different ways, to accommodate them more fully. This is done by focusing on **Effective planning** within a lesson. Effective planning has been mentioned but it is where in each part of the lesson, the **anticipatory set, introduce/model new information, guided practice, independent practice, wrap up, and assessment**, is planned according to the needs of the students. In this case because the GT students may have different intelligences in each area this is taken into account. Such as in the **introduction/ model new information** part of the lesson Mr. Pruitt may explain a math problem step by step which will focus on the logical-mathematical intelligence area. Or within the **independent practice** part of the lesson, the part where the students work on their own, he might use **Cooperative learning**, or learning within a group as a student team, to focus on the students with an interpersonal or social intelligence. All of these methods are used to help the GT students achieve their potential within the classroom.

In Mr. Pruitt's classroom there are 4 students who have needs in both reading and math and did not pass their year assessments last year. With these students to try and help them Mr. Pruitt has used **RTI**, Response to Intervention, as a way to try and help these students succeed. RTI is a program which consists of three levels or **tiers of intervention** which will be used to try and help the student succeed. The first tier is more general accommodations within the classroom, tier two is where the students who still are not progressing well are targeted and this usually occurs in small groups, and tier three is more intensive where the students are targeted one on one. Throughout this process Mr. Pruitt is meeting with an RTI team which will help Mr. Pruitt accommodate for these children to help them succeed. **RTI team members** are often the principal, reading teacher (especially in this case will be important), school psychologist, speech therapist and others will meet to discuss students who are struggling. As the team meets Mr. Pruitt will bring **types of data collection** such as work samples to show the team the progress of the students and to get information on how to help them. The team will also look at the **etiology** or the cause of the problems that the student may be having. If it is realized that the student has a special need the etiology is especially important in looking at if the need or disability is

prenatal, perinatal or post natal in its origin. Mr. Pruitt has been using RTI as a method to target those four children who are having difficulties in reading and in math. RTI will help them succeed in the classroom without sending them directly to special education services. It is only after a student does not succeed in tier three that students will be referred to special educational services.

The remaining students of Mr. Pruitt's classroom are students who are on grade level but have various challenges at home. With these students because they do not have an learning disability Mr. Pruitt needs to think about what they are thinking or he uses **Metacognition** or thinking about thinking. With this method Mr. Pruitt will be able to respond better to them in the classroom by trying to see how they are feeling. With metacognition Mr. Pruitt will strive to provide the **Least restrictive environment** possible for these children to learn in. Because these children may have needs at home they may be classified as **At Risk** students or students at risk for failure. This may be because of a bad situation at home and by thinking more of the students Mr. Pruitt will help them succeed.

Within Mr. Pruitt's 6th grade classroom there are many **Exceptional children**. There are students who are ESL/CLD, students with ADHD, GT students and even students who may be at risk. Because of this however they are all special and deserve the chance to succeed. This is part of the dream of the of the **No Child Left Behind Act** (NCLB 2001) which focuses on how to help these children succeed. Mr. Pruitt is fulfilling this dream by using with all students a UDL program to help them succeed and within that program some may need a RTI program or other accommodations. But all are provided. This is all done to help these exceptional children reach their full potential, even with limited resources of a 6th grade classroom.