How To Support English Language Arts Students With The Universal Design For Learning Principles

Every student deserves a powerful English language arts curriculum that helps them build knowledge. Read more about how *Wit & Wisdom®* makes knowledge building accessible to all students by utilizing the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principles.

How Do UDL Principles Apply to Architecture and an English Language Arts (ELA) Lesson

Imagine three people entering a shopping center: One uses a wheelchair, another pushes a stroller, and a third walks into the space. Each of these people has the same goal, but they have different requirements for achieving it. For architects, universal design is a principle that guides their thinking about building inclusive spaces for all people. An architect carefully crafts the entry, including ramps and stairways, to ensure that all three of these people can enter the shopping center. By considering diverse needs in the population, the architect creates a product that everyone can use—no retrofitting needed.

(Image Source: CAST, www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl)

For educators, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guides the development of learning designs that keep the same learning goals and grade-level expectations for all students while providing access points that allow the diverse student population to succeed. Strong core instructional materials provide opportunities for every student to build knowledge and skills while reducing the barriers to success along the way.

Why is UDL important?

CAST's Universal Design for Learning framework encourages educators to consider how they can provide students with multiple means of Engagement, Representation, and Action & Expression in each lesson. The goal of the framework is for all learners not only to succeed in school but to become more independent in driving their own learning, a goal Great Minds® shares. To learn more about each area of the framework, review the guidelines on CAST's website.

The CAST UDL Guidelines can be broken down both vertically and horizontally. Each column focuses the reader on one network of the brain. Then each row breaks down how students can access the learning goal, build their skills toward it, and then internalize the skills and behaviors that will help them reach an expert learning goal for each neural network. Each section of the graphic organizer provides some suggestions on how to support students and meet their needs as they grow into expert learners.

The teacher–writers of *Wit & Wisdom* carefully considered the wide variety of learning styles that exist in every classroom; however, no curriculum can fully account for the learner variability that may exist in any classroom. *Wit & Wisdom* is designed to support every learner; it gives teachers a range of options for delivering the content and suggests many ways that students can express their learning. Because *Wit & Wisdom* lessons are written as narrative guides, not scripts, teachers can use what they know about their students to best address their needs in the English language arts classroom and still use high-quality instructional materials with integrity.
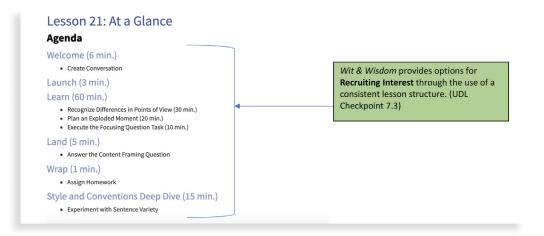
Below are examples of how the *Wit & Wisdom* Teacher Edition uses all three UDL Principles—Engagement, Representation, and Action & Expression—to help teachers provide more ways for students to access and engage with lesson content. To be clear, the annotations provided below do not appear in the TE, but instead are examples of how the principles of UDL can be identified in the curriculum. Ultimately, teachers will need to apply their own knowledge of their learners, instructional expertise, and deep understanding of the learning goals of a module, arc, or lesson to fully realize the power of the UDL principles in their classrooms.

How do You Provide Multiple Means of Engagement in ELA?

Providing students with multiple means of engagement helps them set a purpose for learning and increases their motivation to learn. The UDL framework encourages educators to provide options around three guidelines related to engagement: Recruiting Interest, Sustaining Effort and Persistence, and Self-Regulation. The goal of providing multiple means of engagement is to develop independent learners who are purposeful and motivated—a desired outcome for every student. Educators can learn more about each of the UDL guidelines for Engagement here.

Provide Options for Recruiting Interest

To provide options for recruiting interest, educators need to consider how they can engage students' cognition in the learning tasks before them. The ways in which students are engaged in learning may vary over time, even for the same student. The three key checkpoints for recruiting interest include optimizing individual choice and autonomy over learning; optimizing relevance, value, and authenticity; and minimizing threats and distractions.

Every *Wit & Wisdom* lesson has a predictable and routine lesson structure that allows teachers to create a safe and supportive learning space for students. Because students can anticipate the flow of the lesson each day, the predictable learning sequence supports students as they transition between tasks, allowing them to keep their focus on learning content. The consistent agenda allows students to anticipate relevant activities and reduces distractions.

Lesson 21: At a Glance

Agenda

Welcome (6 min.)
- Create Conversation

Launch (3 min.)

Learn (60 min.)
- Recognize Differences in Points of View (30 min.)
- Plan an Exploded Moment (20 min.)
- Execute the Focusing Question Task (10 min.)

Land (5 min.)
- Answer the Content Framing Question

Wrap (1 min.)
- Assign Homework

Style and Conventions Deep Dive (15 min.)
- Experiment with Sentence Variety

> *Wit & Wisdom* provides options for **Recruiting Interest** through the use of a consistent lesson structure. (UDL Checkpoint 7.3)

Teachers will find many opportunities to recruit students' interest in *Wit & Wisdom* lessons. Topics that are of high interest to students, especially those paired with a compelling Essential Question, will excite students and keep them immersed in the content. The Launch section of each lesson consistently orients students to the important questions they need to answer and helps them set a purpose for engaging with the texts and tasks during that lesson.

Provide Options for Sustaining Effort and Persistence

In this example from Grade 7 Module 4, students engage in cooperative learning through a Socratic Seminar. The lesson guidance provides prompts to help students cite evidence, pose questions to one another, and connect their ideas. The teacher, as a facilitator of this conversation, can respond to what students share and aid them in positively building on one another's contributions. Through supportive facilitation, teachers help students see the value in the knowledge that their peers share.

> ✔ Students form a circle and discuss the question for the Socratic Seminar: Considering what you know of the time period, was Dr. Rush a good doctor?
>
> During the seminar, encourage students to cite evidence, pose questions that elicit elaboration, and connect their ideas to others' ideas.
>
> Ask follow-up questions as needed:
>
> - How did Rush influence the crisis positively? How did he influence it negatively?
> - Did he do more harm than good, or did he do more good than harm?
> - What did the crisis reveal about the medical community?
> - What did the crisis reveal about medical and scientific understanding?
> - What role did Free African Society nurses play?
> - What role did the French doctors play?
> - In the debate between the French doctors and Rush, which side might you have taken? Why?
> - Which members of the medical community could be called heroic?
>
> Record and display students' ideas.

> *Wit & Wisdom* provides options for **Sustaining Effort and Persistence** by fostering collaboration and community. (UDL Checkpoint 8.3)

The Teacher Edition provides frequent guidance to help teachers support students in sustaining effort and persistence. For example, the Criteria for Success that appears with Focusing Question Tasks and End of Module Tasks helps students be aware of how they will be evaluated and keeps them focused on the learning goals of the task.

Provide Options for Self-Regulation
At the end of the Socratic Seminar in the above example, students have an opportunity to reflect on their new learning. They reflect on what the class did well and how they might improve, and they set goals for their next Socratic Seminar. This open-ended task encourages students to monitor their interactions with others and strengthens metacognition. For teachers reviewing students' responses, this is important information for determining potential scaffolds and supports to aid students with Socratic Seminars in the future.

> Ask students to identify what the class did well during the discussion and how they can improve.
>
> Have students complete Handout 27A, assessing their performance and setting a new goal for the next seminar.
>
> For more information on the Socratic Seminar routine used in this lesson, see the *Wit & Wisdom* Implementation Guide.

Wit & Wisdom provides options for **Self-Regulation** through self-assessment and reflection. (UDL Checkpoint 9.3)
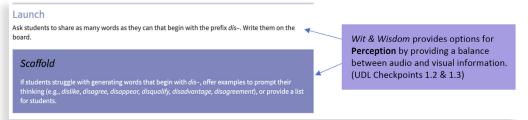
How do You Provide Multiple Means of Representation in ELA?

Students differ widely in how they take in and comprehend information. *Wit & Wisdom* lessons provide options for how students consume information and build knowledge. In addition to using the TE to understand the options provided, teachers will also need to consider the unique needs of the learners in their classroom; for example, a student with a sensory disability, such as blindness, will need different perception supports than a student with Dyslexia. Teachers are entrusted to make instructional decisions that help students access instruction, build their skills with consuming new information, and internalize the skills and behaviors needed to become strong consumers of texts, media, and resources as independent learners.

The following annotations show some examples of how the *Wit & Wisdom* TE helps educators provide multiple options to students with varying needs related to representation of the content. The three UDL guidelines for Representation are Perception, Language and Symbols, and Comprehension. The goal of this principle is to develop learners who are both resourceful and knowledgeable. Educators can learn more about each of these UDL guidelines here.

Provide Options for Perception
In the following Grade 5 Deep Dive lesson, the Teacher Edition asks students to think of words that begin with the prefix dis–. Students can start by orally sharing what they already know while the teacher adds to the student-generated list on the board, or the teacher can provide students with some options to respond orally or in writing. Either way, teachers maximize opportunities for students to both see and hear the words, so they start this lesson by noticing patterns of meaning across all the words they know that include this prefix.

> **Launch**
> Ask students to share as many words as they can that begin with the prefix *dis–*. Write them on the board.
>
> **Scaffold**
> If students struggle with generating words that begin with *dis–*, offer examples to prompt their thinking (e.g., *dislike, disagree, disappear, disqualify, disadvantage, disagreement*), or provide a list for students.

Wit & Wisdom provides options for **Perception** by providing a balance between audio and visual information. (UDL Checkpoints 1.2 & 1.3)

Teachers might encounter other options for supporting students' perception of content in their Teacher Edition, including suggestions to use American Sign Language for learning new concepts, creating anchor charts, or annotating with a variety of symbols.

The inclusion of film clips, the study of visual art, and opportunities to listen to songs or speeches also provide a variety of ways for students to perceive content in the *Wit & Wisdom* classroom.

Provide Options for Language and Symbols
Across K–8 *Wit & Wisdom* lessons, students are explicitly taught both content-specific and academic vocabulary words. Explicitly teaching these terms gives students access to language that helps them analyze texts and build content knowledge.

In this Grade 2 example, students learn the academic vocabulary word dialogue. They then read a passage in their text that includes dialogue to better understand how the language in the dialogue reveals something about each of the characters. By clarifying how authors use quotation marks and naming this frequently used convention, students develop another tool they can use to analyze texts.

Launch ⏱

Explain that sometimes when text is read, readers imagine what characters are saying based on clues in words and images. Other times we the text states what characters say to one another. Ask:

> **"How can you tell when you are reading the actual words one character is saying to another in a text?"**

Display a set of quotation marks and confirm that quotation marks are placed on either side of the spoken sentence or phrase.

> *Scaffold*
>
> Depending on prior experiences, students may need additional support recognizing conversation signaled by quotation marks in text. Consider finding additional examples of quotations from familiar texts to share with the class or small groups, in advance of the lesson.
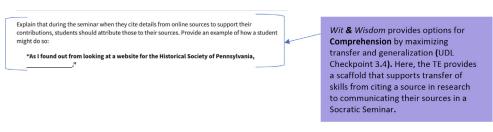
Read Aloud the Focusing Question and Content Framing Question.

Highlight the word *dialogue*. Explain that dialogue is the word we use when characters in text speak to one another and have conversations. Tell students that in this lesson they will close-read a passage with dialogue to unpack what it reveals about each person who is speaking.

> *Wit & Wisdom* provides options for **Language and Symbols** by clarifying vocabulary and symbols. (UDL Checkpoint 2.1)

Provide Options for Comprehension
In the Grade 7 Socratic Seminar lesson, a sentence frame supports the transfer of new information between contexts. Sentence frames are useful scaffolds for students who need language supports, but frames can also help all students transfer and synthesize ideas into new contexts. In middle school, students are expected to cite sources in both writing and speaking as they bring evidence into their arguments—a critical skill for civil discourse. All students are capable of meeting this goal with the additional support for transferring the skills of both communicating the source of their information and their understanding of the text.

Explain that during the seminar when they cite details from online sources to support their contributions, students should attribute those to their sources. Provide an example of how a student might do so:

> **"As I found out from looking at a website for the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, _____."**

> *Wit & Wisdom* provides options for **Comprehension** by maximizing transfer and generalization (UDL Checkpoint 3.4). Here, the TE provides a scaffold that supports transfer of skills from citing a source in research to communicating their sources in a Socratic Seminar.

Other ways the curriculum supports students' transfer of knowledge between contexts include the regular use of graphic organizers, annotations, and writing models that help students structure their thinking. Several instructional routines also support students with the transfer of ideas from texts; for example, creating a tableau from an important scene in a novel helps students understand characters, settings, and conflict.

How do You Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression in ELA?

Students express their knowledge in a wide variety of ways. Students with disabilities related to verbal or written expression will need different kinds of supports to express what they know. Additionally, students with physical disabilities may need supports to engage in some instructional routines. To accommodate this variety, *Wit & Wisdom* provides many instructional routines, regularly varies how students interact with texts, and transitions students between a variety of learning tasks in one lesson. Teachers are encouraged to consider the needs of their students and plan for how they will engage effectively in the learning environment and successfully express the knowledge they build in lessons. Educators can learn more about UDL guidelines for Action & Expression here.

Provide Options for Physical Action
Frequently in *Wit & Wisdom* lessons, students work with partners or small groups in a variety of instructional routines. Students may also use a variety of resources to complete their work. In this Grade 5 example, a teacher may choose to use the instructional routine, Mix and Mingle, to help students share their responses to the Content Framing Question with one another. Teachers can also use what they know about the learners in their classrooms to determine the ideal speed, movement around the room, or resources they need to complete the task. Additionally, teachers could choose an equivalent instructional routine, like Jot-Pair-Share, to have students turn directly to the person sitting next to them, rather than engaging in the Mix and Mingle.

Land ⏱

Answer the Content Framing Question

Reveal: *What does a deeper exploration of character dialogue in chapter 11 reveal?*

✔ Display the following question for students to individually answer in their Response Journals. Set the expectation that students write at least two sentences for each question.

- What can we learn from analyzing, or closely examining, dialogue between characters?
- How does the author use dialogue to show a conflict between Milo's and Dr. Dischord's ideas and ways of thinking?
- How does the dialogue between Milo, Dr. Dischord, and DYNNE in this chapter develop the story overall?

Depending on time, students Mix and Mingle to share their responses. ◄

Bring the whole group back together, and invite several students to share their ideas.

Wit & Wisdom provides options for **Physical Action** by providing intentional opportunities for students to move around the room and work with new partners through the Mix and Mingle instructional routine (UDL Checkpoint 4.1)

Provide Options for Expression & Communication
Students may need options for expressing or communicating the knowledge they have built in *Wit & Wisdom*. A student with Dysgraphia needs support to move past this barrier to write a response. Students may need opportunities to orally process knowledge before sitting down to write, and other students may benefit greatly from writing before trying to communicate in speech. By providing a variety of formats for expressing and communicating ideas, *Wit & Wisdom* helps teachers provide options to students who need additional support.

In this Grade 5 example, teachers receive the option to extend students' practice with two challenging words from their core text, The Phantom Tollbooth. By giving students an opportunity to think, talk, and share their thoughts about the words dissonance and disconsolate with a partner and with the class, students become more fluent with the words and make them personally meaningful. With additional vocabulary practice, students also better understand the characters and their motivations in the novel.

Land

Ask two pairs to share their answers.

- Dissonance *means "to not be in agreement or harmony, especially with musical sounds."*
- Disconsolate *means "hopelessly unhappy" or "to not be happy."*

Extension

Extend students' thinking about the words *dissonance* and *disconsolate*, asking students to Think-Pair-Share about the following question: "Why does *dissonance* make the Soundkeeper *disconsolate*?"

- *Dissonance would sound unharmonious or out of harmony, and that would make the Soundkeeper disconsolate or unhappy. She wants only the sounds she likes, unlike DYNNE and Dr. Dischord who love dissonance.*

Wit & Wisdom provides options for **Expression & Communication** by building fluencies with graduated levels of support. (UDL Checkpoint 5.3)

Provide Options for Executive Functions

Students need considerable support with setting goals, and *Wit & Wisdom* lessons frequently provide this support to learners. In the Grade 7 Socratic Seminar lesson below, students reflect on their performance and consider whether they met their goal for the discussion. They then set a new goal for future discussions. Teachers may want to provide additional support to students' goal setting by providing them with some suggested goals or by reviewing the expected norms for discussion.

Criteria	+/Δ
I used vocabulary that I learned in this module, such as these words:	

I met my goal for this discussion.   YES   /   NO

Explain:

_____

_____

_____

My goal for the next discussion is to:

_____

_____

_____

Wit & Wisdom supports developing students' **Executive Function** by providing teachers and students a framework for setting goals related to improving discussion skills. (UDL Checkpoint 6.1)

Additional Resources to Continue Learning About UDL

To learn more about UDL, investigate these resources:

- ☐ Explore the CAST website.
- ☐ Read a new book on the CAST Book Catalog.
- ☐ Listen to a TED talk by Jan Wilson: "Reimagining Disability & Inclusive Education."

You can also listen to two *Wit & Wisdom* curriculum developers discuss how they think about UDL in Melissa & Lori Love Literacy, episode 52: "Universal Design for Learning is INVISIBLE EQUITY in HQIM."

WORKS CITED

CAST. 2018. Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. http://udlguidelines.cast.org