Using UDL Principles in the IEP

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When States and school districts implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL), all curriculum goals, instructional materials, teaching methods and assessments will be designed from the beginning to be accessible to all learners. In the meanwhile you can make the curriculum more meaningful for your child by adding certain accommodations, assistive technology and supplementary aid and services to the IEP that are based on the principles of UDL.

Curriculum goals:

- **Clearly stated goals related to state standards.** Goals should not just focus on skill development.

- **Selection of curriculum goals and objectives per marking period.** If a child cannot master every curriculum objective, the IEP should state that teacher(s) will select the core objectives for the student to master in each unit. These objectives should be communicated to the parents so they know what the expectations are for their child.

- **Homework, projects and assessments aligned to selected objectives**. The child should be focusing on the selected objectives for homework, projects and assessments; except when work on non-selected objectives is necessary for class participation. The IEP should state that the child's grade will be based solely on the assignments, projects and assessments that reflect the unit objectives chosen for the student.

Instructional Materials:

- **Alternate formats of supplemental materials when possible to support instructional units e.g., CD-roms/ videos or DVDs/ disc of streaming video, Youtube and Teachertube.** The IEP should list the types of alternate formats that will be used for the student. In addition to CD-roms, videos and DVDs, many schools now have streaming video (thousands of short video clips that come from a subscription service) that teachers can access on classroom computers. It can be helpful to have some of these clips downloaded on a disk for home use. There shouldn't be a copyright issue when home use is involved (it's like checking out a library book).

- **Alternate formats of textbook and other instructional materials when possible to support instructional units e.g. audiotapes, digital text/graphic novels and lower lexile reading material.** The IEP should list the alternate formats of textbooks and other materials that will be used for the student. If these instructional materials do not come in a digital format the school can have them scanned and made into an electronic file. Digital text can be used on the computer and customized to meet the child's needs (e.g. learning prompts can be embedded). In addition, the child can listen to the text being read through

headphones. Graphic novels are books that have pictures to aid comprehension (some are like comic books) and are available for some classic titles. Lower lexile format means a version of a book that uses lower grade level language.

- **Use of computer for written assignments and for accessing digital text and other software.** If there is not easy access to a computer in the classroom, the child may need a laptop loaded with software to help with reading and writing goals. Some examples of writing software are Inspiration. Draftbuilder, Co-writer and Write Out Loud. The necessary hardware and software should be listed in the IEP, in addition to other assistive technology that the child may need,

- **Preview of instructional materials.** It can be very helpful to preview the materials before they are covered in class. For example, get copies of the English books for the following school year to read over the summer. The IEP should state that the student will have the opportunity to preview the instructional materials, when possible.

Teaching methods:
- **Class discussion questions in yes/no or multiple choice format.**
  Depending on the communication needs of the child, he or she may be better able to participate in class discussion when asked questions in these formats rather than an open-ended question, e.g. "Is Tom or Mary the main character?" instead of "Who is the main character?" This accommodation and any other teaching methods that are successful for the child should be noted in the IEP

- **Teacher training on technology used by the child.** It is difficult to mandate that teachers attend trainings outside the school (because of union rules). However, there are a lot of ways to train the teachers while they are at school. The IEP should state whether this training is necessary.

Assessments:
- **Accommodations**. Accommodations may not be allowed unless they are written into the IEP. Examples of accommodations include timing, scheduling, setting, how the tests items are presented, or how the student responds to test items.

- **Teacher-made assessments based on curriculum objectives, which are designed to eliminate barriers caused by the disability.** The child should only be assessed on the core objectives selected for each unit. Also, the questions and answers should be in plain English at the reading level of the child (except for vocabulary words listed in the objectives) and in a format that allows the child to show what he or she has learned. If open-ended questions are too difficult, then multiple choice, matching column and fill-in- the-blank formats can be used. The IEP should reflect the student's assessment needs.

- **Digital tests.** If decoding is an issue, the IEP should request digital tests, which allow the child to hear the questions and answers read aloud through headphones.