Final Project

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TE 846

**Universal Design for Learning and Differentiation**

**Theory:**

According to the website [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org), the UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL) framework can serve as a guide for better student differentiation in regards to educational practices. The UDL framework also offers increased flexibility in the ways educational information is presented to students in the classroom. The UDL framework offers a set of principles for curriculum development that gives all individuals an equal opportunity to learn in the classroom setting and beyond. The UDL framework attempts to reduce the academic barriers often found in basic instruction. UDL lessons provide differentiated instruction while maintaining high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are English Language Learners (ELL). This higher level of expectation can help close the achievement gap between students with disabilities and the ELL population, while also allowing the regular education student to develop at their own pace as well.

Universal Design for Learning supports teachers’ efforts to meet the challenge of diversity by providing flexible instructional materials, techniques, and strategies that help teachers differentiate instruction to meet these varied needs that naturally occur within each classroom population. UDL is said to support educators’ efforts and ideas by offering flexible ways to present information and content, by differentiating how students express what they know, and by stimulating interest and motivation for learning. This is referred to the “what, how and why” of learning within the UDL framework.

**Practice:**

UDL is helpful to students who are English Language Learners and students with disabilities because it provides instant opportunities for the teacher to present early literacy lessons that will meet the individual needs of all learners. The UDL technology supports, scaffolds, and customizes individual lessons for all students, regardless of their academic abilities. The UDL framework is very beneficial for ELL and students with disabilities because new academic concepts and information is taught at the student’s own pace. UDL through technology offers the teacher tools for automatic customization and differentiation of lessons. An example of differentiation through the UDL framework is the Starfall learn-to-read website that I utilized with my two case study students as described in the lesson below.

**Lesson Example:**

For my two case study students, I found during my initial assessment at the beginning of the school year that both students only knew a few letter names and did not know any letter sounds upon entering my kindergarten classroom. For my final project, I decided to introduce and teach them early literacy concepts utilizing the Starfall learning program that was listed on the [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org) website. This early learning program can be found at [www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com). According to the [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org) description, Starfall offers a free learn-to-read website that was designed to increase knowledge in early literacy concepts. I found Starfall to be easily accessible on my two classroom computers and I was really looking forward to providing online access to learning for my two case study students. According to these students, they do not have online access or computers in their own homes. Starfall offered my students a kid friendly program that is easy to navigate independently. For my two case studies who have limited computer knowledge, I appreciated that Starfall designed their website in non-intimidating way and presented new information at the child’s own pace.

Prior to beginning the Starfall activities, I wanted to gather data to be able to document the letter and sound identification increase in my two case studies. I decided to do a second assessment for letter and sound knowledge for both students (see rubric data below) because they had been in class for a few weeks and had gained letter/sound knowledge in the classroom setting. Once I had my second letter and sound assessment data collected I began to work with each case study student on the Starfall website. For about one month, we worked for about 5 minutes a day, 2-3 times a week, during our “word work” time of The Daily 5. During the word work portion of our morning, all students are independently doing early literacy activities while the teacher and paraprofessional work individually or in a small group with students. I found this to be the best time to teach my case studies using the computer without the other children feeling left out of the loop (computer use envy is common in my classroom!). The Starfall program was a great success for my case studies as evidenced by the rubric below. After working with the Starfall program, my two students have demonstrated increased confidence in letter recognition activities and phonics knowledge in both individual and group settings. The rubric below shows the academic and data side of my UDL lesson, but the confidence they have gained in the classroom with their peers cannot be measured on a data table.

***UDL Lesson Plan***

### Starfall Early Literacy

#### Lesson Overview

**Title: Starfall Early Literacy**

**Author: Teresa Seely**

**Subject: Reading/Language Arts  
Grade Level(s): Pre-K–2  
Duration:** **15 Minutes Weekly**

**Unit Description**

In this unit, students will use the interactive online learning tool, Starfall, in order to increase their letter knowledge and phonics skills.

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#### Lesson Description for Day

For each lesson, the student will learn about one letter in the alphabet. They will work on identifying both the upper and lower case versions.  They work towards mastery of their respective letter sounds for the letter they are working on each day.

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**State Standards**

This lesson will address the two following Common Core Standards:

RF.K.1. Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.

* Recognize and name all upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet.

RF.K.3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

* Demonstrate basic knowledge of letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary or most frequent sound for each consonant. 

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**Unit Goals**

All students will be able to identify the following:

All 26 upper and lower case letters of the alphabet.

Sound of each 26 letters in the alphabet.

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**Lesson Goals**

During each online lesson, the student will be able to do the following:

Indentify one letter of the alphabet by pointing out the upper and lower case version.

Say the sound of the above letter in the alphabet.

**Anticipatory Set**

In order to increase motivation about learning a new activity, the teacher will demonstrate the Starfall program by acting as the student and modeling how to navigate the Starfall program while the child watches.  The teacher will prompt the student to activate prior computer knowledge (mouse, screen, icons) in order to increase their confidence before they attempt the Starfall program. 

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**Introduce and Model New Knowledge:**

During this time, the student and teacher will work together to learn the Starfall lessons.  The teacher will assist the student through a team approach.  The teacher will make any corrections to mistakes that are being made before progressing to guided practice. 

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**Provide Guided Practice:**

The teacher will observe as the student learns to use the Starfall program at their own academic pace.  The teacher will continue to be at the student's side while they learn how to navigate and complete learning tasks.  If necessary, the teacher will offer suggestions and guidance to suit the needs of the child.  

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**Provide Independent Practice:**

The student will be given an opportunity to practice the Starfall program independently during our word work time in class.  The teacher will have the student select a letter to learn about from the letters they are missing on the assessment sheet.  The teacher will have the child pick the letter from the stack of unknown letters and then begin to work on learning about the letter name and sound with the Starfall program. 

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#### Wrap-Up

As a wrap up to the lesson, the student will be invited to share their new knowledge and skills on how to use the Starfall program with their classmates.  This will give the tow case study students confidence in their newly acquired skills in letters and sounds. 

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#### Assessment

**Formative/Ongoing Assessment**

The student will continue to work with the Starfall program throughout the school year.  The teacher will keep a running record of letter recognition and increases in phonics knowledge during the school year.

**Summative/End Of Lesson Assessment:** For the end of the lesson, the teacher will have the student demonstrate their knowledge of how to navigate the Starfall program. The teacher will also conduct an end of lesson assessment to see what academic gains have been made in phonics and letter identification skills.

#### Materials

Computer, pencil, paper, assessment form for letter identification and phonics.

Website: [www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)

**Rubric-**

**Starfall Program**

**Student #1 Score**

**Independently uses Starfall program 4**

**Can identify the 26 lower case letters 3**

**Can identify the 26 upper case letters 3**

**Can say the 21 consonant sounds 3**

**Can say the 5 vowels and both of their sounds 2**

***Overall Score 3***

**Comments: Results based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being mastery of skill. Results tested after 1 month of instruction.**

**Starfall Program**

**Student #2 Score**

**Independently uses Starfall program 5**

**Can identify the 26 lower case letters 4**

**Can identify the 26 upper case letters 4**

**Can say the 21 consonant sounds 5**

**Can say the 5 vowels and both of their sounds 3**

***Overall Score 4.2***

**Comments: Results based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being mastery of skill. Results tested after 1 month of instruction.**

**Reflection-**

By incorporating a UDL activity into my teaching program, I was able to ensure that my two case study students were provided with true differentiated learning in their early literacy instruction. As we began to use the program, Starfall offered my two students interactive activities and games related to early literacy skills, such as letter recognition and phonics activities. My students benefitted from the multiple literacy based games and activities designed to build decoding skills. The students were taught about letters; letter sounds and for the more advanced student, provided guided reading opportunities. On the UDL website [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org), Starfall is described as a UDL tool that was primarily created for the first grade student. I have believed that with the curriculum being pushed down, it is also a valid learning tool for my entire kindergarten student population as well. The letter identification and phonics lessons on Starfall target basic literacy skills; while the reading portion of the website offers the more advanced kindergarten students a chance to practice reading independently online. This contributed to their active learning of new letter recognition and phonics skills. Student #2 showed a significant increase in letter identification and phonics knowledge during the month we worked with the Starfall program. She also gained an increased confidence in her ability to learn new things on the computer. Both students benefitted from the use of UDL instruction and I plan to continue to guide all of my students towards learning through technology and well as regular instruction in the classroom.

**UDL References-**

[www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)

[www.lessonbuilder.cast.org](http://www.lessonbuilder.cast.org)

[www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)

[www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)

Additional early learning websites for differentiation:

[www.abcya.com](http://www.abcya.com)

[www.pbskids.org](http://www.pbskids.org)

[www.jumpstart.com](http://www.jumpstart.com)

[www.funschool.kaboose.com](http://www.funschool.kaboose.com)

**Self-evaluation-**

During this project, I learned that there are many opportunities for teachers to differentiate instruction in the classroom on a daily basis. This can take place not only with hands-on activities in the classroom; but through the use of technological advances, such as the websites listed above in my UDL references. I also learned that by venturing past the typical teaching style that I was taught practice many years ago, my students academically benefitting through the use of UDL and its’ guidelines. I anticipate using this information on a regular basis in my classroom teaching because the use of technology is in direct alignment with what our students are challenged with in today’s world. Many countries teach their children how to integrate technology into their daily learning and my students must compete with them in the future. This information is valuable for any teacher hoping to give their students an academic advantage as they move up through their schooling. By providing my kindergarten students with knowledge and technological skills, I have helped them not only learn the basic skills of early literacy, but have prepared them to feel comfortable using technology on a daily basis.