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## [School Counselors Engaging All Students: Universal Design for Learning in Classroom Lesson Planning](#)

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**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY** To introduce school counselors to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. The study demonstrates UDL-aligned instructional strategies in two school counselor-created classroom lessons: one elementary, one secondary.

**HOW THE RESEARCH ADVANCES THE PROFESSION** School counselors must be intentional about implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, which will often include planning and teaching classroom lessons on topics connected to academic skills, career planning and social-emotional learning. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a scientifically valid framework for providing access to curriculum for all students; it may facilitate school counselors' use of evidence-based instruction to reduce barriers to learning for students with diverse learning needs. Current school counselors can use this information to examine lessons for potential barriers in order to better craft instruction. Counselor educators can use this information to guide school counseling students to write universally designed lessons to meet the challenge of creating a comprehensive school counseling program.

**GUIDANCE FOR PRACTICING SCHOOL COUNSELORS** School counselors can use the Universal Design for Learning guidelines to identify barriers in lessons delivered as part of the comprehensive school counseling program and to consider options that can improve every student's learning. School counselors can begin the process of incorporating UDL into classroom lessons simply by following the pattern presented in this article. The process demonstrated for the two lessons included developing (a) universally designed learning objectives, (b) universally designed assessments and (c) universally designed methods and materials. School counselors new to the UDL guidelines should focus their work on making one change to a classroom lesson for each of the three UDL principles (i.e., Engagement, Representation, and Action & Expression). To do this, school counselors can examine a previously taught classroom lesson by looking for barriers related to each UDL principle. Once those barriers are identified, use the UDL guidelines and checkpoints (see Figure 1) to make only one tweak to the lesson. In addition to the description of these two lesson plans, the article provides suggestions for additional training and support for counselors to integrate UDL into their practice.

**ETHICAL DIMENSIONS** The UDL framework can facilitate school counselors' use of evidence-based instruction to reduce barriers to learning for students with diverse learning needs, including students with disabilities, English language learners, and those from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, among others. UDL researchers tend to refer to learner variability to emphasize that diverse learning needs come in many forms and apply to all students based on the ways their individual attributes impact their school experience (Rao & Meo, 2016). The fundamental assumption underlying UDL is that effective lesson planning can address learner variability by ameliorating barriers to learning implicit within a curriculum (Israel et al., 2014).