UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING AND INCLUSION

Research indicates early childhood education supports a range of benefits including:[1,2]
- increased academic preparedness for school
- increased high school graduation rates
- higher earnings in the workforce

The application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and inclusion principles enables all children to benefit from early childhood education opportunities

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Originates from Universal Design in architectural engineering [3]
- UDL (developed by CAST) is an **evidence-based framework** for **teaching and learning** that guides educators in meeting the **diverse needs** of **all students** [4,5]
- UDL reflects a **proactive** approach, whereas **differentiated instruction** is a **responsive approach** to adapting teaching and/or curricula adapted to meet individual needs[6,7]
  - Best practice: UDL + differentiation, as appropriate

Principles of UDL [4]

1. **Multiple Means of Engagement:** multiple ways to **motivate** students that are **personally meaningful**
2. **Multiple Means of Representation: multiple modalities** (e.g., visual, written, auditory) to proactively accommodate all learning styles
3. **Multiple Means of Action and Expression: choice** and **flexibility** in how students interact with learning materials and **demonstrate knowledge**

Inclusion

- **Involvement** of **all individuals** in a particular activity or setting [8]
- In **early childhood education** settings: **inclusion** empowers all children to actively participate in their natural learning environments[9]
- Means of **removing barriers** and **improving outcomes** for all students[10]
  - **Evidence** indicates that **inclusive preschools** foster **positive academic and social development** for both typically-developing children and those with special rights[11, 12, 13]

What can you do to support UDLI?

- **Learn!** Become knowledgeable about the accessibility of classroom environments and curricula for all children[14]
- **Communicate!** Expect your schools and teachers to promote accessible learning environments, incorporate a variety of instructional approaches, and offer various ways to measure student learning[14]
- **Advocate!** Share with your child's teachers and discuss ways to best engage your child to be inclusive of their unique identity and learning needs[14]

Additional Resources:

References:

Mary C. Laurita, OT/s
Department of Occupational Therapy, Tufts University
Developed in collaboration with Eliot-Pearson Children's School
Kaitlyn Irwin, OT, OTD; Hanna Gebretensae, EdD; Gabriela Herrera, MA