

UDL and Blended Learning: Part 1

Dr. Catlin Tucker

Hi, my name is Dr. Catlin Tucker. I'm an educator, an international trainer, blended learning expert, and author, and I am excited to talk about the intersection of blended learning and universal design for learning.

So, I define blended learning for leaders, coaches, teachers as active, engaged learning online combined with active engaged learning offline. And that combination of active engagement on and offline can take lots of different forms. But at the heart of blended learning, what we're trying to do is shift control from teacher to learner, giving them more control over these four elements of their learning: time, place, pace, and path. And the phrase blended learning is actually just an umbrella and within that umbrella are lots of different models that weave together this active engagement both on and offline.

So you might be wondering why UDL, like why, what is the value of universal design for learning? Well, it's anchored in brain-based research, but my why is really just an acknowledgement that different students need different things. Different kids need different inputs to get to a particular output. And in the traditional classroom, it is very challenging for a teacher to do that effectively. What universal design for learning is really encouraging us to do is to strive to make learning inclusive, accessible, and equitable so that all students can make progress toward firm learning objectives.

Since the pandemic, I've been really interested in, how do we increase accessibility, inclusivity, and equity when we're using these different blended learning models, which is why I'm so excited about this intersection between blended learning and universal design for learning.

'Cause there are two things in education that are not gonna change, and we can't say that about a lot in education where it feels like every year there's a new initiative. But the two things I'm positive aren't going away are one, learner variability. Students will always be different from one another in terms of their needs, their skills, abilities, backgrounds, learning preferences and interests.

And second is technology. Technology has permeated every aspect of our lives and it's going to play a role in education, which is why I think this kind of combination of really thinking about blended learning and universal design for learning together is so exciting because it can help us to honor and design for learner variability while also leveraging technology in really exciting ways to shift students to the center of the learning experience.