UDL and CA MTSS: Part 3

James Mckenna	Okay, so universal design for learning is integral to California's multi-tiered system of support. So how does UDL enhance MTSS's differentiated approach to supporting students?
Rhonda Marriot-Spencer	Well, I love that you used that word differentiated because I think that's a common misconception for people is that universal design for learning is synonymous with differentiation. And on the contrary, we think about universal design for learning, is that proactive, this is what we do before. So as we are intentionally designing based on where our students are at, what they are able, what their strengths are, and then what their areas of needs are I think that's where UDL plays such an important role in that, so that students can then succeed.

That being said, differentiation is also a very effective strategy. And so when we need to think about UDL and differentiation, they go hand in hand, right? Both are happening. So UDL, proactive. Before we're introducing the content, before we're providing opportunities for our students to demonstrate their understanding, but then we also need to differentiate along the way.

So, it's so great because we can see UDL implemented in so many ways in the classroom and throughout the school. So it can be done when there's whole group instruction. Definitely, it can be done in that small group instruction or even in those one-on-ones. Lots of different opportunities as we implement that area of choice for students to have a role in there and to take power over their own learning and decide their learning path or how they're going to, as I mentioned, demonstrate their understanding.

So that just increases their engagement in that school setting. So I think the beauty is when we intentionally design in that way, then those students are engaged, they're excited about the learning, they're interacting with their peers to problem-solve, to come up with those solutions to things, and then to also just be able to articulate what they understand.

And then, that just leads to enhanced school conditions and climate. So we receive... Or we see decreases in behavior, in discipline, in those what we call office discipline referrals, things like that. We see that as an enhancement to social-emotional learning competencies. So again, there's that integrated approach there. So just universal design for learning. That's why it's so important. It is the foundational component of a multi-tiered system of support. And then there are so many benefits to it.

James McKenna	And would it be fair to say that universal design for learning would be a student-driven method of differentiation, whereas differentiated instruction, DI, would be more of an educator-driven method of differentiation?
Rhonda Marriot-Spencer	Oh, I love that clarification, James. And I think that just helps educators to really clearly understand that. So yeah, putting UDL in the hands of students, right? So they own, they are actually in charge of universally designing their own learning experience. And then that differentiated instruction that comes from that teacher, that's their intentional design of it. I love that.
James McKenna	And I love how explicit the California multi-tiered system of support model is that universal design for learning and differentiated instruction exists at every tier.

However, the more universally designed Tier 1 is, the less specific differentiation the educators are going to have to do because they're offering those supports to everybody. |
| Rhonda Marriot-Spencer | Absolutely, and I think that's... Universal design for learning, as you have conveyed in your previous recordings, has been around for a while. And while I'd originally started out as that special education support, and then, what we quickly realized that if that's effective for students with special needs, think how effective it is for all students. And so that's why we clearly want to articulate it at that universal support.

So if we can go in and provide that intentional design and remove those barriers, then that also leads to a decrease in students identified with special needs. So because they're getting what they need, we're filling in those gaps where we're providing that continuum of support when and where they need it. So we're not waiting for them to fail and that for them to truly need that support after the fact. |
| James McKenna | So Rhonda, for the people watching this video that are excited to start the UDL journey or continue on that path, where do they go for help? |
| Rhonda Marriot-Spencer | I'm so glad you asked. I like to refer to this as a whole system of engagement. So when we are thinking about implementing universal design for learning, we need to tap into the wealth of resources that we have throughout our state. So our friends at CCEE are definitely a wealth of information and a valuable resource to support folks. Through the California UDL Network. That's another opportunity to network with colleagues and then explore and obtain additional resources to support the implementation of UDL. And then, also, our County Offices of Education are filled with skilled professional learning facilitators and trainers to |

be able to support the implementation at the district-level and also at the school site-level.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to share this information around California MTSS and the intentional integration of universal design for learning. I am so thrilled that this audience is eager to learn more about UDL and then start that journey to implement it with your students and at your school sites. So I encourage you to seek out opportunities to discover more and to try things out. And we look forward to hearing about your successes.