

Short reports

True Inclusion With UDL: Designing to the Edges to Reach Every Learner

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RALABATE, Patricia, Kelly. *True Inclusion With UDL: Designing to the Edges to Reach Every Learner.* Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing, 2024. ISBN 978-1-68125-725-9.

Patricia Kelly Ralabate's *True Inclusion With UDL* provides a structured and evidence-informed overview of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework and its application in inclusive education. The book builds upon the theoretical foundations established by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) and translates them into pedagogical principles and strategies for creating accessible, equitable learning environments.

The publication is organized into five thematic chapters, each addressing a distinct dimension of inclusive instructional design.

Advocating for True Inclusion introduces the central premise that inclusion should not be a reactive measure introduced after learning barriers emerge, but a proactive and intentional process embedded in lesson design from the outset. The author calls for educators to move beyond formal compliance with inclusion policies and adopt a design approach that anticipates learner diversity. This concept resonates with educational systems that are currently transitioning from individualized forms of support to systemic inclusion, as seen in ongoing curriculum reforms in several European countries.

Designing to the Edges represents one of the most practice-oriented sections of the book. Ralabate presents a framework for identifying barriers in learning goals, instructional methods, classroom environments, and assessment strategies before instruction begins. The described "barrier audit" is a systematic procedure aimed at preventing recurring obstacles and improving the overall quality of teaching through universal

accessibility. The chapter also illustrates how UDL principles—engagement, representation, and action and expression—can be applied to create flexible learning pathways that accommodate a wide range of learners.

In *Collaborating on Inclusive Design*, Ralabate highlights the necessity of interdisciplinary cooperation in planning and implementing inclusive instruction. Collaboration among teachers, teaching assistants, parents, and specialists is presented as a cornerstone of sustainable inclusion. The discussion aligns with international frameworks that emphasize shared professional responsibility and collective reflection in inclusive education.

The chapters *Championing True Inclusion* and *Widening the True Inclusion Circle* extend the discussion to leadership and organizational culture. Ralabate introduces the concept of UDL action teams—groups of educators who collaboratively analyze and refine inclusive practices within their institutions. These teams function as mechanisms for continuous professional learning and systemic change, reinforcing the idea that inclusion requires coordinated effort across all levels of a school.

While the book is firmly situated within the U.S. educational context, including references to American legislation and policy initiatives, its theoretical framework is transferable to other educational systems. The text conceptualizes UDL as an evolving and reflective process of instructional design rather than a fixed set of techniques. This approach makes the book relevant for educators seeking to strengthen inclusive practice within different cultural and structural conditions.

Ralabate acknowledges the complexity of implementing long-term inclusive change. Some examples assume stable leadership structures and well-functioning interdisciplinary teams, which may not be consistently present in all school contexts. Nevertheless, the proposed framework provides adaptable principles that can be adjusted to local realities and constraints.

Although the book primarily focuses on broad pedagogical design, it also raises questions regarding areas that remain less elaborated—such as the application of UDL principles to learners with profound sensory or combined disabilities. Addressing these aspects could further expand the scope of discussion on inclusive practice.

True Inclusion With UDL thus represents a theoretically grounded and methodologically coherent contribution to the field of inclusive pedagogy. By linking conceptual foundations with practical tools, the book demonstrates how designing “to the edges” expands the definition of the educational center and promotes a vision of inclusion that values all learners from the start. This perspective provides a strong basis for further research and professional dialogue on the transformation of educational design toward full inclusion.

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