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Unlocking Accessibility:
Universal Design in Environmental Education

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Handouts

exploreaccess.org/handouts/

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Introduction

- Provide training and technical assistance at Arkansas' University Center on Excellence in Developmental Disability (UCEDD)
- **Focus areas:** digital access, civil rights, access in higher education, universal design, leadership.

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The Power of Design

Design has the power to make us feel competent or incompetent; it has the power to include us or exclude us.

Elaine Ostroff
Founding Director
Institute for Human-Centered Design

The Evolution of an Idea (1)

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The Evolution of an Idea (2)

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The Evolution of an Idea (3)

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Which is “good design”?

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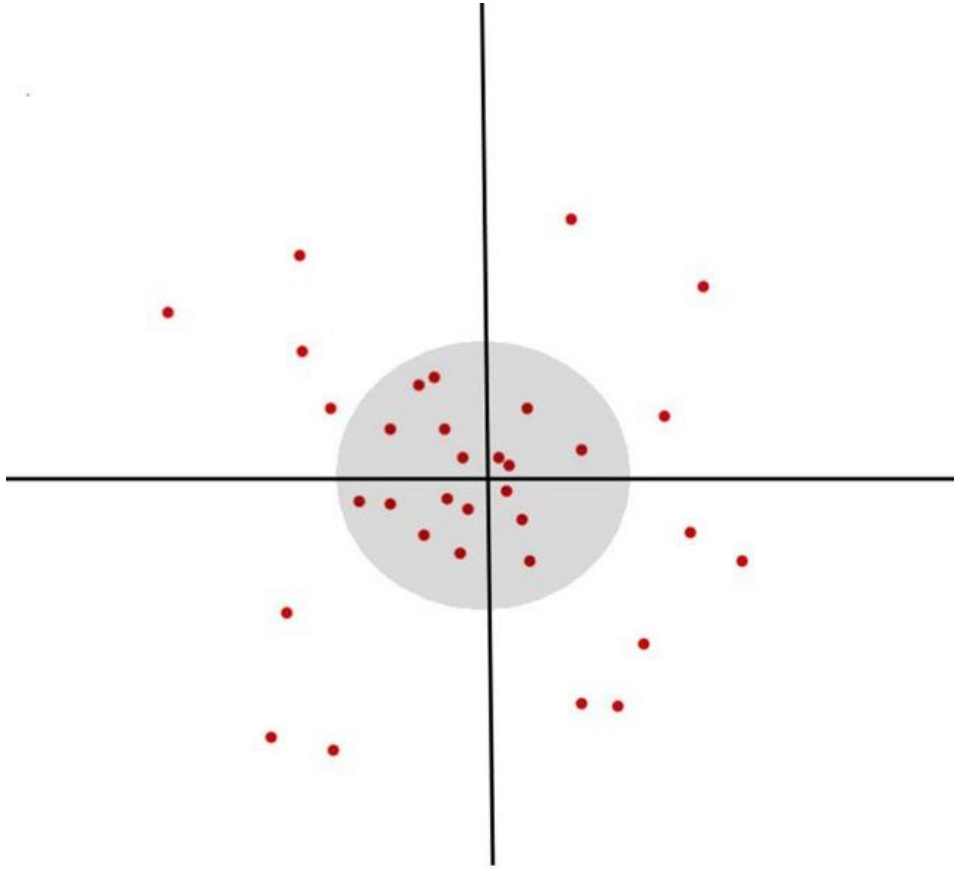
Traditional Approach



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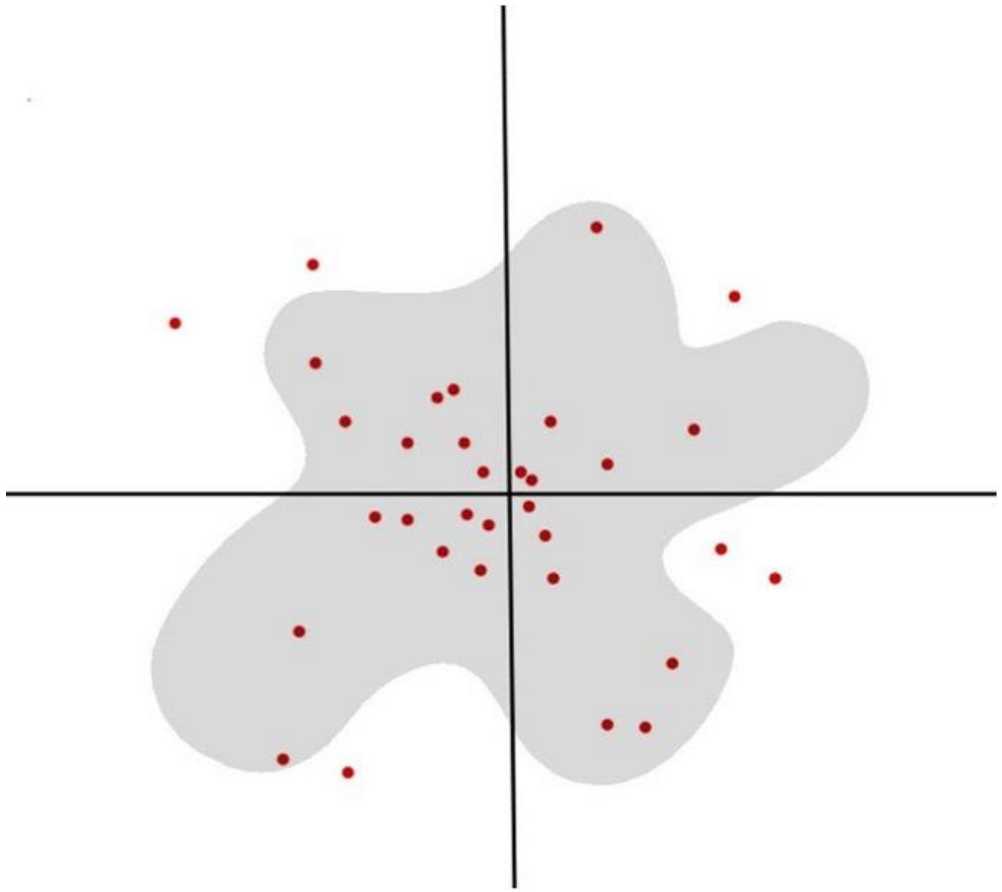
Inclusive Design



UD as a Philosophical Approach

The philosophy challenges us to think in new ways – to anticipate the variety of settings and conditions in which people perform a task or use an object…

and then to design the process, course, or object with those diverse possibilities in mind.

Exclusion, Accommodations, Universal Design

- Source: https://www.mobilizegreen.org/blog/2018/9/30/environmental-equity-vs-environmental-justice-whats-the-difference

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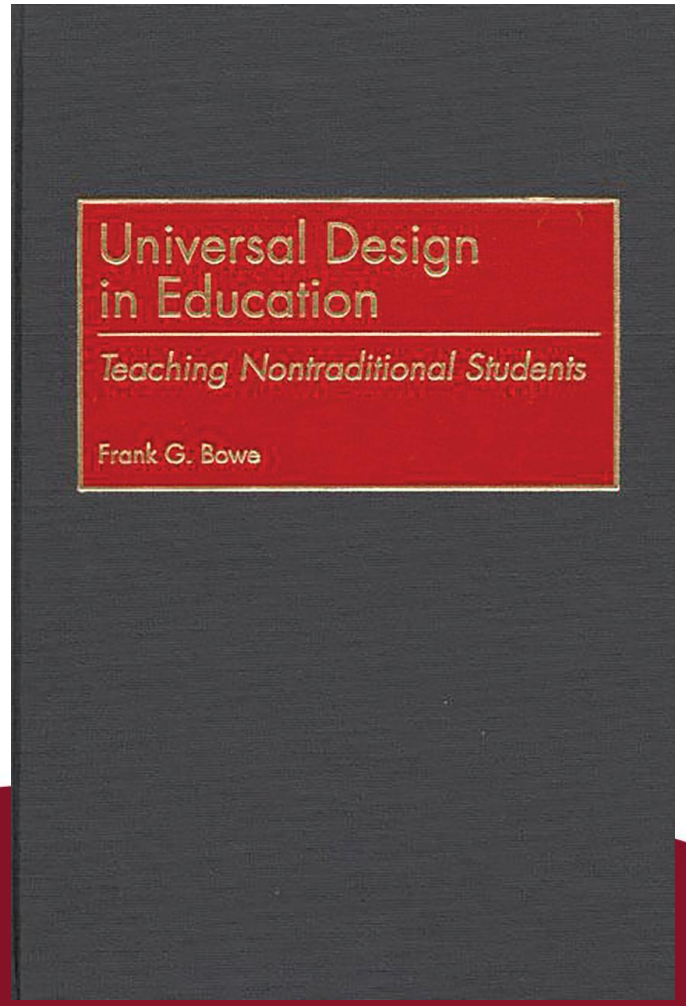
Universal Design in Education Defined

The preparation of curriculum, materials and environments so that they may be used appropriately and with ease, by a wide variety of people.

Frank Bowe
Universal Design in Education



Universal Design does not:

- Imply a “one size fits all” approach.
- Eliminate the need for accommodations.
- Remove learning challenges.

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Universal Design does:

- Enable learners to be more self-sufficient.
- Reduce barriers to learning.
- Reduce the need for some accommodations.
- Allow learners to focus on what is important: learning.

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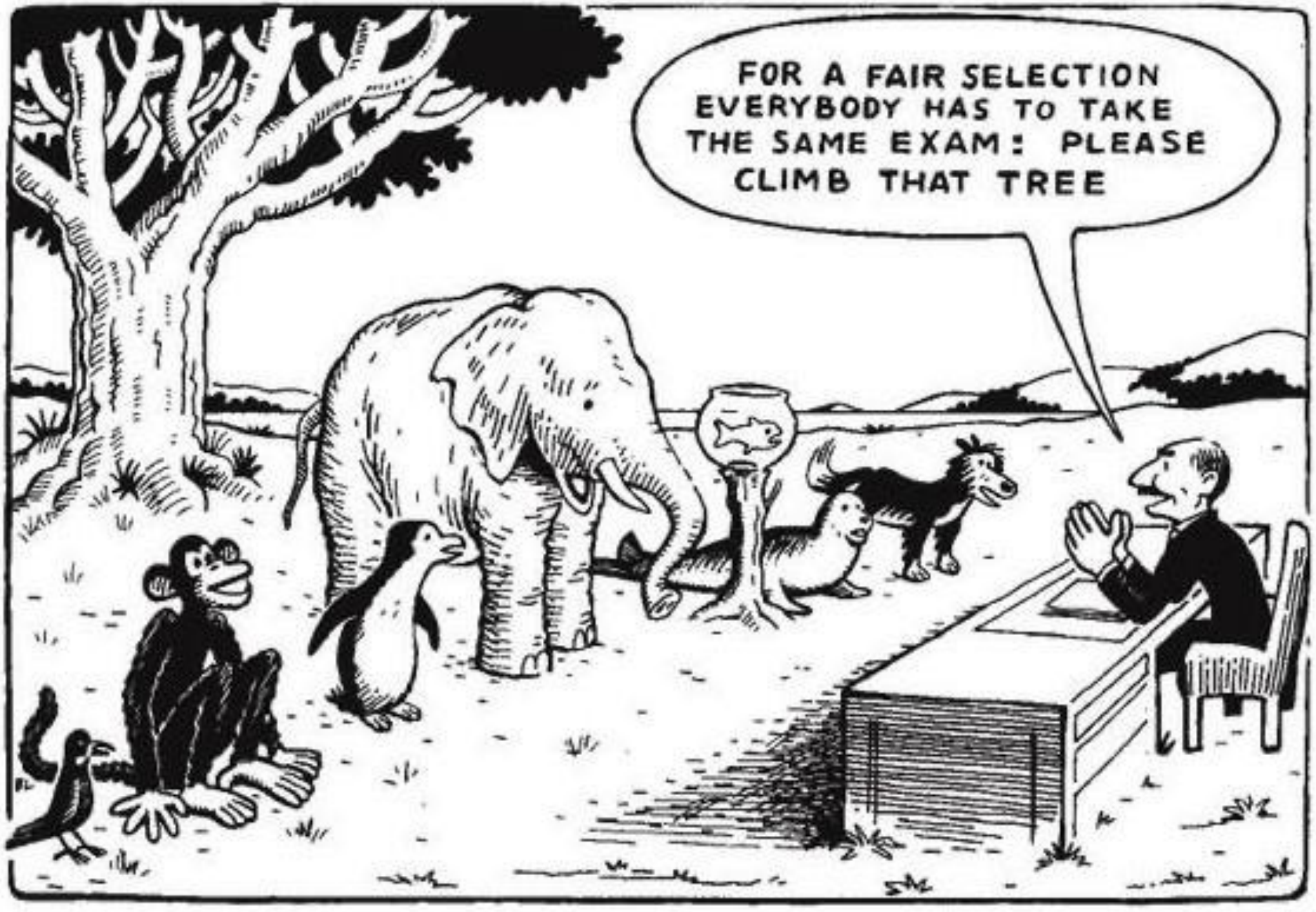
FOR A FAIR SELECTION EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE CLIMB THAT TREE

Various Models of Universal Design in Education Environments

- Universal Design in Education - Frank Bowe
- Universal Design of Instruction - University of Connecticut
- Universal Design of Instruction - University of Washington, DO IT
- Universal Instructional Design - University of Guelph
- Universal Design for Learning - CAST

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
Center for Applied Special Technology

Multiple means of:

- Representation
- Expression
- Action and Engagement

cast.org

CAST

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Strategies for Implementing Universal Design

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Communicating About Events and Activities

- Advertise in accessible ways.
- Offer a way to request access and accommodations.
- Communicate clearly what participants should expect.
- Communicate ways that access will be provided.

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Being Ready to Provide Accommodations

- Speech to Text services
- ASL interpreting services

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Interpreting and Captioning Resources

Communicating Hands

- Phone: 501.374.5293
- Email: interpreting@communicatinghands.com

Communication Plus

- Phone: 501.224.2521
- Email: scheduling@cplusinterpreting.com

Sign Language Interpreter Network of Northwest Arkansas

- Phone: 479.268.2417
- Email: scheduling@slinofnwa.com

Specialized Interpreting Services

- Phone: 479.343.8786 (v/text)
- Email: info@specializedinterpreting.com

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Planning Inclusive Activities

- Plan your activity so that it engages people in a variety of ways
- Think through how you might adapt it
- Reduce the need for individual accommodations and “separateness”
- Identify sources for accommodations or equipment you might need to make the activity accessible

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Creating Accessible Materials

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What is Digital Accessibility?

Digital accessibility involves the creation of websites, mobile applications and electronic documents that can be easily navigated and understood by a wide range of users.

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Common Barriers to Access

- Inaccessible platforms
- Presenters rely on participants seeing the screen
- Text in slides is too small
- Inaccessible or no handouts provided
- Lack of captions or reliance on auto captions

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Preparing Your Materials

- Slide Presentation
  - MS PPT Accessibility
- Handouts
  - MS Word Accessibility
  - PDF Accessibility

Explore Access

Tools for Promoting Disability Access and Inclusion

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MS PowerPoint Accessibility

- Choose slides with good contrast
- Font size = 24 pt. or larger
- Choose layouts that match content (not blank slides)
- Add alt text to images
- “Save as PDF” for sharing

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MS Word Accessibility

- Use headings properly
- Add alt text to images
- Make links that make sense
- “Save as PDF” for sharing

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What Makes a PDF Accessible? (1 of 2)

- PDFs must meet the same accessibility standards as other documents:
  - Good contrast
  - Clear, readable fonts of at least 12-point size
  - Proper heading structure
  - Meaningful link text
  - Alt text for images.
  - Well-structured tables

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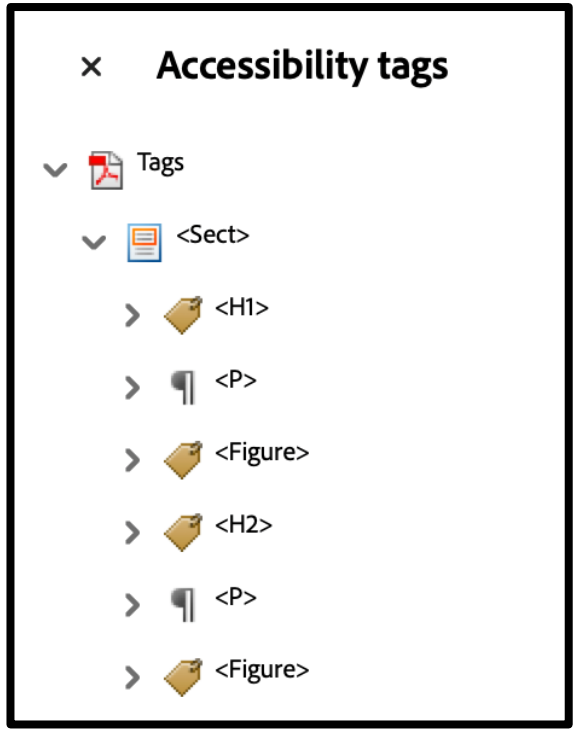
What Makes a PDF Accessible? (2 of 2)

- Tagging layer:
  - Screen readers rely on the tag layer to interpret the document's structure and content.
  - Ensuring PDFs are generated correctly from the source will help ensure they are tagged.



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Suggested Resources

- NEA: Understanding Universal Design in the Classroom
- CAST
- 5 Examples of UD in the Classroom
- Sample Social Story: I can visit Mt. Ranier (PDF)
- Trauma-informed environmental education: Helping students feel safe and connected in nature

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Contact Me

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Check for upcoming events:

uofapartners.uark.edu/news-events/

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