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Unlocking Accessibility: Universal Design in Educational Programming

Melanie Thornton
Director, Initiatives on Advancing Disability Access



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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



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The Evolution of an Idea (1)



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The Evolution of an Idea (2)



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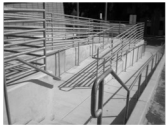
The Evolution of an Idea (3)



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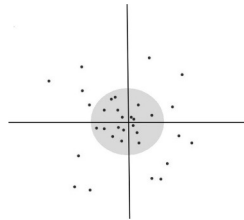
Which is "good design"?



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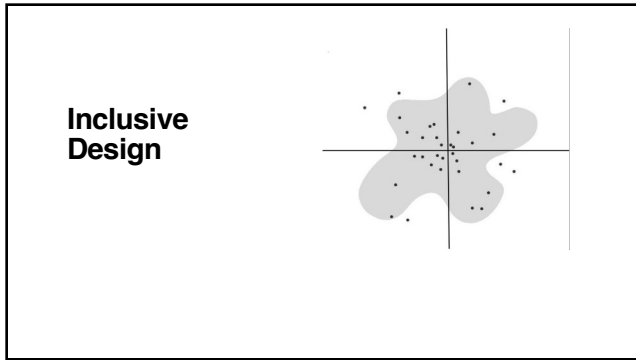
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Traditional Approach

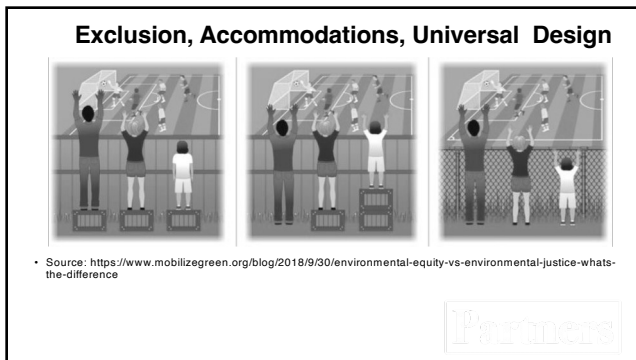


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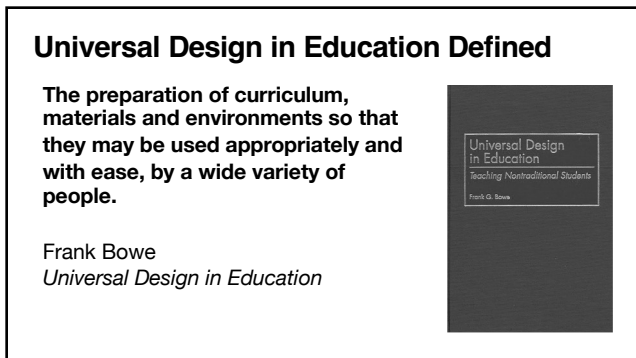
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Universal Design does not:

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



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Universal Design does:

- Enable learners/visitors to be more self-sufficient.
- Reduce barriers to learning and engagement.
- Reduce the need for some accommodations.
- Allow visitors to focus on the experience rather than navigating barriers.



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Universal Design Principles:

- Equitable Use
- Flexibility in Use
- Simple, Intuitive Use
- Perceptible Information
- Tolerance for Error
- Low Physical Effort
- Size and Space for Approach & Use

[Developed by a group of US designers and design educators from five organizations in 1997. Principles are copyrighted to the Center for Universal Design, School of Design, State University of North Carolina at Raleigh. The Principles are in use internationally.]

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

Multiple means of:

- Representation
 - Expression
 - Action and Engagement
- cast.org



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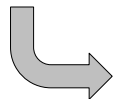
**Various Models of Universal Design
in Education Environments**

- [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](#)

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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.

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What does Universal Design Look Like?

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The Application of Universal Design...

- Is proactively accessible where feasible
- Is flexible where possible
- Includes the readiness to provide accommodations when needed

Design like it matters.



It does.

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Strategies for Implementing Universal Design

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Advertise in Accessible Ways

- Variety
- Accessible flyers
- Accessible social media posts



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Offer a Way to Request Access and Accommodations

- Accessibility statement
- Question on registration form



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Accessibility Statement

We are committed to creating an inclusive and accessible event for all attendees. Below is important information about the accessibility features and accommodations available at our event:

- This event is being held in a wheelchair-accessible building. Accessible parking is available on [location of accessible parking].
- Assistive listening devices are available for loan in [location].
- Accessible digital handouts can be downloaded at: [website]
- Please contact [Name] at [Email/Phone] to request accommodations.

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Communicate Clearly What to Expect

- General Description
 - Information about the venue and its accessibility
 - Schedule for event
 - Location of quiet spaces
- Social Stories
 - [Visit to Crystal Bridges – Social Narrative \(PDF\)](#)



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Be Ready to Provide Accommodations

- Speech to Text services
- ASL interpreting services
- Assistive listening devices
- Alternate formats for materials
 - Digital versions
 - Braille
 - Large print



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Interpreting and Captioning Resources

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

Communicating Hands

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

Communication Plus

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



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Plan Activities with Access in Mind

- Plan your activity so that it engages people in a variety of ways
- Think through how you might adapt it to increase accessibility
- 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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Tours and Presentations

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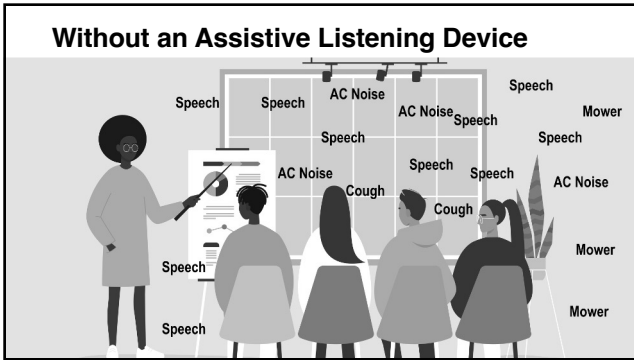
Use amplification

- Face the audience when speaking.
- General sounds systems
- Assistive listening devices (ALDs)
- Repeat questions from the audience.
- In discussions, pass the mic.

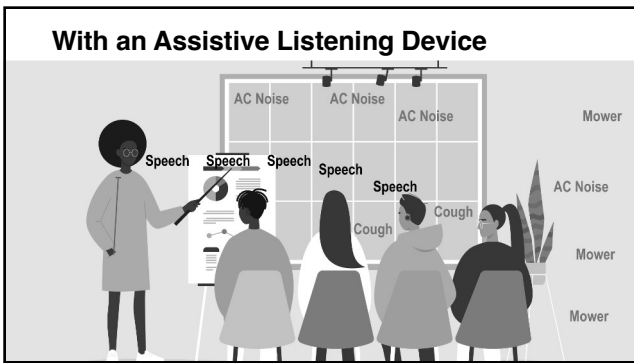


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Describe visual aspects of your program

- Think NPR programs
- Audio and video description
- Integrating description in narration

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Consider Neurodivergence and Sensory Processing Differences

- Avoid flashing objects on screen
- Avoid loud unexpected noises
- Set the stage for people to stand, take breaks, use fidget toys
- Provide information about quiet spaces or sensory rooms



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Make sure videos you show are captioned

- Your own videos
- Online videos
- Movies and DVDs



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Captioning YouTube Videos

- Automated captions are not adequate.
- You can allow it to auto-transcribe and then edit YouTube videos online.



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Making Visual Content Accessible

- Write script so that visual content is also spoken.
- Add voiceover or narration for any missing visual content.



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Creating Accessible Materials



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Use Plain Language When Writing Materials

- Writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience.



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Tips for Using Plain Language

- Write for your audience
- Organize the information
- Choose your words carefully
- Be concise
- Keep it conversational
- Design for reading
- Follow web standards
- Test your assumptions



Center for Plain Language
Make it clear.



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Have Accessible Electronic Versions of Brochures and Handouts Available

- Accessible digital formats
- Provide in advance if possible
- Ready to print in larger format if needed
- Ready to Braille if needed.



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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)

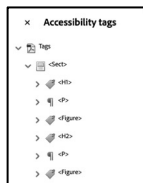
- PDFs must meet the same accessibility standards as other documents:
 - Good contrast
 - Clear, readable fonts of at least 12-point size
 - Proper heading structure
 - Meaningful link text
 - Alt text for images.
 - Well-structured tables



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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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Maintain accessible routes and walkways

- Remove debris from outside accessible routes.
- Make sure furniture is not blocking paths indoors.
- Check for low hanging items inside and on trails.



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Suggested Resources and Handouts

exploreaccess.org/handouts/



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Contact Me

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Check for upcoming events:
uofapartners.uark.edu/news-events/



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