


**Joyful Learning: Engage and Advance**  
**Young Learners with Significant and Complex Learning Needs**  
**AbleNet University**                      **April 5, 2023**



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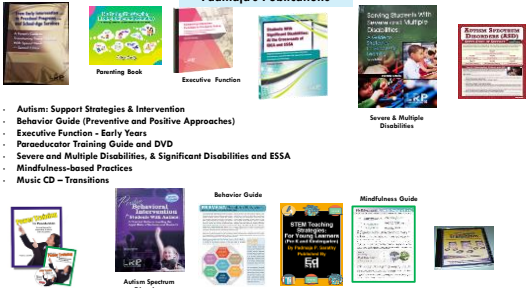
**Agenda**  
**Webinar Objectives**

- Introduction** – Addressing the Needs of Young Learners with Significant and Diverse Needs. (5 minutes)
- Overview of UDL Principles and DEC recommended practices** (5 minutes).
- Illustration of Hands-on and Joyful Instructional Delivery** - Language, Cognitive and Social-Emotional Activities: Engage and Sustain to Advance (40 minutes)
  - Tap into the strengths and needs of young learners with significant and diverse learning needs.
  - Use a diverse array of highly motivating and joyful techniques and tools to engage and sustain learner attention and maximize their learning outcomes (applying UDL framework)
- Summary** - Conclusion and Q and A. (10 minutes)

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**Padmaja's Publications**



- Autism: Support Strategies & Intervention
- Behavior Guide (Preventive and Positive Approaches)
- Executive Function - Early Years
  - Paraprofessional Training Guide and DVD
- Severe and Multiple Disabilities, & Significant Disabilities and ESSA
- Mindfulness-based Practices
- Music CD – Transitions

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**Issues & Challenges In Engaging and Advancing Learners**

- Routinely Observed Problems:** Environment, Instruction & Materials
- Environment:** Presence of a dull rather than interactive, stimulating and joyful.
- Instruction:** Minimal active learner engagement during instruction – intrusive adult prompting and directing
  - Frequent downtime - watching videos, coloring activities with total adult prompting
  - Learner spending most of the time interacting with an adult and not engaging or socializing with other children
  - Adaptations to activities not always matched student's personalized cognitive, communication, behavioral and motor needs
  - Removing student from activity due to behavioral issues instead of creative redirection
- Materials** – Need for adapted materials matched to student needs & connected to concepts that are novel, concrete and diverse

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**Understand Learner Strengths, Capabilities and Needs**

Let us identify-review what can the student do currently...

- Attends to an activity or listens to a story for a few minutes?
- Makes choices/decisions when (limited) options are provided?
- Indicates "Yes/No" response to literal questions?
- Recalls some facts/basic information previously learned?
- Answers 'What' 'Where' and 'When' questions?
- Able to generalize when provided with multiple opportunities to practice in various settings?
- Draw a conclusion or make a prediction after a story is read?

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**Learner Characteristics: Strengths and Needs**

Consider the strengths, needs and functioning level of your target student.

What can the student do currently?

- Makes a choice between 2 items given representational objects related to activity.
- Reach for an object with hand or eye gaze or body movement or body orientation.
- Shows increased vocalization in response to person or activity or object.
- Smiles in response to social, visual, auditory, and/or tactile input.
- Shows change in affect.
- Activates an AT device to obtain something or to respond to questions.
- Orients towards sound through head turn.

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### Universal Design for learning (UDL)

- Provide **multiple, flexible options for engagement**. Various opportunities are provided to engage student's interest, offer appropriate challenges, increase motivation and gain student response. **The Why of Learning.**
  - Art, dramatic plays, games, toys, books, songs, concrete items with varied textures, sizes and shapes, computer software, etc.
- Provide **multiple, flexible methods of presentation**. Information is presented in variety of formats, and at different complexity levels to address needs. **The What of Learning**
  - Power point, interactive graphics, simulations, story boards, physical objects, auditory cues, photographs, manipulatives, etc.
- Provide **multiple, flexible methods of action and expression**. Offer a variety of formats - **flexible methods** - for student to respond, navigate through information and activities and demonstrate what he/she knows. **The How of Learning**
  - Verbal response, pointing, manipulating picture symbols or concrete objects, using AT devices to communicate and respond, partial participation, etc.

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### Applying Universal Design for Learning Framework

- Provide **multiple, flexible options for engagement**. **The Why of Learning**
- Provide **multiple, flexible methods of presentation**. **The What of Learning**
- Provide **multiple, flexible methods of action and expression**. **The How of Learning**

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### Adaptations for Access, Engagement, Action and Expression

Personalized adaptations and supports promote active participation of learners with significant disabilities in everyday routines and activities:

- **Make environmental adjustments** (e.g., seating next to and not away from peers; minimizing adult proximity and prompting; designated boundaries; reducing visual over-stimulation, etc.).
- **Provide instructional supports during activities and routines** (e.g., using multi-sensory techniques and concrete representations and to illustrate concepts and to build concept knowledge; weaving movement, role-play and music to sustain attention; alerting with pictures and songs for transitions; word bank paired with photos/concrete objects; etc.)
- **Offer personalized adaptations and materials** (e.g., use of multiple ways for student to communicate and respond –consistent use of voice output devices/assistive tech.; slant boards; capturing child's attention with a flashlight; etc.

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### DEC Recommended Practices

Get familiar with the DEC Recommended Practices:  
[www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices](http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices)

- Pursue best-practices in child-focused strategies... How you design and plan your:
  1. Environment
  2. Instructional Practices
  3. Adult-Child Interaction
  4. Family-based practices

Practitioners work with the family and other adults:

- To modify and adapt the physical, social, and temporal environments to promote each child's access to and participation in learning experiences.
- To identify each child's needs for assistive technology to promote access to and participation in learning experiences.
- To create environments that provide opportunities for movement and regular physical activity to maintain or improve fitness, wellness, and development across domains

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### PARTICIPANT POLL - 1

#### Which Environmental and Instructional Tools & Supports Do You Routinely Use to Engage Learners with Significant Needs?

- Incorporate UDL at the initial phase of planning when designing the environment and instructional delivery.
- Provide a **designated calming space** for children to take a break to calm down when feeling restless or agitated.
- Present **different tasks to meet diverse student needs** within the same lesson.
- **Play games** to practice vocabulary or math concepts.
- Ensure **intrusive physical prompts** are gradually faded.

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### Environment and Instruction - Engage the Learner

- **Draw student's attention with hands-on activities with multi-sensory features.**
- **Use of real-life activities** (From research on personal aspects of science found for students with significant cognitive disabilities).
- **Familiarize students with the materials.** (touch, look, listen and smell)
- **Position students appropriately** to suit the specific activity.
- **Engage student's attention** by tapping on the picture and/or object associated with the lesson/concept/story (attached to a mini white board).
- **Maintain attention** by illuminating the pictures and key words in the adapted book with shining a light from behind (Downing, 2005).

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### Creative Instruction: Activity & Material Adaptations

Rethink and switch to a preferred option from current situation (not-so-effective).

- A magic bag to motivate learners**
- Dycem mat to stabilize materials**
- Build up handles of tools with a piece of foam, playdoh, etc.**
- Adapted brushes**    **Slant boards**
- Considering seating options**
- Use of a wedge during seated time.**
- Allow child to hold fidget toy during Circle.**
- Have a calming space.**

Consider options to address cognitive, communication, motor and behavioral needs.

- Use the least intrusive adaptation that works.**

Roleplay and act out stories.  
Use finger or puppet play  
Do movement activity to build vocabulary - actions, animal names.  
Use a Hula Hoop for bean bag toss (counting - math)  
Limiting choices to select from  
Pair children for transitions.  
Play pretend games.

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### A Story Map Organizer Tool Teaching Story Theme, Events and Characters

The Story (Are You My Mother by P. D. Eastman)

Who was in the story? (story characters: people/animals/toys)

Who else was in the story?

What is one thing that happened in the story?

What is the story about?

Where did the story take place? (The story setting: home/farm/outside/forest)

Tell me what else happened in the story.

Record the story on the Step by step.

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### Engaging Learners to Connect with the Story

Have children point to (interact) the story props (characters) as you read the story.

Demonstrate and have children roleplay story characters.

Use Brainstorming to identify (point to) Story Characters.

Story - Happy Ending

Create a Word Wall Pairing Vocabulary with Pictures and Representational Items.

Cat? Dog? Boat? Hen? Cow?

Plane? Car? **Baby bird is searching for his mother.**

Mother Bird finds baby bird.

All-Turn-It-Spinner

(adopted from Sarathy, 2017)

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### Integrate the different senses into a planned language lesson.

**Visual and Auditory**  
See book and the pictures.  
Listen to the book.  
See Word Wall with pictures.

**Tactile**  
Touch book. Turn the pages.  
Planting Activity: Touch seed, soil, water, etc.

**Gustatory and Olfactory**  
Smelling and tasting a carrot

**Auditory and Kinesthetic**  
Drama and role-play

**Visual, Tactile and Kinesthetic**  
Hold and touch a carrot  
Create a Student-authored book

**Associated Themes and Concepts**  
Family, Growing Things (STEM) & Feelings  
Executive Function: Focus & self-control

The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss

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### Joyful Learning: Draw & Sustain Attention and Internalize.

Advance Language, Communication, Cognitive and Social-Emotional Skills

- Make story reading interactive with active learner involvement and using story props.
- Use storytelling techniques paired with puppets and mime.
- Pursue story dramatization with a role to play for each learner.
- Incorporate music and movement activities - foster growth in social-emotional, math vocabulary, and comprehension.

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### Language & Literacy - Vocabulary Building - Play Games

- Play the 'toppings' game: pizza topping/sandwich topping/ice cream topping.
  - Students identify with the aid of picture supports or real items what topping they would like to have on a pizza or a sandwich or ice cream.
  - Have students point to the different toppings taking turns. Also, see if they can recall what his/her peer chose before his/her turn.
- Adaptation: Provide picture supports with prerecorded words in an AT sequential communication device.
  - Modify the game with the student selecting a response given 2-3 choices.


Builds attention skills, vocabulary, learning to take turns and getting along with peers.

All-Turn-It-Spinner

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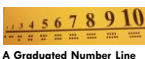
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### Math - Enhance Motivation, Build Attention & Engage the Learner.




**MATH - PATTERNS**  
Replicating and Continuing a Pattern Given Choices


Increase Action and Expression with Visuals and Multi-sensory Items.




**A Graduated Number Line**  
Attach it to desk for student to gain visual understanding of abstract concept and make a response.  
Fasten with concrete items if needed for tactile input, gain concept knowledge and make a response.




iTalk2 Communicator



All-Turn-It-Spinner



Use a sorting tray to assist with counting.



Have fun with Math using Dice.


**Demonstrate & share ideas and tools with parents.**

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### Strengthen Emotional Competence.

Story Example:  
**The Grouchy Ladybug**  
By Eric Carle




**Build Emotional Vocabulary.**  
Use stories, situations and relayplay to identify and express feelings safely.


Story Example:  
**When Raslie Gets Really, Really Angry...**  
By Molly Bang




**Emotions**



Teach and Practice Turtle Technique to learn to calm down.



Create a Calming Space.



(adapted from Sarathy, 2017)

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### Reaction, Response and Redirection

**Addressing Behavioral Issues**  
Examine and Evaluate Responses to Behavioral Episodes.

**Proactive**

Reflective

Enable

**PREVENT**  
Seven Contemplative Discipline Steps

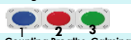
Verify

**Teach**

Navigate


Engage

Talking Brix Communicator



Counting Breaths, Calming

Adapted from P.R.E.V.E.N.T. Problem Behaviors, Ed311.com (2018) Mini Guide




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
### Student Response – Multiple Personalized Options

Present multiple ways for student to actively respond during the activity/lesson:


- Respond in complete sentences/phrases.
- Use Yes/No Participation cards.
- Read the text with the aid of the picture cues.
- Point to pictures or objects related to story as story or text passage is read.
- Make a choice between 2-3 options given with or without the aid of AT.
- Touch and manipulate the item.
- Reach for the target item with eye-gaze or body orientation or facial expression.
- Activate an AT device to respond (gain a voice).



Secret/Choose  
(A choice board)



No Yes




Choice-making is powerful - teaches children that they can exercise control over their environment by using communicative behavior to indicate choice or behavior.

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### Learner Response – Personalized Supports

Alphabet cards




Story prop: Chicka, Chicka Boom, Boom


Graphic Organizer



Counting objects attached to a slant board


Quick Talker an option






Story prop: The Giving Tree

An Object-based Daily Activity Schedule for students with significant cognitive and communication needs




Share thoughts/feelings Happy/Sad Like/Dislike



iTalk2 Communicator Enable choice-making.

No Yes





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### Instruction – Actively Engaging the Learner


- Have the student play an active and engaged role during instruction.
- Play games to make learning joyful (Ex. Throwing a specified # of bean bags into basket; Bingo game to practice vocabulary words)
- Note all initiations by the student – how the student initiates through sounds, movements and changes in state and affect.
- Use systematic prompting and fading where applicable (From overall research on mathematics for students with significant cognitive disabilities) Browder, 2008
- Enable student's self-dependence.





All-Turn-It-Spinner





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### Using Appropriate Level of Prompts and Cues

**Hierarchy of Prompts - Independent performance without any assistance is the goal.**

<b>Full Physical Prompt - Example:</b>	The teacher/para takes the student's hand and physically guides her to hang the coat on the hook or guides her to bring the mat to circle.
<b>Partial Physical Prompt - Example:</b>	The teacher/para may guide student's elbow to hang the coat on the coat hook.
<b>Gesture Prompt - Example:</b>	The teacher/para points to the coat and then the hook gesturing what is expected of the student, or the para looks at the student and then the coat hook.
<b>Modeling - Example:</b>	The instructor demonstrates what the student is supposed to do, part/all the action. The para models how a student should hang his coat on the coat hook.
<b>Verbal Prompt - Examples are:</b>	The instructor provides a verbal direction that tells the student exactly what to do to perform the task. "Line up for recess" or "Hang up your coat".
<b>Verbal Cue (Indirect Verbal Prompt):</b>	The instructor provides a verbal hint or cue about the next step or reminds the student to move on to the next step. Example of giving verbal cue: "What do you do next?"

Enable Student's self-dependence!

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### PARTICIPANT POLL - 2


#### What Would You Add to Your Instructional Practice to Increase Learner Engagement and Response?

1. Instruction paired with concrete representational items.
2. Increase opportunities for response with offering choice-making options.
3. Role-play and drama aided with AT to motivate and engage learners.
4. Play games to practice vocabulary or math concepts.
5. Minimize physical and hand-over-hand prompting.

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### Take-Aways

<p><b>Strengthen Focus and Attention with Storytelling, Drama, Roleplay, and Puppets.</b></p> <p><b>Play Games that will Exercise Memory, Interactions with Peers and Taking Turns.</b> Charades, Bingo, I Spy, Bean Bag Toss</p> <p><b>Teach and Model Self-calming Strategies.</b></p> <p><b>Blend in Movement Activities.</b></p> <p>Quick Talker</p>	<p><b>Engage and Enrich Learners With Joyful Learning</b></p> 	<p><b>Encourage and Enable Self-dependence.</b></p> <p><b>Watch the Prompts.</b></p> <p><b>Minimize (Paraeducator) Proximity, Maximize Discreet Support</b></p> <p><b>Make Effective Use of AT to Promote Student Engagement, Communication and Independent Response.</b></p> <p><b>Use Concrete Representational Items Paired with Text-Connect with Concepts.</b></p> <p>All-Turn-It-Spinner</p>
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Team and Collaborate for Student Success: School Staff and Family

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### The Main Sources



Enhancing Executive Function in the Early Years: Environment, Instruction and Adaptations for School Readiness  
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### Resources

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- Sarathy, P. (2020). *Mindfulness-based Practices for Developing Brains: Cultivating Calmness, Concentration and Coping Skills.* A Quick Reference Guide, Austin, TX: Ed 311. (<https://ed311.com/>)
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- *Magical Musical Transitions – A Music CD for assisting children with Autism Spectrum Disorders* (www.nprinc.com)
- Sarathy, P. (Second Edition, 2014). *Serving students with severe and multiple disabilities: A guide to strategies for successful learning.* Horsham, PA: LRP Publications.
- **UDL website:** (Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) <http://www.cast.org/research/udl/index.html>)

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**Thank You.**

A special thanks to AbleNet University for hosting the webinar.

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**Upcoming Webinars:**

**May 2, 2023: Cultivating Calmness, Concentration and Coping Skills**