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Rose, D.H. & Gravel, J.W. (2010). Universal design for learning. In E. Baker, P. Peterson, & B. McGaw (Eds.). *International Encyclopedia of Education, 3rd Ed.* Oxford: Elsevier.

Rose and Gravel (2010) present an overview of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), including a framework, guidelines supported with research and suggestions for the future development of the program. The authors clearly outline the background for this design and recognize that due to the relatively infancy of the program, there are limitations in the types of research available to support the effectiveness of the system at the ground level.

There were countless areas of the article that I connected to. Having spent a large portion of my early teaching career overseas, I have been fortunate to work in a variety of school systems with a range of curriculum implementation expectations. What I had previously assumed to be "best practice" and "good teaching" is not as closely related in the different education systems as I had once thought. Much of what Rose and Gravel (2010) have introduced through their UDL is what teaching is from my perspective. The designing of a flexible curriculum that lessens barriers and supports all learners is not a new concept to me. This is teaching. Anticipating needs by being proactive in your planning, facilitating and evaluating is what a teacher does. My background provides me with a different set of ideologies than those I am learning about in British Columbia. The role of a resource teacher or support teacher was not something I had previous experience with. Within your class of thirty pupils, you would have any number of learning challenges, very few of which were formally diagnosed. It was your responsibility as the classroom teacher to meet the needs of each and every student. This is why I began pursuing further education for myself within the field of special education; to better meet the needs of all pupils. Collaborative teaching was the norm as were regular observations, performance management and professional development relating to successful differentiation. I am excited that there is an organized system to begin addressing some of the issues within the education system from

the ground up. By implementing the ideas presented by Rose and Gravel (2010), I believe that the challenges faced by classroom teachers in regards to understanding how to reach a variety of learners can be minimized.

I drew many comparisons between UDL and differentiation. In a former school, all lesson planning was required to show how you as a teacher planned to differentiate for content, process, product and the learning environment. This parallels, for me, the multiple means of representation, action and engagement presented by Rose and Gravel (2010). By proactively addressing these areas, the curriculum becomes accessible on many levels and children are able to work within their instructional level. They can learn to set goals for themselves and can become active in their learning. Teachers can facilitate rather than control.

There were further connections between the system suggested in this article and Response to Intervention (RTI) as presented by McIntosh et al. (2011). RTI discusses different tiers for addressing student needs, with the classroom-based, tier 1 being of most importance. To be successful at the first tier, classroom teachers must be aware of how different children learn and be able to differentiate the process, content and product. I believe that through a combination of UDL and RTI, the education system will be better equipped to help all learners reach their full potential. We would be able to fit the mould to the child rather than trying to fit each child into the same mould.

References

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future directions. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 26*(18), 18-43.

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