

# UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING WORK GROUP ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

September 5, 2007

Twenty-eight national disability and general education groups have endorsed proposed legislative language to incorporate the principles of universal design for learning (UDL) into the bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. These organizations represent teachers, school boards and state and local administrators, as well as parents and advocates representing children with disabilities. On behalf of these twenty-eight national organizations, I am submitting these comments on the Miller-McKeon Discussion Draft to Amend Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

As you are aware, universal design for learning is a research-based framework for designing curricula—including goals, teaching methods, instructional materials, and assessments—to reduce barriers, provide appropriate supports and challenges, and maintain high achievement standards for all students, including those with disabilities and limited English proficiency. The use of technology is an important component of universal design for learning which is consistent with other efforts to provide America's students with a 21<sup>st</sup> century education. For more information on universal design for learning see [www.udl4allstudents.com](http://www.udl4allstudents.com).

We are very pleased to see Section 1111(c)(15) in the discussion draft regarding the development of a comprehensive state plan to address the implementation of universal design for learning in consultation with experts and stakeholders. This provision represents a landmark commitment to the principles of universal design for learning, which will result in improved instruction and assessment for all students. We strongly urge the inclusion of this provision in the bill.

We are also pleased to see draft legislative language in the assessment provisions and other provisions concerning accessible curricula which was drawn from the principles for universal design for learning. Although this proposed language is an important addition to the law, we strongly urge the Committee to add additional language to clearly link these provisions to the principles of universal design for learning. Such expanded language would formally recognize the large body of research on universal design for learning that includes assessment design and accessible curricula. As you are also aware, much of this research has been funded by the U.S. Department of Education and is well known in the education field.

The following are our specific recommendations concerning the discussion draft of ESEA:

- Amend Section 1111(b)(1)(D) to incorporate a reference to standards consistent with the principles of universal design for learning.
- Amend Section 1111(b)(3)(D)(iv) on assessments to start (after the word “shall”) with the phrase “supporting the principles of universal design for learning” and add a provision to the end which states “ and provide appropriate supports for students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities according to the intended learning standards.”

- Amend Section 1111(b)(11)(D) on state assurances regarding the delivery of accessible curricula by the LEAs to end with the phrase “supportive of the principles of universal design for learning to the maximum extent practicable.”
- Retain Section 1111(c)(15) on state assurances regarding a comprehensive plan for the implementation of universal design for learning. Also, we recommend that teachers be specifically named as one of the stakeholder groups to include in the consultation process because the use of UDL will directly impact how teachers provide instruction. Specifically, change line #17 to read " ...consultation with experts, teachers, and other stakeholders..."
- Add a new provision following Section 1111(c)(15) requiring an assurance in the state plan that the state educational agency, to the extent that it is involved in selecting and recommending textbooks and other instructional materials, will encourage the purchase of textbooks and materials that are consistent with the principles of universal design for learning.
- Amend Section 1112(c)(1)(P) on LEA assurances regarding the delivery of accessible curricula by the schools to end with the phrase “supportive of the principles of universal design for learning to the maximum extent practicable.”
- Add a new provision after Section 1112(c)(1)(P), requiring an assurance that the LEA shall encourage the use of teaching methods, instructional materials and assessments that are consistent with the principles of universal design for learning.
- Amend Section 1851 regarding the Core Curriculum Development Grant. LEAs that use the funds from the grant to develop curriculum, provide essential materials and textbooks, provide staff development and/or create and use formative assessments under Section 1851(d) should do so in a manner that supports the principles of universal design for learning.

We urge the Committee members to consider this language as they continue to work on the bill. Thank you for this opportunity to participate in the development of the ESEA reauthorization bill.

Sincerely,

Reginald Felton,  
 Chair, UDL workgroup Advocacy Committee and  
 Director Federal Relations,  
 National School Boards Association