

Reprise – Arts Access for All

Julie Palkowski, WMEA State Chair, Disability and Accessibility



In musical terms, a reprise is a repetition of musical material heard earlier in a composition or performance. This article may appear to have some elements of past points I've shared through-

out my career supporting arts education. In one sense, it's comforting to know that there are some grounded best practices that support our young musicians and creative learners. In another sense, the reprise encourages what you are probably already doing in your music classroom.

Allow me to introduce this article's topic: Understanding by Design (UDL). Understanding by Design is a framework "designed to elevate strengths and eliminate barriers, because everyone deserves the opportunity to grow and thrive (CAST)." In short UDL is a means towards the vision of "Arts Access for All" by creating meaningful and engaging experiences for all of our learners. UDL is not just for students with disabilities; it is meant to support all students with varying needs and learning types (Penn State). UDL was launched by Harvard University's Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) in 2008. The current 2024 version provides a practical framework for all content areas, including music. Throughout the school year, I will be sharing specific applications of UDL in the music classroom. Today's article will provide the general overview of UDL and access to the [Inclusive Music Education Padlet](#) with multiple resources, stories, a survey and videos.

Before I dive into UDL, allow me to introduce myself. I am pleased to support Wisconsin Music Educators Association as the disability and accessibility chair. This is a relatively new role for WMEA, taken on by the first chair, Terry Little, in 2023. I wish

to provide a special thank you to Terry for meeting me to share about her work as the founding chair. The WMEA disability and accessibility chair advocates for all aspects of music education to ensure programs and services are accessible and support students and educators with disabilities. Terry Little has provided an amazing start for our work and a solid path for me to follow.

I am honored to be serving in this role and have been working in this area, along with arts education, for most of my professional career. Before being hired as a music teacher several decades ago, I was a music specialist with the Milwaukee County Special Recreation Department, designing and facilitating adaptive arts and recreational programming for children and adults. Following that position, I had multiple paths from teaching to administration to working as a state arts education consultant. I eventually made my way back to the music classroom while also being an education coordinator for an arts foundation. My professional trajectory has led me back to working with children and adults with special needs using music and integrated arts. I am happy to serve and support you in your professional journey.

As I shared, this article highlights a framework, UDL, which provides a solid foundation in reducing learning barriers and supporting a wide range of learners in all content areas. UDL's aim is to support educators in designing meaningful and engaging educational experiences for all students which includes the participation and integration of individuals with disabilities. UDL provides flexibility in teaching and learning, allowing educators to adapt their classroom practices to meet student's specific needs (Hanson, 2025).

Here are UDL's three principles. Future articles will take an in-depth look into each of the three principles as they relate to the music classroom.

"...UDL is a means towards the vision of 'Arts Access for All' by creating meaningful and engaging experiences for all of our learners."

- **Engagement** – How to encourage students to participate in a music activity by:
 - Welcoming Interests and Identities
 - Sustaining Effort and Persistence
 - (Supporting) Emotional Capacity
- **Representation** – How to present the music task to maximize student access to learning by:
 - (Gathering) Perceptions
 - (Using) Language & Symbols
 - Building Knowledge
- **Action and Expression** – How a student can access the learning activity through their:
 - Interaction
 - Expression & Communication
 - Strategy Development

Using these UDL principles in planning for the music classroom supports all students. Here are three quick tips to get started on your professional journey using UDL.

1. Set clear learning goals.
2. Anticipate and adjust for barriers with a plan to better support the learner.

disability and accessibility

3. Design with the learner in mind, offering flexible options (i.e. provide the learner with choices in time, place, resources and how they participate.)

One last suggestion, I encourage you to actively build relationships with your colleagues who work with students identified with special needs. Continuous conversations between you and your colleagues will help you build a clear understanding of learner needs, interests, and supports, while also building up your ideas for instructional strategies and resources.

Thank you for your continued energy and efforts in our school communities. Remember to visit the [Inclusive Music Education Padlet](#) for more information about UDL, application to the music classroom, a survey on current UDL practices in the music classroom and additional stories. Feel free to contact me with your questions, suggestions and ideas. Have a wonderful school year.

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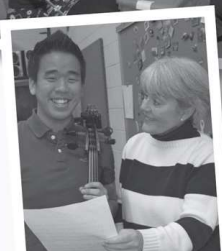
Julie Palkowski, PhD, is a teaching artist – music and integrated arts with Art for All Wisconsin, as well as the education coordinator for the Les Paul Foundation. She has been a music teacher, principal, arts administrator, national panelist and leader with SEADAE, and WI DPI arts education and creativity consultant.

Email: julie@artsforallwi.org



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