Understanding the Impact of the Race to the Top and ARRA Funding on the Promotion of Universal Design for Learning

May 2012

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Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Initiatives on the Move

Understanding the Impact of the Race to the Top and ARRA Funding on the Promotion of Universal Design for Learning

Executive Summary
May 2012

Introduction

Educators realize that students have a wide variety of strengths and needs. They also recognize all learners can and do meet high expectations when given multiple means for success. An innovative approach to teaching and learning, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) emphasizes research-based instructional practices that guide educators in using new technologies and whole classroom methods while personalizing each student’s instruction.

Although the UDL framework has existed for over two decades and educators have been utilizing UDL practices in their classrooms and schools for many years, more states and districts are now viewing UDL as a critical part of their reform efforts than ever before. Across the country, states and districts are revising their curriculum to align with the Common Core Standards in conjunction with the UDL principles.

The Challenge

Over the last twenty years, educators have been searching for reform ideas to solve the access and equity issues that create barriers to effective learning for a variety of students. Educators recognize that every child has unique strengths and needs that aren’t served well by a traditional, standardized instructional approach. The nation’s challenge is not to change the students, but rather to redesign, adapt and personalize curricula and instructional methods and create a learning environment that helps each student develop his or her full potential.

Universal Design for Learning – An Innovative Approach

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) shows great promise for transforming curriculum and instruction to provide all learners with the opportunity for success. An overarching
innovative curriculum design framework, UDL emerged from successful efforts to adapt technology to meet the needs of students with physical and cognitive disabilities. But its central principles can be applied in innovative ways to help all students from all backgrounds and at all levels become successful learners.

The UDL framework:
- includes three principles calling for educators to provide multiple means of engagement, multiple means of presenting instructional content, and multiple means of action and expression when designing and delivering instruction
- is based on the latest learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, human developmental science, and education research
- helps educators to use digital technology and innovative methods to teach whole classes while personalizing each student’s instruction
- provides a blueprint for creating flexible instructional goals, methods, materials and assessments that work for everyone—rather than the one-size-fits-all approaches found in typical instructional environments

Purpose

This report, *Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Initiatives on the Move*, represents the first comprehensive examination of UDL implementation at state and local district levels. Until now, little has been known about how familiar state education and school personnel are with UDL or how UDL implementation is being funded.

With the generous support of the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, this project was conducted by two independent research teams:
- CAST conducted the state-level analysis by interviewing state education leaders, typically, state directors of special education. The state investigation included an examination of the use of federal Race to the Top (RTTT) funds in 14 states that had mentioned UDL in their RTTT applications.
- Thomas Hehir and Associates conducted the district-level analysis by surveying 134 local special education directors in districts that received American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grants.

This study sought to:
- gain an overall “snapshot” of the ways in which state and local policies and initiatives address UDL.
- uncover the extent to which Race to the Top (RTTT) and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds have been effective in supporting UDL initiatives.
Overarching Themes

The following overarching themes emerged from this two-part study:

- **Both state and local district leaders:**
  - reported a high degree of familiarity with the UDL principles. All state leaders reported having good, very good, or excellent familiarity with the UDL principles, while more than half of the local leaders reported being extremely or moderately familiar with the UDL principles.
  - linked UDL with other education initiatives that embrace universal approaches occurring in general education environments, e.g. response to intervention (RTI), positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), and differentiated instruction.
  - perceived a connection between technology and UDL.
  - reported that confusion exists regarding what UDL is.
    - State leaders suggested that state and district personnel often do not have a clear understanding of the meaning of UDL, in particular with respect to the relationship between UDL and other initiatives such as differentiated instruction.
    - Many local leaders ($n=98$) indicated ARRA funds were used for universal approaches (RTI, PBIS, or UDL). However, when prompted, only 23 of them identified that funds had been allocated explicitly for ‘UDL’ (compared to 73 for ‘RTI’ and 64 for ‘PBIS’).

- **State leaders reported:**
  - a strong connection between UDL and standards-based education initiatives, e.g. the Common Core State Standards and statewide assessments.
  - UDL was addressed as part of their state technology plans or in the context of 21st century learning.
  - two factors are critical to UDL advocacy:
    - state leadership need to embrace UDL and
    - UDL must be understood as a general education initiative that moves beyond special education.
  - mixed understanding about the role of technology (low vs. high) in UDL implementation.
○ several challenges impeding the effective implementation of UDL, e.g. limited funding/resources for the purchase of technology, insufficient staffing levels, and length of time necessary to achieve implementation.

○ using RTTT funds for a variety of activities that support UDL implementation, including:
  ■ development of model curricula
  ■ purchase of accessible curriculum materials
  ■ creation of web-based on-line materials to address the Common Core State Standards
  ■ professional development opportunities related to co-teaching, and
  ■ infusion of UDL into programs offered by institutions of higher education.

● State leaders identified several ways in which the federal government could support states in the implementation of UDL in the future, e.g. incorporating the concept of UDL into federal policy, offering clarification on the importance of UDL, and providing increased federal funding or incentive grants.

● State leaders expressed a desire to receive additional technical assistance and support from organizations, such as CAST, in the implementation of UDL. In particular, they recommended increased availability of web-based resources and online professional development opportunities.

Local district leaders reported:

○ ARRA funds had been either ‘effective’ or ‘very effective’ at building their districts’ long-term capacity to serve students with disabilities.

○ using ARRA funds for a variety of activities to:
  ■ purchase computers (tablet, laptop and desktop) with a substantially high percentage of their funds
  ■ support professional development for general and special education teachers
  ■ purchase curricular materials
  ■ purchase technology for UDL implementation

Larger school districts received somewhat larger ARRA awards than smaller districts. Interestingly, local district leaders from larger school districts reported using these funds to promote UDL more than smaller districts did. Otherwise, the local districts that reported using ARRA funds to promote UDL were similar in nearly every other way to districts that did not report using the funds to promote UDL.
It is notable that no state or local leaders referred to the use of UDL in the context of creating substantially separate learning environments for students with disabilities.

**Background**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) was signed into law by President Obama on February 17th, 2009. According to the U.S. Department of Education, ARRA was an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, create or save jobs, and address long-neglected challenges. It focused on supporting efforts to modernize our nation’s infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, protect the nation’s safety net for those in greatest need and provide tax relief.

ARRA provided $11.3 billion dollars through Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The goal of the IDEA ARRA funds was to provide both short-term stimulus and long-term improvements in teaching and learning for children with disabilities. Some recommended uses of these funds included the purchase of technology, the provision of evidence based professional development, the development of data systems, the expansion inclusive placements for preschool children with disabilities and the hiring of staff to assist older students to transition from school to the workplace.

Race to the Top (RTTT) is a $4.35 billion dollar competitive federal grant program made available through the ARRA. The RTTT Fund includes $4 billion for statewide reform grants and $350 million to support states working to improve the quality of their assessments. RTTT challenged states to create comprehensive, coherent, statewide education reform. UDL was offered as a potential use for these funds.

The RTTT selection criteria include adoption of common state curricular standards and common assessments, state data systems, using data to improve instruction, raising student achievement, improving teacher and principal effectiveness, and intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and districts. To be eligible for RTTT funds, a state must also have applied and been approved for State Fiscal Stabilization Funds.

The RTTT grant program was introduced in July 2009 with the first phase of applications due in January 2010 and awards for the first phase given out in April 2010. Phase two applications were due in June 2010 with funds awarded in August 2010. All RTTT grant awards were to be expended by September 30, 2011. Phase three of the program was announced on November 16, 2011. States that were finalists for the second phase but did not receive funds were eligible to apply for an additional $200 million based on their population of children ages five to seventeen. Nine states were to be judged based on the...
plans in their existing applications. On December 20, 2011, phase three awards were announced.

The U.S. Department of Education sought bold reforms and promised to partner with each receiving state to help them carry out their RTTT proposals. Forty-six (46) states and the District of Columbia developed comprehensive education reform plans to apply for Phase 1 and Phase 2 Race to the Top competitive grants. Phase 1 winners - Delaware and Tennessee - were joined by Phase 2 winners: District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island. This study was conducted prior to the announcement of the Phase Three awardees therefore they are not included in this investigation.
Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Initiatives on the Move

Understanding the Impact of the Race to the Top and ARRA Funding on the Promotion of Universal Design for Learning

Introduction

Over the last twenty years, educators have been searching for reform ideas to solve the access and equity issues that create barriers to effective learning for a variety of students. Educators realize that students have a wide variety of strengths and needs. They also recognize all learners can and do meet high expectations when given multiple means for success.

During this time, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has emerged as an innovation that shows great promise for transforming curriculum and instruction in such a way that all learners have the opportunity for success. An innovative approach to teaching and learning, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) emphasizes research-based instructional practices that guide educators in using new technologies and whole classroom methods while personalizing each student’s instruction. An overarching curriculum design framework, UDL calls for educators to provide multiple means of engagement, multiple means of student representation, and multiple means of action and expression.

National UDL Landscape

Recent federal policy changes indicate that UDL is becoming more widely accepted as an educational framework within the national policy landscape. In 2008, the U.S. Congress recognized the power of UDL by including a federal definition of the term in the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA).[1] The HEOA also included several provisions encouraging postsecondary institutions and teacher preparation programs to incorporate the principles of UDL into their instruction.[2] The National Education Technology Plan similarly emphasized that the implementation of the UDL principles can help improve the educational outcomes of diverse learners (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Incorporation of the principles of UDL into other federal education laws, including the upcoming reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is a primary goal of the National UDL Task Force, a coalition of over 40 national organizations committed to advocating...
for UDL at the national level. The ESEA reauthorization bill that was approved by the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions in October, 2011 included several references to UDL. As of the writing of this report, however, legislation addressing the implementation of UDL in the K-12 context is yet to be enacted. In addition, specific federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Education on UDL implementation does not currently exist. Without such direction, one might assume that states and local school districts are waiting to move ahead with UDL initiatives. To check this assumption, this study sought to investigate the UDL landscape at state and local levels in the absence of a federal implementation mandate.

Federal Funding

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) was signed into law by President Obama on February 17th, 2009. According to the U.S. Department of Education, ARRA was an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, create or save jobs, and address long-neglected challenges. It focused on supporting efforts to modernize our nation's infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, protect the nation’s safety net for those in greatest need and provide tax relief.

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Purpose

This report, *Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Initiatives on the Move*, represents the first comprehensive examination of UDL implementation at state and local district levels. Although the UDL framework has existed for over two decades and educators have reported implementing UDL in their classrooms and schools for many years, little has been known about how familiar state education and school personnel are with UDL or how UDL implementation is being funded.

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- gain an overall “snapshot” of the ways in which state and local policies and initiatives address UDL.
- uncover the extent to which Race to the Top (RTTT) and American Recovery and
Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds have been effective in supporting UDL initiatives.

In addition, this study provides valuable information on the ways in which RTTT and ARRA funds, specifically, have been used to fund educational approaches such as UDL. Federal reporting systems have provided some insights into how the RTTT and ARRA funds are being used, however information on the manner in which states and districts are funding UDL is not readily available.

Methodology

To garner a general view of the state-by-state landscape, a web-based scan of state education policies, programs, and projects was conducted by CAST from January to March 2011. This scan was designed to determine which states identified UDL in: (1) their applications for federal funding enhancements (e.g. RTTT proposals) and (2) other state reports and plans (e.g. State Performance Plans (SPPs) and Annual Performance Reports (APRs) under IDEA).

Utilizing the data uncovered in the state-by-state landscape scan, we embarked upon an investigation to learn about the types of UDL initiatives implemented by states and how the UDL initiatives were supported. We were particularly interested in two types of funding: (1) UDL initiatives at the state level that were supported or influenced by the use of RTTT funds; and (2) UDL initiatives at the local level that were supported or influenced by the use of ARRA funds.

The two research teams used these methods for data collection and analysis: (1) The CAST team conducted the state-level analysis using phone interviews with state directors of special education; (2) Thomas Hehir and Associates conducted the district-level analysis using a survey mailed to local special education directors. By surveying both state and local district leaders, we were able to obtain a more comprehensive view of UDL implementation using a dual-system lens. This document is a combined report of these two studies and represents the collaborative efforts of both research teams.

Overarching Themes

The following overarching themes emerged from this two-part study:

- Respondents at the state level reported using RTTT funds for a variety of activities that support UDL implementation, including the development of model curricula, purchase of accessible curriculum materials, creation of web-based online materials to address the Common Core Standards, introduction of
At the local level, districts that used ARRA funds to implement UDL invested a substantially higher percentage of their funds toward purchasing computers (tablet, laptop and desktop). In addition, these districts reported using ARRA funds to support professional development for general and special education teachers and to purchase curricular materials. Most importantly, when compared to all other districts, a substantially higher percentage of districts that used ARRA funds to implement UDL reported that ARRA funds had been either ‘effective’ or ‘very effective’ at building their districts’ long-term capacity to serve students with disabilities.

Respondents at both the state and local district levels reported a high degree of familiarity with the principles of Universal Design for Learning. All respondents at the state level reported having good, very good, or excellent familiarity with the UDL principles, while more than half of the respondents at the local level reported being extremely or moderately familiar with the UDL principles.

Respondents at both the state and local district levels discussed UDL in relation to other education initiatives that embrace universal approaches occurring in general education environments, e.g. response to intervention (RTI), positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), and differentiated instruction.

At the state level, in particular, respondents indicated a strong connection between UDL and standards-based education initiatives, e.g. the Common Core Standards and statewide assessments. In addition, state respondents noted the need for UDL to be embraced by state leadership and to be perceived as a general education initiative that moves beyond special education.

It is notable that no respondents referred to the use of UDL in the context of creating substantially separate learning environments for students with disabilities.

Respondents at both the state and local levels perceived a connection between technology and UDL. Respondents at the state level indicated that UDL was addressed as part of their state technology plans or in the context of 21st century learning. Respondents at the local level reported using ARRA funds to purchase technology in the context of UDL implementation. State respondents reported confusion with respect to the level of technology (low vs. high tech) that is necessary to implement UDL.
There appears to be confusion regarding the meaning of UDL at both the state and local district levels. At the state level, respondents suggested that state and district personnel often do not have a clear understanding of the meaning of UDL, in particular with respect to the relationship between UDL and other initiatives such as differentiated instruction. At the district level, although many \((n=98)\) respondents indicated using ARRA funds for universal approaches (RTI, PBIS, or UDL), when prompted, only 23 of those respondents identified allocation of funds explicitly for ‘UDL’ (compared to 73 for ‘RTI’ and 64 for ‘PBIS’).

At the state level, respondents also identified several challenges impeding the effective implementation of UDL, e.g. limited funding/resources for the purchase of technology, insufficient staffing levels, and length of time necessary to achieve implementation.

State respondents identified several ways in which the federal government could support states in the implementation of UDL in the future, e.g. incorporating the concept of UDL into federal policy, offering clarification on the importance of UDL, and providing increased federal funding or incentive grants.

Respondents at the state level expressed a desire to receive additional technical assistance and support from organizations, such as CAST, in the implementation of UDL. In particular, they recommended increased availability of web-based resources and online professional development opportunities.
State Use of Race to the Top Funds to Promote and Implement Universal Design for Learning

May 2012
CAST, Inc.

Patricia Ralabate, Emily Dodd, Ge Vue, Joanne Karger, Frances Smith, Abby Carlisle
Description of Sample and Interview Instrument

The state sample was comprised of state directors of special education from states that had identified the terms “Universal Design for Learning” or “Universal Design” in their RTTT application. Based on the state-by-state landscape scan, 19 states were originally selected. These states had submitted applications for RTTT grants in either Phase 1 or Phase 2.

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) provided contact information for each state special education director in the 19 states. Fourteen of the 19 states that were contacted agreed to participate in the study. Four of the 14 states in the study received RTTT funding. The remaining 10 states mentioned UDL in their RTTT applications but did not receive RTTT grants.

The interview survey was designed in consultation with CAST Policy Analyst Skip Stahl, Research Scientist Dr. Samantha Daley and researchers from Hehir & Associates. The instrument included 14 questions; five questions were presented using a forced choice Likert-type numerical rating scale and nine questions were open response items. Answer choices for the numerical portions of the interview were ordered in a ranking series from 1-5. All open response items were answered through interviews conducted by phone. Most of the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and lasted approximately 20 minutes. Fourteen of the nineteen states completed the phone interview (73.6%). Three research team members simultaneously reviewed the transcripts and agreed upon common themes and findings. Survey data were supplemented with information on RTTT expenditures provided through the federal RTTT website and IDEA Money Watch website.[ii]

Key Findings

Some key findings of this state level study include:

- Although all of the respondents rated their own familiarity with the principles of UDL as good, very good and excellent, many reported they believed there is confusion among state and local personnel about what UDL is.

- All respondents, those that received RTTT funds and those that did not, reported that their states were engaged in UDL activities.
• A variety of UDL implementation activities were reportedly supported by RTTT funds.

• A majority of respondents (9 out of 14) stated that their states were making progress on implementing UDL.

• The majority (12 out of 13) of respondents reported that their states viewed UDL as much of a priority as other state priorities (e.g. RTI, PBIS); 4 respondents stated that UDL was a top priority.

• Respondents associated UDL with accessibility

• Respondents identified technology as a critical component for successful UDL implementation.

• Respondents at the state level expressed a desire to receive additional technical assistance and support from organizations, such as CAST, in the implementation of UDL.

• Respondents identified several challenges impeding the effective implementation of UDL, including limited funding/resources for the purchase of technology, insufficient staffing levels, and length of time necessary to achieve implementation.

**Discussion of State-Level Findings**

**Funds to Support UDL Initiatives**

Respondents from states that received RTTT grants reported that the funds were being used to support (1) development of model curriculum, (2) purchase of accessible curriculum materials, (3) creation web-based on-line materials to address the Common Core Standards, (4) provision of professional development related to co-teaching, and (5) efforts that embed UDL into programs offered by higher education institutions. In addition, respondents from states that received RTTT and states that did not receive RTTT funds identified a variety of other federal funding sources for UDL initiatives, including IDEA Part B and Part D, ARRA, ESEA Title 1, and federal innovation grants.

State respondents specifically mentioned that local districts employed the 15% set aside IDEA Part B discretionary funds to address student need within the general education environment. According to one respondent, IDEA state improvement and personnel
preparation grants were used to offer professional development related to UDL. Other activities that were supported by funds other than RTTT funds included purchasing assistive technology and redesigning assessment instruments for English language learners. One respondent offered that a college and career readiness grant was instrumental in funding the development of UDL tools and resources, such as an online module.

As one respondent summarized, “districts are being very, very creative...our commissioner of education, our state board of education made it clear that...[although] our work of moving these things forward...would have been...facilitated greatly by Race to the Top money, the commitment remains regardless of whether you receive the funds or not.”

**Conceptualizations of and Familiarity with UDL**

**Figure A. Respondents’ Rating of Familiarity with the Principles of UDL (n=14)**

![Bar chart showing respondents' rating of familiarity with the principles of UDL.]

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A rating of 2.5 was rounded up to 3.

**A range of definitions.** Throughout the interviews, respondents’ definitions and conceptualization of UDL indicated a range of interpretations. Some continue to find ways to clarify a common definition of UDL as a framework. As one respondent noted, “it is a framework [UDL] from which other work is done but if everyone in the Department was asked about [UDL] not everyone would be able to explain it.” Another respondent offered that the state is “building in UDL to many initiatives….so it is not just interpreted as something else…it is a scientifically based definition and concept, not to be confused with something like differentiated instruction.”

**Accessibility.** A number of respondents identified UDL as having a close association to accessibility. One comment noted, “…there’s more of an overlap with accessibility and UDL”. When asked, “how would you rank this initiative in relation to other education priorities?” a respondent shared, “we look at the assistive technology and the accessible instructional materials as high importance, but this one would be equal.” Another respondent noted that the state “promote(s) accommodations and modification for all students and one way to do this is UDL.”

**Technology.** Technology was also identified as a critical component for UDL success. Several respondents identified the strength of including digital means and methods into a UDL process while others cited the prohibitive costs of technology. For example, one respondent shared comments such as “a lot of schools don’t have a lot of resources to support the investment in technology” as an identified challenges to effective UDL initiatives in the state.”

**Assessment.** UDL is viewed by a number of the state respondents as important to the assessment process especially as value-added features that provide student access. One respondent noted “in designing assessment…certainly making the [test] accessible so that students are engaged in authentic and valid assessments, then it is absolutely a top priority.” Another highlighted the importance of personalization confirming “Promote personalized education.”

**Description of State UDL Initiatives**

All the respondents reported that the state is engaged in some UDL related activities. The types of activities undertaken to build knowledge of UDL and support its implementation varied widely. Professional development for educators was the most frequently reported activity. Respondents reported sending staff to attend UDL institutes offered by CAST or contracting CAST to provide professional development for their staff. For example, one respondent noted: “Last summer, we had a group of 40 teachers from one of our largest districts attend CAST training.
there at Harvard and they have begun to implement that across the district.”
Another respondent commented: “We have…ongoing online courses that CAST
has been involved with for teachers that deal with Universal Design for Learning.”

A few respondents indicated that their state has started its own UDL professional
development program or has been collaborating with local universities to weave UDL
into preservice teacher preparation. For example, one respondent noted: “We have
educator effectiveness academies that we run during the summer to train 6,000 educators
and the common core curriculum using UDL principles.” Another respondent
commented: “We also have principal leadership and aspiring leadership academies, and
as far as their training, Universal Design for Learning is also part embedded within their
content as well.” A third respondent stated: “We are talking to representatives in our
colleges of education. We are asking them to make sure that UDL is part of…what
preservice teachers are schooled in because it's going to be so important to curriculum
implementation…”

Other UDL related activities included:
● designing curricular materials and assessments that adhere to the UDL principles
  of design
● weaving UDL into literacy initiatives
● incorporating UDL principles into state technology plans and 21st Century
  learning initiatives
● procuring textbooks in accessible instructional materials (AIM) format
● purchasing assistive technology (AT) and providing AT training to improve
  access to curricular materials
● advocating for changes in state teacher certification requirement to include UDL,
● developing a web-based learning lab for educators, educational service providers,
  and families

Progress Implementing UDL

When asked to rate how much progress their states have made in pursuing UDL
activities, the majority of respondents (9 of 14) rated their states as having made a
great deal of progress.

Figure B. Respondents’ Rating of Progress of State in Pursuing UDL Activities
(n=13)²
A rating of 2.5 was rounded up to 3.

Some of these respondents listed leadership at the state and local district level as a key to spreading the understanding of UDL to other state offices and fostering collaboration across departments. Others described the multiple activities underway in their states and partnership with CAST to provide professional development. For example, one respondent noted that the state “has been working closely with CAST for many years on professional development.” Another commented that UDL “is a critical part and embedded throughout [the state’s] wave of reform.”

A few respondents (3 of 14) rated their state as having made some progress. They described their states as being at the beginning stage of implementation and awareness building. For example, one respondent stated that the state was “…building in UDL to many initiatives, just starting.” Another noted: “We're making progress because I think we're getting the word out.”

A third respondent indicated that there is not a perceived need for UDL from local districts.

We would say that most of the program and initiatives run out of our agency are based on perceived need and general need in districts. At the moment, there is not a perceived need by districts for universal design for learning. It’s not one of the main initiatives that is on their plate at the moment.
**UDL as a State Priority**

Respondents reported that their states are attempting to make UDL a priority. The vast majority of respondents (12 out of 13) indicated that they viewed UDL as a state priority that was equally or more important to other state education-related priorities. Four respondents stated that UDL was a top priority in their state.

**Figure C. Respondents’ Rating of UDL Implementation in Relation to Other State Education-Related Priorities (n=13)**

The majority of respondents (9 out of 14) also indicated that their state has been assigning a fair amount of priority to designing standardized assessments aligned with UDL principles. Four respondents reported that it was a top priority in their state to design standardized assessments aligned with UDL principles.
Respondents further referenced the importance of making UDL a priority that is embraced by state leadership and reflected in state policy. For example, one respondent noted that the success of the state’s UDL initiative was due in part to the fact that state leaders were “implementing the UDL principles” and “collaborating [with the department of special education].” Another respondent highlighted the fact that “the Associate Superintendent… has been a champion for including UDL in assessments.” A third respondent noted that it was essential for the “State Board of Education and Commissioner’s office [as well as the] Accountability, Title One, and Special Education offices [to] believe all staff should know and be proficient in UDL.”

With respect to state policy, respondents discussed the importance of making sure that “UDL is weaved into language and policies.” Some pointed to state policy pertaining to UDL as reflected in current or pending state legislation or regulations. In addition, a number commented on the need to have UDL perceived as a general education initiative
that goes beyond special education. For example, one respondent stated: “Leaders are looking to make [UDL] more of a general education concept like RTI with broad understanding and application beyond special education.” Another noted: “In the last 10 years [UDL] has been spreading to other offices/branches beyond special education.”

Among recipients of RTTT funds, one respondent commented on how the state’s RTTT plan would contribute to the increased infusion of UDL in state policy: “[UDL is] very strong at the state level because we are embedding it in our Race to the Top plan… this is the beginning of a cycle for us… take what we have identified as the strategies within UDL and starting it throughout the state.”

At the same time, other respondents reported the lack of emphasis on UDL in state policies as a challenge to effective implementation. For example, one respondent stated that s/he “wants all teachers to understand UDL,” but acknowledged” that this can’t happen unless UDL becomes reflected in state policy and grants.”

Perceived Effectiveness of UDL Activities

In response to the question of how effective their state’s UDL initiative(s) have been to date, nine respondents reported that their state’s UDL initiative(s) have been fairly effective or very effective.[3] No respondents reported that their state’s UDL initiative(s) have had very limited/no effectiveness.

Figure E. Respondents’ Rating of the Level of Effectiveness of Their State’s UDL Activities (n=13)
Ratings of 2.5 and 3.5 were rounded up to 3 and 4, respectively.

**Perceived Challenges Impeding Effective Implementation**

While the majority of respondents rated their state’s UDL initiative(s) as fairly effective or very effective, respondents also identified a number of challenges that are impeding effective UDL implementation. One challenge identified was a lack of widespread understanding of UDL, in particular with respect to confusion regarding the relationship between UDL and other activities such as differentiated instruction. One respondent pointed out that contributing to the:

> lack of effectiveness is that not many people know what [UDL] is … as well as [that many] have significant confusions to what is [UDL] and other regular ed initiatives like differentiated instruction. And the vast majority of the major initiatives under [UDL] have to be championed by our folks in instruction and regular ed instruction and not that many of them are familiar with UDL except for our technology office.

Other respondents agreed. For example, one commented: “Many states don’t really understand what UDL is – [they] must recognize that it is not just another name for differentiated instruction.” Another noted: “I'm sure … that the people in the [state] department [of education], some people would not have an understanding of what [UDL] is.”

A number of respondents discussed the limited understanding of UDL on the part of
teachers. For example, one respondent noted that teachers are “often left wondering where to start, how to start, how to determine if what they’re doing is UDL.” Another commented that teachers are frequently confused about the level of technology that is necessary to implement UDL and would benefit from being shown low-tech examples. This individual stated: “One of the concerns I know that some educators have is that if they don’t have a very sophisticated technology infrastructure, then they would be very limited in their implementation UDL principles… and so I think it would be important … [to] include both high-tech and low-tech examples.”

In clarifying what had lead to their [state] effectiveness with a UDL initiative one respondent noted, “lack of effectiveness in that not many people know what it [UDL] is and what are the [UDL] principles as well and has significant confusions to what is Universal Design for Learning and other regular ed initiatives like differentiated instruction.” Differentiation was a consistent theme by several respondents in either distinguishing characteristics of UDL or combining as an approach like UDL.

We have several district[s] who are [have] adopted differentiated instruction, understanding by design, universal design vs UDL…so there’s a lot that are not in conflict but they are different than UDL capacity.

In one instance, a respondent noted that UDL, “is house[d] in the differentiated learning grant….the way which we look at differentiated learning truly is…the outcome of UDL…we just don’t call it UDL…I think the term scared people and overwhelmed people…when we look at the [UDL] principles…it really is multiple means of representation.”

Additional challenges that were identified as impeding effective implementation of state UDL activities included the following: limited funding/resources for the purchase of technology, insufficient staffing levels, and length of time necessary for successful implementation.

One respondent noted, for example, that one of the greatest challenges associated with UDL implementation pertains to the “price of technology [and] some resource issues … making sure all schools have compatible systems in place to be able to use the technology.” Another respondent pointed out that one “area that is problematic is that [when it] comes to staffing, there is insufficient staffing for … implementation.” A third respondent commented:

Many teachers have been teaching a long time and were not trained in UDL, so it will take a lot of time to train these teachers and see a difference in statewide instruction that will reflect UDL. Many schools are also in need of multiple years of remediation/corrective action and it will
take time for these schools to be able to effectively incorporate UDL.

Moreover, it was noted that, with respect to the area of assessments, some states have been “finding that it is taking longer to develop new assessment items with UDL [than originally thought].”

**Potential Federal Assistance**

Respondents identified several ways in which the federal government could support states in the implementation of UDL activities in the future. Nine respondents noted that one way for the federal government to support states is by incorporating the concept of UDL into federal policy. Of these nine respondents, five explicitly mentioned the need for UDL to be incorporated into the reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and/or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). For example, one respondent noted that the federal government should provide “encouragement to continue to spread the word with information and resources on [UDL] … [making sure] it is infused in the reauthorization of both [ESEA and IDEA], and some of the [assistive technology] provisions in other federal legislation.”

Another respondent discussed the need for “any guidance and clarity that the government can provide to states on the importance of UDL.” This individual further stated: “I do hear [federal officials] mentioning UDL quite a lot. I do hear … that they’re emphasizing that UDL is an excellent practice … I think they should pursue more of that statement and … anything they can do to help us match how UDL is supported for students with ESEA, in particular, I think would be extraordinarily helpful.” A third respondent commented that “bipartisan support for UDL is important.” Moreover, it was suggested that the U.S. Department of Education “apply the principles [of UDL] in their websites and online resources.”

Nine respondents also identified the need for additional federal funding and incentive grants to help states improve the effectiveness of their UDL activities. For example, one respondent noted that:

Money is the key … [the U.S. Department of Education should] continue funding resource centers and support[ing] state work as well as providing funding incentives to support statewide UDL implementation and … incorporating UDL implementation into policies with the appropriate funding support … While we’re totally committed to the implementation of UDL and looking at our policies, it always supports us [for there to be] funding that travels with the initiative.

Another respondent commented that there is a need for “the [U.S.] Department of
Education through the Office of Special Education Programs [to create] some innovative and discretionary grant … that [states] would apply for … that [would be] a real strong support especially as we go through the future here.”

Moreover, a number of respondents suggested greater flexibility in the use of general education and special education funds. For example, one respondent recommended a “change in [federal] policy that would allow greater flexibility in the funding stream where there is not such a division between general ed and SPED as it comes down the pipe.” Other respondents advocated for increased support for professional development and the creation of “a national database for professional development tools and resources that support UDL.” Still others highlighted the particular need for additional funding and incentives with respect to UDL implementation in the area of assessments.

**Potential Assistance from Organizations**

Respondents stated that they would like to receive additional technical assistance and support from CAST in the implementation of their state’s UDL activities. A number of respondents identified the need for increased professional development from CAST, including “train the trainers” programs and cross-department trainings in UDL “so that understanding is more widespread.”

Moreover, respondents commented on ways in which increased web-based support from CAST could assist their states in pursuing UDL activities. For example, one respondent noted that it “would be good for CAST to have a web based availability of resources from basic 101 on UDL to resources and tools to support schools or states that are struggling with the implementation of UDL design.”

Other respondents recommended that CAST develop online professional development training sessions or modules. One respondent stated:

Our educators are very interested in multiple media resources, like podcasts and video clips. And what they’re really looking for is something that actually shows what UDL looks like. You know, teachers actually planning, implementing, and debriefing their universally designed lessons that are aligned with the common core. So they could see it in action … In addition, in the planning section, some of the difficulties that people have with [UDL] is finding appropriate source material on a variety of levels in a variety of mediums to address the needs of the diverse learners that we have … and … I think it would be important that those resources include both high tech and low tech examples.

The value of online training sessions that include interactive, authentic classroom
examples was noted. One respondent stated: “Especially if it had a real classroom application that once you work through the module, then you go through something with your kids, then you bring it back to share with another group of people who also work through it, so that you have that reality of a real life application. It’s not just sit and learn it…” Respondents further pointed out that online training sessions could be particularly helpful to general education teachers in order to “focus on changing the mindset of the regular education initiative.”

Additional examples of potential support from CAST included the possibility of creating grant-sponsored activities that would enable states to work more closely with CAST and the need for CAST to partner with states in order for CAST to learn about best practices that are currently underway in some states.

**Approaches to UDL Implementation in Two States**

Some respondents provided more elaborate details of UDL activities in their states. Their descriptions suggest that their states may be engaged in more comprehensive approaches to UDL implementation. Below is a synthesis of what the respondents from two states described as the state’s approach to implementing UDL.

**UDL Activities in State A**

Two respondents in State A reported that their state has been implementing UDL for numerous years. One of their earlier UDL activities involved purchasing a literacy software package that was designed in adherence to the UDL principles and putting it in the hands of classroom teachers. This approach was effective in improving student access to the literacy curriculum but not in improving other areas of implementation. As one respondent explained:

> I certainly do not want to wrap UDL around any particular program or particular piece of software. I certainly do not want to do that at all. I think that just would was a detriment to us in the early days...because it's such a literacy packet and so, people are looking at that in terms of giving students access to the curriculum where they didn't have it before. I think there can be a danger to that.

Building upon this experience, the state is now focusing on learning goals and investing in professional development. According to the respondents, their teachers and consultants have attended CAST’s professional development institutes and have begun to implement UDL activities across their district. To provide guidance and support ongoing implementation, the state is experimenting with a teacher apprenticeship model in which more experienced teachers share pedagogical expertise with each other throughout classroom implementation. For example, one of the respondents noted:
I think what’s happening right now is that with the county—with the cohort model, where they took a specific group of people had—that have the opportunity to have trainings brought them back, allowed them to implement it in their classroom, that was cohort 1. Now, this year, we’re bringing cohort 2 on board. We’re pairing the season 1, cohort 1 person with a new person and that season person will mentor the new person coming on board, that has—have a mentor along with coupling with them an education technology teacher.

UDL consultants from regional special education cooperative across the state also visit schools to assist with UDL implementation and use of assistive adaptive technology:

We currently have special education cooperatives around the state located regionally throughout all of the state and many of those have identified a specific purpose as their individual who will work with assistive adaptive technology, as well as their comment as UDL consultants. And that person is available to go out and consult and work with rules in districts specifically in this area. So I think that had—that gives us at the state department an opportunity to really reach into schools. I think that's one thing that had led to our success.

Finally, over the last several years, the state has partnered with different districts to pilot models of UDL implementation that is tailored to the needs of their schools. One of the respondents commented:

I think another thing that has led to success is the pockets of specific programs where people have looked at schools and said what would work in this area. So we just had programs. And those pilot programs that are very specialized…We certainly have what I would consider pilots of excellence or pockets of implementation.

State A’s initial effort to implement UDL began with adopting a UDL software literacy program. Since then, it’s activities have evolved into implementing multiple activities simultaneously and in different ways across districts.

**UDL Activities in State B**

The respondents from State B described their state as in the beginning stage of implementation and engaged in multiple UDL activities simultaneously. The respondents attribute the state’s commitment and progress toward implementing UDL to strong leadership support at the state level, a desire to implement UDL at the local district level,
and RTTT funding. One noted: “…leadership - both at the state level and also in terms of local level - has the desire to implement. Funding support, that we have Race to the Top funding that is being used to support this again, we feel that is very helpful.”

Many of the UDL related activities in State B are initiated at the state level. The respondents reported that the state has an internal coordinator to help with cross department collaboration and to spread knowledge and understanding of UDL: “We are implementing the UDL principles by the state leaders or collaborating across our department. We had an internal coordinator at first and we're modeling that with the local education agency.”

The state is also working on accessible instructional materials regulation. One of the respondents pointed out: “We're also working on some state regulations...We do have some regulations in Maryland and there will be more to make sure that all materials are accessible for all learners.”

Furthermore, the state is developing new state curriculum and language for the procurement of curricular resources to implement the common core state standards. The curricular resource team is using the UDL principles of design to guide its ongoing curricular development and is including UDL in its procurement document. As the respondents explained: “We are also developing exemplary units and models aligned to the common core state standards and our curriculum resource team, again, are making sure that those lessons are built on UDL principles.” This individual further noted:

...we are also procuring resources for educators to implement that new curriculum. And in our procurement documents, we request UDL as one of the components that--so if, for example, we're looking at intervention modules, those modules have to be built upon UDL principles.

The state is in conversation with colleges of education to include UDL in its pre-service teacher program and has weaved UDL into its own professional development opportunities for both teachers and administrators. According to the respondents, the state perceives UDL as a best practice and has incorporated UDL into its co-teaching framework. As a result professional development offerings to support the implementation of the state’s co-teaching framework and new curriculum align to the common core standards include UDL.

With the implementation of the principles with UDL we see it as a best practice incorporated into it [the co-teaching framework]…We have educator effectiveness academies that we run during the summer to train 6,000 educators and the common core curriculum using UDL principles. Likewise, professional development offerings for principals also include
UDL in its curriculum. And we also have principals’ leadership and aspiring leadership academies, and as far as their training, Universal Designs for Learning is also part embedded within their content as well.

Finally, state B is developing a web portal for family and educational service providers that will include information and activities related to UDL.

In addition to that we're launching next month a narrow learning lab education portal for service providers, family, professional, internal and external stakeholders. And this contains information resources and an interactive activity that's actually related to UDL.

**Summary for State-Level Study**

All of the state respondents reported having good, very good or excellent familiarity with UDL. Many suggested that there is confusion about what UDL is among state and local personnel. In particular, some respondents perceived a connection between technology and UDL or within the context of 21st century learning.

Respondents mentioned using RTTT funds for a variety of activities that support UDL implementation, including (1) development of model curricula, (2) purchase of accessible curriculum materials, (3) creation of web-based on-line materials to address the Common Core Standards, (4) introduction of professional development opportunities, and (5) infusion of UDL into programs offered by institutions of higher education.

At the state level, respondents identified several challenges impeding the effective implementation of UDL, e.g. limited funding/resources for the purchase of technology, insufficient staffing levels, and length of time necessary to achieve implementation. State respondents identified several ways in which the federal government could support states in the implementation of UDL in the future, e.g. incorporating the concept of UDL into federal policy, offering clarification on the importance of UDL, and providing increased federal funding or incentive grants.

Respondents at the state level expressed a desire to receive additional technical assistance and support from organizations, such as CAST, in the implementation of UDL. In particular, they recommended increased availability of web-based resources and online professional development opportunities.
RTTT APPENDIX A
States who mentioned UDL in their Race to the Top applications

- Arkansas
- Arizona
- Connecticut
- Hawaii
- Kentucky
- Maryland
- Missouri
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New Mexico
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina
- Utah
- Washington
- Wisconsin

RTTT APPENDIX B
States that received RTTT funds

- Florida
- Maryland*
- Massachusetts
- Ohio*

*Received RTTT funds and mentioned UDL in its application
In order to accurately represent the information collected in this session I will be recording our conversation. This recording, and your comments, will not be used for any public purposes without your permission.

About CAST:
CAST is a nonprofit research and development organization that works to expand learning opportunities for all individuals, especially those with disabilities, through Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. It provides guidance on how to create instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone--not a single, one-size-fits-all or retrofitted solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.

Purpose of this Interview:
As you may know, CAST recently conducted research to examine whether states included UDL activities in their Race to the Top applications. Our investigation concluded that twenty-three states had mentioned UDL in some capacity as an objective they would pursue. The purpose of this Interview is to follow up with all the states that we have identified to determine whether UDL activities are being pursued and how they are being funded.

Your responses are greatly appreciated and will be used to support CAST’s efforts to extend resources to states and the field. The information collected in this Interview will be included in a final report that we will be providing to our funder and will be used to inform our outreach efforts, however, none of the information will be made public and you will not be personally attributed, or held accountable, to any of the responses. This Interview will take 10-15 minutes to complete.

Interview Questions
1) Are you the appropriate state contact to speak with about initiatives related to Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?
   a. If not, whom should we contact?

2) Using a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your familiarity with the principles of Universal Design for Learning?
   a. 1- Very Limited/Not familiar
   b. 2- Fair
   c. 3- Good
   d. 4- Very Good
   e. 5- Excellent

3) Your state’s RTTT application mentions UDL ….. (insert RTTT reference).
   a. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rank this initiative in relation to other education related priorities?
      1- Not as important
      2- Slightly less important
      3- Equally important
      4- Slightly more important
      5- A top priority

4) On a scale of 1-5 how much of a state priority is it to design standardized assessments that are aligned with UDL principles?
   1- Very limited/no priority
   2- Some priority
   3- Fair amount of priority
   4- A great deal of priority
   5- A top priority

5) On a scale of 1-5, how much progress has your state made in pursuing its UDL initiative(s)?
   1- Very limited/no progress
   2- Some progress
   3- Fair amount of progress
   4- A great deal of progress
   5- Accomplished/Nearly accomplished
6) On a scale of 1-5, how effective do you feel your state’s UDL initiative(s) has been to date?

1- Very limited/no effectiveness
2- Some effectiveness
3- Fairly effective
4- Very effective
5- Extremely effective

7) Please share what you feel has lead to the effectiveness/lack of effectiveness of your state’s UDL initiative:

   a. Time to implement/Lack of time to implement
   b. Leadership/lack of leadership
   c. Funding support/lack of funding
   d. Other _______________________________

8) CAST is mindful of the fact that states may be pursuing additional initiatives that are in alignment with UDL practices and principles, but are not being referred to using “Universal Design for Learning” terminology. These initiatives could include greater investment in classroom technologies designed to reduce barriers to learning, and/or professional development for general or special ed teachers that will improve their ability to provide multiple representations of curriculum content, and multiple pathways to success for their students. To the best of your knowledge, are any additional state initiatives being pursued at this time that may reflect the principles, values, and goals of UDL?

   IF the state WON RTTT:

9) Your state was awarded RTTT funds, are these funds being used to support your UDL initiatives?

10) Are any other funds being used?

   a. IDEA part B ____________
      i. State Improvement/Personnel Prep grants
      ii. 15% discretionary funds
   b. IDEA part C ____________
   c. Title One _____________
   d. ARRA funds ____________
   e. Federal Innovation grant funds ____________
   f. Outside/Private funding ____________
If state did NOT win RTTT:

11) Your state did not receive RTTT funding, however, UDL was referred to in your state application. Are these initiatives being pursued despite the absence of RTTT funds?

a. Or have you pursued UDL initiatives in the past using other funding streams?

12) If so, how are/were these initiatives being funded? (open-ended)

a. IDEA part B
   i. State Improvement/Personnel Prep grants
   ii. 15% Discretionary funds
b. IDEA part C
   c. Title One
   d. ARRA
   e. Federal Innovation grant funds
   f. Outside/Private funding
   g. Regular LEA funding
   h. Other

13) In what ways could an organization like CAST help to support your state’s UDL initiatives? Or encourage your state to pursue UDL initiatives in the future? (open-ended)

a. Professional Development
b. Tools/Resources
c. Advocacy
d. Research dissemination
e. Other

14) In what ways could the Federal Government help to support your state’s UDL initiatives? Or encourage your state to pursue UDL initiatives in the future? (open-ended)

a. Professional Development
b. Tools/Resources
c. Advocacy/policy changes
d. Research dissemination
e. Funding incentives
f. Other
14) Final Comments or thoughts?
Special Education Directors’ Use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funds to Promote Universal Design For Learning

May 2012

Thomas Hehir & Associates,
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District Level Analysis

This report contains findings from our survey of Directors of Special Education around the country on their local education agency’s use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to promote Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In the sections that follow, we present 1) a brief summary of key preliminary findings; 2) an overview of the response rate and characteristics of survey respondents; 3) respondents’ reports of their districts’ overall use of ARRA funds; 4) respondents’ descriptions of how stimulus money was used to promote UDL and other instructional approaches; 5) respondents’ reports of districts’ use of ARRA funds to purchase technology; and 6) a brief report on themes we observed in respondents’ open response data. We also include appendices with raw data from some of the open response questions.

Key Findings

Some key findings we observed in this examination of the data include:

- More than half of respondents reported being extremely or moderately familiar with the principles of Universal Design for Learning.
- Though many ($n=98$) respondents indicated using ARRA funds for universal approaches (RTI, PBIS, or UDL) when prompted, only 23 of those respondents identified allocation of funds explicitly for ‘UDL’ (compared to 73 for ‘RTI’ and 64 for ‘PBIS’).
- LEAs that used ARRA funds to implement UDL served, on average, larger numbers of students and were awarded larger total ARRA funds. These LEAs invested a substantially higher percentage of their funds toward purchasing computers (tablet, laptop and desktop). Most importantly, when compared to all other LEAs, a substantially higher percentage of LEAs that used ARRA funds to implement UDL reported that ARRA funds had been either ‘effective’ or ‘very effective’ at building their districts’ long-term capacity to serve students with disabilities.
- Out of the 134 respondents who answered our question regarding use of ARRA funds for professional development, a substantial percentage ($n=52$, or 39%) reported that their LEAs used ARRA funds to provide training for both general and special education staff.
- Directors of Special Education from 100 LEAs reported using ARRA funds to purchase technology or equipment. LEAs who reported using ARRA funds to support UDL purchased technology at a notably higher rate.

Sampling and Respondent Characteristics
Our sample comprised a stratified random sample of 400 local education agencies (LEAs) that we sampled from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) database in July of 2011. We confirmed, using data available at www.ideamoneywatch.com, www.recovery.gov, or www.edmoney.org, that 380 of these 400 LEAs directly received ARRA IDEA funds. We then contacted each LEA by telephone to request the name and email address for the person responsible for special education. One hundred sixty of the 380 LEAs we contacted by email (42%) provided some form of response. One hundred fifty-three of the 380 (40%) provided some valid data, and 132 (35%) completed the survey.

Respondents hailed from 34 states and represented the general diversity of LEAs in the nation. Directors of special education from a variety of LEAs responded to the survey, including urban, suburban, town and rural\(^5\) LEAs. These LEAs served children with a range of demographic characteristics. Some served predominately African American, White, or Latino students, while others served diverse populations of students with a mix of racial backgrounds. Survey respondents hailed from districts with a diversity of median family income levels, with respondent districts ranging from low-income LEAs where median annual family incomes were less than $30,000 to wealthy LEAs where median incomes exceeded $100,000.

The percentage of students with disabilities in the majority of responding LEAs ranged from 11% to 16%. A small number of LEAs who provided data served a very high percentage of students with disabilities (greater than 30%, \(n=4\)) or a very low percentage (less than 9%, \(n=9\)). Respondents represented small and large LEAs, with the largest proportion overseeing special education in mid-sized LEAs (1,500-10,000 students). More than three-quarters of respondents reported that they had been responsible for special education in their LEA for over 2 years. Respondents who indicated that they had been in their positions for less than one year were asked whether they felt qualified to respond to the remainder of the survey. Eight of the 17 first-year respondents indicated that they did not feel qualified and therefore were not asked any additional questions for this survey.

\(^{5}\) These designations were assigned in accordance with NCES guidelines for determining the overall urbanicity of a school district.
The sample of LEAs who responded to the survey was similar to the population of LEAs on a number of important characteristics. Responding LEAs had similar average levels of family wealth (as measured by per capita income and median family income) and similar percentages of students who received free and reduced priced lunches as did the overall population of LEAs. The percentages of African American, White, Latino and Asian students served by LEAs were not significantly different between the response sample and the population. Total LEA enrollment represents the one significant difference we found between the response sample and the overall population. On average, respondents came from districts that served larger numbers of students than the average district in the full population of LEAs.
We found a similar pattern when we compared sampled LEAs that responded to the survey with sampled LEAs that did not respond to the survey. Although the responding and non-responding LEAs were generally similar on a range of LEA characteristics, the response sample was composed of a higher percentage of urban LEAs (13% vs. 7.5%)\(^6\) and had, on average, somewhat higher median family incomes ($51,425 vs. $47,473). The non-response sample also included a higher percentage of LEAs located in rural areas (48% vs. 36%) and served a larger percentage of students who received free or reduced priced lunches (47% vs. 43%). The socioeconomic differences between responding and non-responding LEAs, while statistically significant, in our opinion are of a small enough magnitude that they do not raise the threat of substantially biasing findings. However, the difference in response rates between urban and rural districts does appear substantial. We suspect that the lower response rate from rural districts may reflect less comfort with or access to email in rural areas. Therefore, when interpreting findings from this survey, the reader should be aware that results may be more representative of urban districts than rural ones.

**Uses of and Satisfaction with ARRA Special Education Funds**

Respondents reported using ARRA funds for a variety of purposes. Though the specific uses of funds varied widely from LEA to LEA, on average, staff costs represented a little less than half of LEAs’ ARRA spending. Approximately 1/4 of ARRA special education money spent by LEAs was used to purchase technology and equipment, and approximately 1/5 was used for professional development.

**Figure 3:** Displaying the average percentage of ARRA special education funds respondents reported allocating to different spending categories (n=125). Note: these figures were generated by taking the average values in categories across responding LEAs and thus do not represent an estimate of total dollar averages.

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\(^6\) The differences reported in this section of the report were statistically significant at an \(\alpha\)-level of 0.05.
Larger LEAs allocated this money differently than smaller LEAs in some important ways. First, large LEAS (serving more than 10,000 students) spent a larger percentage of funds on hiring new staff (average proportion of spending for large LEAs = 14%) and out of district placements (6%). Small LEAS (those with 1,500 students or less) invested higher than average percentages of their funds in professional development (24%) and technology (33%).

Approximately 2 out of 3 respondents reported using some ARRA funds either to retain or hire staff. Approximately 40% indicated that their LEAs used ARRA money to retain existing staff ($n=56$) and around 31% indicating that they used funds to hire new staff ($n=42$). Fifteen respondents reported that their districts used ARRA funds both for retaining existing staff and for hiring new staff. On average, respondents indicated that about 12% of the retained staff and 40% of new hires would be let go when ARRA funds were exhausted in September 2011.
Approximately three out of four responding LEAs reported using ARRA funds for professional development. Figure 6 (below) highlights the use of ARRA money for professional development by responding LEAs. Out of the 134 directors of special education who provided a response to professional development questions, 91 (or 68%) reported providing professional development for special education teachers; 57 (or 42%) reported providing professional development for general education teachers; 36 (or 27%) reported providing professional development for ‘other school personnel’; 28 (or 21%) reported not using ARRA funds for professional development; and 8 (or 6%) reported not knowing whether or how their districts used ARRA money for professional development.
As Figure 7 indicates, respondents were, by and large, optimistic that ARRA funds had helped their LEA to build long-term capacity to improve the education of students with disabilities.

Promotion of UDL and Other Instructional Approaches

Twenty-three, or 19%, of responding districts who provided responses to our question...
regarding instructional approaches \( n=124 \) indicated that they used ARRA special education funds to promote ‘Universal Design for Learning’ when prompted with a list of options comprising UDL, Response to Interventon (RTI), Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and ‘Other’.

If we include respondents who indicated RTI or PBIS, arguably UDL approaches under a broader definition since they utilize universally designed approaches, we see that 98 out of 124 (or 79%) of districts used money for these purposes. Our data indicate that LEAs who reported using ARRA funds for UDL were similar to the total responding sample on measures of respondent years of experience, percentage of students with disabilities, and median family income but differed in terms of overall LEA enrollment and the amount money the LEA received from ARRA.

![Figure 8: Displaying the percentage of responding LEAs that used ARRA funds to support select instructional approaches \( n=124 \)](image)

Respondents who indicated that their LEA used ARRA funds for one of the specified instructional approaches were then presented with a list of options, where they could choose multiple answers, to indicate how this was done. These data are displayed in figures (9-11) below.  

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7 Additional information regarding these “Other instructional approaches” is displayed in Appendix A.
LEAs that reported using ARRA special education funds to support UDL (n=23) looked
quite similar to those that did not \( (n=101) \)^8 in terms of district median family income, percentage of special education students, percentage of low-income students and years of experience as special education director. Districts that used ARRA funds to support UDL did, on average, have somewhat higher district enrollments (median enrollment in a UDL LEA = 4,057, vs. 3,247 in a non-UDL LEA) and received slightly higher amounts of money from ARRA (median amount in a UDL LEA= $753,110 vs. $515,771 in a non-UDL LEA).

Unsurprisingly, LEAs that reported using ARRA funds to support UDL indicated a higher level of familiarity with UDL principles than LEAs that reported not using ARRA funds to support UDL (an average rating of 4.2 vs. 3.1 on a 5-point scale).

LEAs that reported using ARRA funds to support UDL rated the effectiveness of ARRA significantly higher than those who did not. 91% of special education directors who used funds to support UDL (20 out of 22) indicated that ARRA funds had been ‘effective’ or ‘very effective’ at improving the long-term capacity of their LEA to improve the education of students with disabilities. Only 66% of LEAs who did not use funds to promote UDL (67 out of 101) provided similarly high ratings for the effectiveness of ARRA funds. \(^9\)

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\(^8\) Of the 155 directors of special education who provided some form of response to the survey, there were 31 who did not respond to the question about specific approaches to educating students with disabilities (prompted choices were UDL, RTI, PBIS, or ‘Other’). Included in these 31 respondents are around 20 directors of special education who opened the survey but only answered the first two questions (number of students in district and years of experience in their position).

\(^9\) LEAs that reported using funds for UDL also rated the effectiveness of ARRA funds higher than LEAs who reported using the funds for RTI or PBIS, with 71% and 79%, respectively, rating ARRA funds as ‘effective’ or ‘very effective’ at improving the LEA’s capacity to support students with disabilities.
Figure 13 (below) displays respondents’ answers to a question asking them about whether ARRA funds have helped teachers in their district to engage in UDL principles. This question explicitly referred to ‘UDL,’ and it provided definitions of the three core principles. If respondents answered yes to any of the three principles, they were prompted to write one or two sentences indicating how ARRA funds helped the district promote the principles indicated by the respondent. The open response data for these follow-up questions is displayed in Appendix B at the end of this document.
Funds to Purchase Technology

Seventy-nine (79%) of responding LEAs used ARRA funds to purchase technology and equipment. Computers of all types were popular purchases with a surprising number of LEAs reporting that they purchased tablet computers (i.e. iPads) with these funds.\(^\text{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Detail regarding “other” types of technology are displaying in Appendix C
Respondents who indicated that they purchased computers (desktop, laptop or tablet) were prompted with follow up questions asking them to indicate the primary user of these materials. We display these data in figures 15-17 below.
Figure 15: Displaying respondent answers to the question "Please indicate the primary way these Laptop Computers have been used" (n=60)

- Special Education Students: 3%
- General Education Students: 10%
- Teachers: 32%
- Other: 2%
- School Administrators: 53%

Figure 16: Displaying respondent answers to the question "Please indicate the primary way these Desktop Computers have been used" (n=49)

- Special Education Students: 4%
- General Education Students: 8%
- Teachers: 6%
- Other: 82%
LEAs that used ARRA funds to promote UDL invested heavily in technology. With the exception of smart boards, LEAs that used ARRA funds to promote UDL reported purchasing technology at higher rates than LEAs that did not use ARRA funds to promote UDL. The types of technology where these higher rates were particularly evident were voice-to-text technology (55%, or 12 out of 22; vs. 23%, or 21 out of 91); text readers (55%, or 12 out of 22; vs. 21%, or 19 out of 91); tablet computers (64%, or 14 out of 22; vs. 35%, or 32 out of 91); laptop computers (82%, or 18 out of 22; vs. 46%, or 42 out of 91); and desktop computers (68%, or 15 out of 22; vs. 35%, or 32 out of 91). Consistent with the rest of the findings reported in this section, LEAs that reported using ARRA funds to support UDL spent, on average, a larger percentage of their ARRA awards on technology than LEAs that reported not using the funds to support UDL (38% vs. 22%). The technology purchases of UDL LEAs also outpaced the technology purchases of LEAs who reported using funds to promote RTI or PBIS.

Themes from Open-Response Data

The survey included three open response questions that provided respondents with opportunities to elaborate on their use of ARRA funds to support UDL. Responses, along with their associated question stems, are presented in their entirety in Appendix B. In reading these comments, we observed two key themes: 1) A desire to provide services for students with disabilities in the general education classroom; and 2) A large number of references to technology.
Many respondents discussed using ARRA funds to provide services for special education students within the general education classroom through the purchase of curriculum, assistive technology and/or teacher training. Although some reported using funds to support the education of special education students in restrictive settings, most appeared to adopt more inclusive approaches that included general and special education students. One respondent said, “I feel that the ARRA funds allowed us to look at broadening the options necessary for allowing access to the general education curriculum.” Another noted, “Students with disabilities are now demonstrating knowledge of core curriculum concepts in general education settings.”

Respondents mentioned technology in these open response questions with surprising frequency. When prompted to discuss how ARRA funds had helped their LEA’s implement UDL principles, more than 40% (34 out of 84) made some reference to technology. Although some respondents discussed technology as narrowly focused on providing assistance to individual students, many more respondents indicated an expansive view of technology that was more consistent with UDL philosophy. For example, one respondent wrote, “We implemented interactive technologies (ActiveBoards, ActiveInspire, etc.) and professional development to help teachers create greater learning and response opportunities and increase student engagement for all students.” Another commented, “Through the use of the technology available in the classroom the teachers can present the materials in ways other than lecture or direct instruction and the students have the opportunity to use a variety of response modes--not just paper/pencil.” Respondents appeared particularly impressed with the potential of the iPad, with one saying, “Ipads are amazing in the classroom. Opens a whole new world for most sp.ed. students.”

**Summary of District Level Study**

This survey of local education agencies’ use of ARRA special education funds yielded a number of interesting findings. Overall, LEAs reported using these special education funds to promote universal approaches within the general education classroom at a surprising rate. Although less than 1 in 5 responding LEAs reported using funds to support UDL, more than half of respondents did report using funds to support Response to Intervention (RTI) programs or Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). RTI and PBIS, while not technically UDL, are universal approaches to education. We take this to suggest that many LEAs who are not currently implementing UDL (perhaps because of lack of familiarity with the term) may be open to doing so. This finding is especially relevant given the finding that only 52% of respondents to this survey were either moderately or extremely familiar with UDL.

It is also notable that LEAs that reported using funds to promote UDL were, on average, somewhat larger than LEAs that did not implement UDL, and received somewhat larger
awards from ARRA. Otherwise, LEAs that reported using funds to promote UDL were similar in nearly every other way to LEAs that did not report using the funds to promote UDL. Nevertheless, UDL LEAs were substantially more likely to report that ARRA funds had helped to build long-term capacity within their districts. Policy makers interested in leveraging additional dollars to support lasting positive change may therefore look to UDL as a potential high-impact strategy.
ARRA Appendix A:

Other Instructional Approaches

- PLC
- Pay for the unreimbursed cost of sped programming
- Differentiated Instruction
- Autism
- Our state failed to fund and used the ARRA to back fill state funds.
- Purchase Assistive Technology
- AT/AC
- Integrated Co-Teaching, Literacy Support
- Technology
- Special ED Liaison
- Purchase Technology
- Autism, Literacy
- Co-Teaching, WIATIII
- Reading and Math instruction
- Differentiated instruction
- Why Try, Love and Logic, SCERTS, CPI
- Inclusion, ABA, CPI, etc.
- Speech Delivery Services
- Fusion Reading, Wilson Language
- Differentiated Instruction, Co-teaching
- ARRA was not used to promote instructional approaches
- Inclusion and Co-teaching
- Assistive Technology and Co-Teaching
- IDEA money is used to support an RtI coach within our district - not ARRA funds
- TCI, specially designed instruction; switch to new special education database
- Read 180
- Reading assessment/interventions
- Purchased Read 180 and necessary technology to support program implementation
- literacy and co-teaching practices
- Supplies and materials
- AIS
- inclusion
- Inclusion/Co-teach
- Training for specialized reading programs.
• Assessment for learning, differentiation
ARRA Appendix B:

1: How were UDL principles used to support students?

Respondents who indicated that they used ARRA funds to support UDL were asked to describe how UDL principles are now used to support students in their school district. Open response data from the fourteen respondents is displayed in Box 1 below.

Box 1: Open response data on how UDL principles are now used to support students in the respondent’s LEA. (n=14)

- Accessing the general curriculum; incorporating into curricular planning to implement common core for math and language arts
- All middle school teams were provided professional development related to UDL and will use this training to further plan for math instruction.
- Cross training gen ed and SE teachers has made the idea of access to the curriculum for all learners part of the planning of lessons. Increased use of technology for both accessing [sic] information, as well as student expression of understanding has improved learning outcomes. 
- Our use of SmartBoards and IPads has enhanced our UDL efforts.
- differentiated instruction all classrooms / use of technology in all classroom
- One Example- software program that will support data collecting and record keeping for all students in area of reading.
- Teachers are developing lessons to meet the needs of a wider range of students within their classrooms. They are also using more technology.
- Technology is used to give all access to the curriculum regardless of the area of disability.
- They continue to be utilized e we make curricular adjustments to implement the common core standards.
- They have continued to use this method through professional development. Through embedded curriculum mapping and design.
- Through the use of appropriate accommodations, access to technology, etc.
- We have purchased a product from [REDACTED] called SOLO and it is available [sic] to all students and supports reading and writing of text.
- We implemented interactive technologies (ActiveBoards, ActiveInspire, etc.) and professional development to help teachers create greater learning and response opportunities and increase student engagement for all students.
- Working with staff to identify essential learning targets an benchmarks in math, reading and language arts.
2: Open response data regarding how ARRA funds have helped LEAs to promote UDL principles

In the space below, please write one or two sentences regarding how you think ARRA funds have helped your school district use multiple ways to keep students highly motivated to learn (n=13)

- Provided opportunities for enrichment / Allowed students to explore curriculum in a variety of ways
- I think it has helped address the identification of students that can learn and progress with differentiated instruction. It also gave teacher through PD the ability, strategies & tools to provide that to students in their classrooms.
- SMART Boards, Tablets, access to technology
- The use AARA funds enabled our district to better address the essential outcomes [sic] we follow in making sure that we taught what was essential for all students, determining if they understand, intervening with supports when they did not understand
- Through some of the materials that were purchased, information can be presented in the classrooms through differentiated modalities.
- Through the use of the technology available in the classroom the teachers can present the materials in ways other than lecture or direct instruction and the students have the opportunity to use a variety of response modes--not just paper/pencil.
- Training of staff in reading and purchasing specialized material to teach deficit areas.
- We have used ARRA funds to provide more technology to students.
- We hired a Sped Rigor Specialist that worked with individual teachers and identified students to scaffold material.
- We used the funds to pay salary.
- by presenting information and content to students in various ways
- [NAME OF DISTRICT REDACTED] has benefited from ARRA as we now have assistive technology devices that we would not otherwise have obtained. We were able to provide an extensive after-school intervention program so we were able to "fill in gaps". It speaks to UDL concepts.
- [NAME OF DISTRICT REDACTED] was able to create an alternative program at the high school level. It allowed students to receive services in a smaller more therapeutic environment.
In the space below, please write one or two sentences regarding how you think ARRA funds have helped your school district provide students with more than one way to express what they know (n=7)

- Differentiation
- It has helped us provide upgrades to one of our facilities that serves our preschool students. It has also helped us support staff with their computer needs since we are starting a web-based IEP system. It has also helped us preserve 2 teaching positions in the past and purchase software to support our students who are non-verbal.
- The funds assisted [NAME OF DISTRICT REDACTED] will retaining teachers who were already working in the system. The ARRA funds helped to keep teachers and paraprofessionals working for two years.
- The funds did enable us (indirectly) to expand use of Dragon Naturally Speaking, which gives some students the ability to express themselves in new ways.
- Through access to technology and software such as Read/Write GOLD, students can use multiple modes to express their learning.
- Through our co-teaching classes students are given choices of assignments to assist them show summatively what they have learned. The teachers design their assessments based on the needs of the students.
- We use this data to help define specialize services (special ed, gifted, EIP, POI, remedial, etc.) a student may need.
- We were able to use the ARRA funds to purchase computers used by staff and students. Students were able to use software to increase curricular knowledge and application of knowledge.

In the space below, please write one or two sentences regarding how you think ARRA funds have helped your school district use multiple ways to keep students highly motivated (n=8)

- ARRA funds provided needed technology equipment to offer varied teaching techniques and tools to our population, which is primarily emotionally disturbed youth. We were also able to offer coaching to teachers in math and ELA instruction.
- Being able to purchase an number of new technology items as well as curriculum materials
- Students love technology and are used to getting stimulation from all the technology at home. Students learn and they do not even realize it....
- They gave us an opportunity to build capacity by increasing our technology for students. / The funds allowed us to train teachers and to improve their skill sets in working with all students.
• Through the use of Life Space Crisis Intervention, teachers are better able to utilize a variety of strategies to reengage students when they are in crisis.
• We are collecting data from speech clinicians to determine if students are more motivated by the iPad than traditional therapy approaches.
• We created handicapped accessible classrooms for students with the greatest special education needs. By picking up the cost of fringes for special ed staff funded via the state funding formula, we did not have to make any cuts.
• developed RtI strategies, management etc... This, in turn, made teachers more aware of universal design and making all students engage in learning that appeals to each of their strengths.

In the space below, please write one or two sentences regarding how you think ARRA funds have helped your school district use multiple ways to keep students highly motivated to learn & provide students with more than one way to express what they know (n=5)

• ARRA funds allowed us to retain staff who would have been on unemployment without the funds. It helped us increase our graduation rate for students with IEPs to 82.8% and reduce our dropout rate for students with IEPs by 67%. If we could maintain this level of funding from the federal government, you would be amazed what progress our students with disabilities could make and the long-term cost savings to society in their adulthood.
• Given the wide range of handicapping conditions addressed within [NAME OF DISTRICT REDACTED], I feel that the ARRA funds allowed us to look at broadening the options necessary for allowing access to the general education curriculum in numerous ways. Additionally, it allowed us to provide a broad range of staff development and support to our general and special education teachers in providing better access to our students.
• Teachers are able to use the interactive white boards to access information and materials to enhance their instruction and differentiate their methodology. By using the response systems the students are able to share their knowledge in an innovative manner. Also, by using the text-to-speech and speech-to-text software the students are able to gain and to share their knowledge.
• The purchase of Kurzweil helped students access information independently, rather than relying an adult to access text. The purchase of additional computers permitted students to express themselves through word processing, rather than writing by hand.
• Use of technology and apps for delivery of instruction in multiple formats for maximum access and support for learning. Use of technology and apps for student demonstration of mastery of content.
In the space below, please write one or two sentences regarding **how you think** ARRA funds have helped your school district **use multiple ways to keep students highly motivated to learn** & **use multiple ways to keep students highly motivated** *(n=7)*

- Academic Lead Teachers were hired to provide academic support to students through supplemental services and needs-based learning in addition to providing support for and facilitating compliance requirements in our schools.
- Read 180 is a program that presents material in a highly interactive, multi-modal approach including watching videos, individualized computer instruction that responds to specific student needs, and group instruction that involves discussion and problem solving. The Promethean Boards - interactive white boards - allow students direct access to technology as a group and/or individually and is highly engaging.
- Staff development on specially designed instruction and collaboration with general education teachers gave teachers ideas on how to present curriculum in more than one way and ideas to keep students motivated.
- The Special Education Liaison was trained as Literacy Coach.
- Through the use of the computers student were able to access curriculum electronically both in reinforcing instruction, and providing intensive remediation. Computers also allowed students to respond in a different mode.
- We have used the funds to purchase products including Read 180, which presents the teaching of reading in a multi-modal approach. iPods and iPads have replaced PECS systems...they are highly motivating, engaging and have been quite successful with non-verbal students.
- We were able to incorporate multiple types of technology into the classrooms that helped keep our kids interested and engaged in learning. The technology also involved a multiple learning styles.

In the space below, please write one or two sentences regarding **how you think** ARRA funds have helped your school district **provide students with more than one way to express what they know** & **use multiple ways to keep students highly motivated** *(n=3)*

- Through the use of technology students can express their knowledge in various means.
- We have implemented Read 180 or System 44 in every school to assist every special ed student improve reading and comprehension skills. Ipads are amazing in the classroom. Opens a whole new world for most sp.ed. students.
- grant monies supported differentiation of instruction using tools not otherwise
In the space below, please write one or two sentences regarding how you think ARRA funds have helped your school district use multiple ways to keep students highly motivated to learn, provide students with more than one way to express what they know, and use multiple ways to keep students highly motivated (n=41)

- Teachers have been the tools through professional development to provide instruction appropriate for various special needs students.
- ARRA funds have helped the district provide professional development in the areas of RtI and behavior management. These funds have also assisted us in keeping the level of quality in our special education programs that helps our students to be successful.
- ARRA funds provided several options for students to access the curriculum through different technologies and assess their outcomes through several technologies.
- Allowed students to be serviced in the LRE with a co-teaching model that promoted differentiated instruction and various assessments formats.
- By providing funds for attending workshops and conferences, and supplying resources for teacher to utilize at school.
- Children can use technology to respond to curriculum in varied ways. / Children have access to all areas of curriculum. /
- Direct instruction and practice by an Instructional Coach to building staff, with specific practice on Math and writing standards.
- Due to training-more teachers became aware of how to handle all types of children's learning modalities. Although not 100% effective as teachers were not all receptive to the idea of teaching students differently.
- Funding provided equipment for students to utilize in their learning and to enable them to have an alternate way of responding.
- Funds allowed us to provide the necessary training to staff. We were afforded the opportunity to embrace the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project which incorporates the principles of Universal Design for Learning, purchase a progress monitoring software for all teachers to use, implement Kurzweil Technology at all levels and provide other professional development training on site.
- Funds were used to pay salary of existing employees and other funds were used to buy materials, training of special ed and regular ed and technology to provide much more appropriate instruction.
- I think the greatest accomplishment was that ALL teachers and administrators saw the benefit and impact to achievement for ALL learners.
- In establishing RtI in all the elementary schools, the funding helped support positions that assisted both regular education teachers as well as exceptional...
children's teachers meet the needs of all the students. The funding helped lessen the caseload sizes while opening the doors for collaborative inclusive practices to be maximized throughout the schools thus maintaining the least restrictive environment for all children.

- In my opinion ARRA funding helped design the Special Education along with RTI the way it was intended. I realize we need to be thrifty with our funding, however if we correct students in these areas the domino effect means we have helped social security, work force, community responsibility, and over all a better society.
- Interactive technologies allow teachers to differentiate modes of student response, it provides opportunity and accountability for every student in the classroom, and it gives all students an equal opportunity to respond and interact with the curriculum.
- List the three but I will try to remember / The funds helped us purchase more up to date electronic devices and programs that students are more familiar with than the traditional pen and paper. / Many teachers are electronically deficient. When we purchased the programs we provided training on how to use them as well as the devices. Therefore, they will not likely sit on a shelf or hang on a wall and not get used. With the training we were sure that several people in the building would at least know what parts and pieces go with the equipment and we won't end up with a camera eye in the trash again. / Students are way more technology savvy than some of us teachers. They are more interested in the programs and have better knowledge of the devices than students have ever had before. We don't need to do the keyboard class anymore. Since math is still math...nothing has changed then we would rather they use the technology to understand math concepts than loose them with boring old methods.
- Maintaining appropriate staffing levels, purchase of cutting edge technology
- New approaches have been made available that would [not have been possible.
- Offered resources to make it happen.
- Purchase of technology - smart boards, increased number of computers. Purchase of differentiated materials and alternate [sic] instructional materials.
- Retaining teachers that are able to support and promote all three UDL principles
- Student engagement and performance has increased as measured by admin walk throughs and state assessment results.
- Students with disabilities are now demonstrating knowledge of core curriculum concepts in general education settings. Achievement scores of students with disabilities have risen significantly the last two years as a result of incorporating UDL principles. The ARRA funds afforded [NAME OF DISTRICT REDACTED] the opportunity to purchase necessary equipment and materials, provide staff focused on coaching teachers in UDL, and provide PD to general education and special education teachers.
• Teachers are more comfortable in determining approaches to meet student needs while utilizing data to measure progress.

• Teachers now have available to them multiple curriculums in reading, writing, math, and transition. They are better able to match the needs of the student to a curriculum which will promote student success. Students have better access to technology and are able to demonstrate mastery in ways they couldn't before.

• Technology + PD

• The grant has provided motivating, engaging learning experiences for all students through our increased use of technology. Learning has become more personalized. Student expression of learning can now take many forms, and barriers to both learning and expression have been removed. Students who were formerly either reluctant or struggling readers or writers can now participate on a more level playing field through the use of technology.

• The majority of training has been devoted to too and making curricular adjustments to engage all students.

• The purchase of technology, such as the iPad and Smartboards, have significantly increased the level of the learner's engagement and teacher's capabilities.

• The technology acquired has provided opportunities for students to access and engage with curriculum. The reading programs provide additional tools for teachers to utilize to improve student learning.

• The use of additional technology both for teachers and students has provided the opportunity for students to assess instruction in a variety of ways enhancing differentiated instruction and motivation.

• These fund have helped purchase programming, technology and professional development in order to motivate teachers to use udl in the classroom.

• Through the use of the purchased technology and the professional development, teachers were able to provide instruction using a multi-media approach. Students could then become more actively engaged in their learning.

• Through training of our teachers (gen ed and spec ed) to learn different assessment and instructional strategies.

• We have begun to have consistent expectations for students across grade levels. lessons are more tiered with multiple ways for the student to demonstrate mastery of skills. We have had most success at the K-5 level. Significant more work is needed at all grade levels. Without additional funds to provide support to staff, we will have a difficult time moving forward at a rapid pace. Things will move slowly, but they will move forward because this is best for students.

• We were able to continue to provide staff in order to provide appropriate classroom instruction to meet the needs of our special needs students.

• We were able to provide training in UDL and Assistive Technology so teachers are knowledgeable and have needed skills. We were able to provide equipment - computers, interactive white boards, and scanners to support the use of UDL in
classrooms. These initiatives support all three principles.

- we now have options for work production / we have trained staff on UDL
- [NAME OF DISTRICT REDACTED] students and teachers benefited from creating and exploring highly effective, engaging, and lasting lessons that will help them sustain a level of support for individual student needs.
- [NAME OF DISTRICT REDACTED] purchased math materials to better address the learning needs of children with special needs, WHY Try materials to assist is motivating children to be highly engaged, and Core Source books to specifically address reading deficits for all children.

3: Respondent Additional Thoughts

- ARRA funds were used to reduce the expense for providing specially designed instruction from the General Fund.
- ARRA funds were very helpful in addressing academic and behavioral needs of students, providing new technology for Resource Teachers resulting in improved access, professional development opportunities for teachers and staff. Teachers in some cases became trainers of trainers in our district which will give long term benefits for staff development and children.
- ARRA helped in the short run, especially with training, now though without it, it will not take long for the results to falter due to lack of reinforcements. Also I forgot to add that we did hire 4 staff for RtI from County level ARRA dollars that were eliminated after only 1 year.
- Because the AARA funds were used to retain staff and allowed the District to reduce MoE, the reduction in staff has ultimately hurt our programs. In my opinion, the Federal Administration did not think this consequence through very carefully!
- Dr Hehir, My apologies for just now finding the time to complete your survey. I would appreciate knowing what your data has demonstrated once you have completed your study. Sincerely, [NAME OF RESPONDENT REDACTED]
- Hi - there was no place to really indicate that the district did not follow the guidelines for how to use the ARRA funds to build capacity. Decisions were made before I came to the district. It was a huge missed opportunity to get going on PBIS, UDL, RtI, etc. Our state funds education so poorly that the district felt compelled to essentially use the $$ to fill budget holes. No capacity was built, unfortunately.
- Incorporation of technology to differentiate instruction continues to be a challenge for schools and a focus of our administrative team in the coming year.
- I really am not aware of what you are talking about ...universal learning.....but I would love to know......
- It is unfortunate that district's were allowed to reduce their Maintenance of Effort...
(MOE) in conjunction with receiving ARRA funds (ie., MOE could be reduced by the amount of ARRA dollars received), in effect this amounted to district Special Education budgets remaining "whole" initially, but now that ARRA funds have ended the MOE level remains at the lowered level. As a result ARRA funds actually hurt Special Education services nationally, as many district's are now funding special education at a level lower than they were prior to ARRA, despite having additional students with more severe disabilities and increased costs.

- I was under the impression that the monies through ARRA were to be used for staffing and a few 1 time purchases...this was the direction we were given to proceed with the monies.
- I will be very interested in the total survey results.
- Maintenance of effort requirements would ensure that special education providers are not eliminated during difficult times. All of our ARRA funds when to provider salaries which means that perhaps general education providers jobs were preserved because of the additional money. However, the added funds with no direct sped benefit caused a hardship on maintenance of effort responsibilities last year and will again this year. Since no ARRA funding was allocated to professional development and there were no "no" response options on the PD questions those responses do not reflect the actual impact.
- More representatives need to be on state boards representing Special Education, Response to intervention, and other disabilities [sic]. Most members have no idea what it takes to get these process in place and on a productive level!
- Thanks for collecting this data to help emphasize the need for the federal government to fulfill the promise to fund 40% of the excess cost to educate students with disabilities.
- The ARRA funds also allowed us an opportunity to work collaboratively with other federal programs to cost share some positions which we were also able to continue post ARRA. The addition of the funds also allowed us to be creative in establishing programs that would improve our opportunity to maintain them after the funds were gone. For example we created much needed behavioral programs, language development programs, and improved our work of establishing inclusive environments for students with disabilities that were appropriately staffed and equipped[sic] to meet the needs of the child.
- The ARRA funds were extremely beneficial in allowing us to purchase programs and equipment that would have been cost-prohibitive in the past. Our students with special needs have reaped the rewards of this supplemental money.
- The district used ARRA funds primarily to retain positions paid from operational funds. I was not afforded a voice in how these funds were spent.
- The IDEA-ARRA funds provided a two-year window where special education was funded at a level that was promised 35 years ago (approximately 38%). With this funding, [NAME OF DISTRICT REDACTED] was able to impact the
education of students with disabilities and begin building capacity of general and special educators. Achievement and behavioral data during this two year period supports the impact of the initiatives funded through the ARRA funds.

• This survey didn't adequately allow me to describe our main use of the ARRA funds. Essentially, since our district is in relatively good financial shape, we used ARRA in large part to enable us to increase/maintain an unappropriated fund balance (i.e., savings account for a 'rainy' couple of years) which we need this year to balance our general operating fund budget and will undoubtedly continue to need until the economy finally improves.

• This was difficult to fill out as money was spent slightly differently for each year. Also, there isn't a direct relationship between positions that were funded by 611 ARRA money and the positions that were eliminated. Much of the spending for students with disabilities is mandated so as the 611 ARRA money was lost positions that were eliminated were general education teachers or aides.

• We did not spend all of our money

• We have built immense capacity to systematize the process of response to intervention (or "instruction" as we like to say). We also significantly increased staff's ability to use positive behavior supports.

• we used ARRA money to offset current staff cost for students with disabilities. We do however use our Medicaid dollars to provide technology (ipads and assistive tech devices) to students

• [NAME OF DISTRICT REDACTED] has utilized the ARRA funds to enhance academic progress, assess, and opportunities for success for students with disabilities. Thank you.
ARRA Appendix C

Other Types of Technology

- Printers
- AIMES Web
- Aukey Pad, FM system components
- OT/PT equipment
- Discipline tracking data
- iPods
- Lifescribe pens/iPOD touch
- Communication devices
- Echo Pens
- FM System
- I, CPS systems
- Virtual field trip set up, promethean boards
- Touch screen, etc
- DANA
- Kindles, ipovs, projectors, mimeos
- Response devices
- Extended, portable keyborads
- Accessibility, touch screens, instructional software
- Communication devices such as TANGO machine
- Tap-It
- Scanners
- Reading pens; portable word processors; ESL translators
- Sensory supplies for Occupational Therapy
- FM systems for hearing impaired
- Digital recorders;
- Projectors,
- Tandberg systems, classroom amplification systems, pen readers
- Whiteboards
- Reading Pens, telebinoculars
ARRA Appendix D

LEA Survey

Electronic version viewable at https://hgse.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eqCSUOwhNZYNUMc

PAGE 1

Thank you...

... for lending your voice to our questionnaire on the timely and critical topic of the use and impact of special education stimulus funds!

As a reminder, this survey should take no more than 5-10 minutes to complete, and your responses will be completely anonymous.

The questionnaire does not require any research on your part, so please do not spend any extra time looking up records to answer any of these questions.

The button below will take you to the survey, and thank you again for sharing your expertise on these issues.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas Hehir

PAGE 2

Please indicate the approximate number of students served by your school district:

- ○ Less than 750 students
- ○ Between 750 and 1,500 students
- ○ Between 1,500 and 10,000 students
- ○ More than 10,000 students
Please click and drag the slider bar below to indicate the approximate percentage of students served by your school district who are students with a disability:

Percentage of students with disabilities in your school district

Please indicate the percentage of students served by your school district who are students with a disability

Please indicate how long you have overseen the education of students with disabilities in your school district

• Less than 1 year
• Between 1 and 2 years
• Between 2 and 5 years
• More than 5 years

PAGE 3

Did your school district use ARRA special education funds to retain existing special education staff whose positions would have otherwise been eliminated?

• Yes
• No
• I do not know
Please estimate the approximate number of staff positions that were **retained** through the allocation of ARRA special education funds in each of the following categories:

- [ ] Paraprofessionals
- [ ] Certified special education teachers
- [ ] Related service personnel (e.g. speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, school psychologists, school nurses)
- [ ] Instructional coaches
- [ ] Administrators
- [ ] Other – please specify: 

Please estimate approximately how many of these retained positions will be **eliminated** when ARRA special education funds are exhausted in September of 2011:

- [ ] Total number of retained positions that will be eliminated by September of 2011

**PAGE 5**

Did your school district use ARRA special education funds to **hire new** special education staff?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] I do not know

**PAGE 6**

Please estimate the approximate number of **new staff positions** that were created through the allocation of ARRA special education funds in each of the following categories:

- [ ] Paraprofessionals
- [ ] Certified special education teachers
Related service personnel (e.g. speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, school psychologists, school nurses)

Instructional coaches

Administrators

Other – please specify:

Please estimate the approximate number of these new staff positions that will be eliminated when ARRA funds are exhausted in September 2011:

Total number of new positions that will be eliminated by September 2011

Did your school district use ARRA special education funds to provide professional development to school staff? (Please check all that apply).

- Yes, we used ARRA special education funds to provide professional development for special education teachers.
- Yes, we used ARRA special education funds to provide professional development for general education teachers.
- Yes, we used ARRA special education funds to provide professional development to other school personnel (please specify): 
- No, we did not use ARRA special education funds to provide professional development to school staff.
- I do not know

Did your school district use ARRA special education funds to promote the following instructional approaches? (Please check all that apply).

- Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Other – Please specify:
- I do not know
PAGE 8

In what ways did your school district use ARRA special education funds to promote **RTI**? (please check all that apply)

- [ ] By hiring or retaining necessary staff
- [ ] Through the purchase of curricular materials
- [ ] By providing professional development/ training for special education teachers
- [ ] By providing professional development/ training for general education teachers
- [ ] Through the purchase of technology or equipment
- [ ] Other (please specify):
- [ ] I do not know

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In what ways did your school district use ARRA special education funds to promote **PBIS**? (please check all that apply)

- [ ] By hiring or retaining necessary staff
- [ ] Through the purchase of curricular materials
- [ ] By providing professional development/ training for special education teachers
- [ ] By providing professional development/ training for general education teachers
- [ ] Through the purchase of technology or equipment
- [ ] Other (please specify):
- [ ] I do not know
In what ways did your school district use ARRA special education funds to promote UDL? (please check all that apply)

- By hiring or retaining necessary staff
- Through the purchase of curricular materials
- By providing professional development/training for special education teachers
- By providing professional development/training for general education teachers
- Through the purchase of technology or equipment
- Other (please specify):
- I do not know

Please describe briefly how UDL principles are now used to support students in your school district:

Please indicate which types of technology/equipment your school district purchased using ARRA special education funds. (Please check all that apply).

- Desktop computers
- Laptop computers
- Tablet computers
- Electronic text readers (e.g. Kurzweil)
- Voice-to-text software (e.g. Dragon Naturally Speaking)
- Braille translation software
- Eye tracking software
- Other technology/equipment – Please specify:
- I do not know
Please *click and drag* the slider bars below to estimate the percentage of your school district's ARRA special education funds that were allocated toward each of the following items:

| Estimated percentage of total ARRA special education funds spent on each item |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                         | 0               | 20              | 40              | 60              | 80              | 100             |
| Purchase technology/equipment |                |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Retain existing staff     |                |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Hire new staff            |                |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Teacher training/Professional development |                |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Other (please specify):   |                |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
Please indicate your familiarity with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?

- I am **not at all familiar** with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- I am **slightly familiar** with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- I am **somewhat familiar** with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- I am **moderately familiar** with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- I am **extremely familiar** with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

In your opinion, have ARRA special education funds helped teachers to promote the following Universal Design for Learning principles? (please check all that apply)

- ☐ Provide students with more than one way to express what they know or are able to do.
- ☐ Use multiple ways to keep students highly motivated to learn.
- ☐ Present curriculum to students in more than one way.

In the space below, please write one or two sentences regarding how you think ARRA funds have helped your school district promote UDL principles. *(piped from page 14)*
Thank you so much for completing our survey. Please use the space below to share any additional thoughts about the issues discussed in this survey.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas Hehir
About the National Center on UDL

Founded in 2009 through a generous grant from the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, the National Center on UDL cultivates a dynamic and effective UDL field by providing resources and information about advocacy, research, and implementation and connecting stakeholders through the UDL Connect community. Educators, parents and policymakers can learn more about UDL principles and practices and how to join the UDL movement at the National Center on UDL, www.udlcenter.org.

About CAST

CAST is a nonprofit research and development organization that works to expand learning opportunities for all individuals through Universal Design for Learning. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Initiatives on the Move study was led by Dr. Patti Ralabate. CAST Director of Implementation, Dr. Ralabate was a Boston College-CAST postdoctoral fellow in residence at CAST during 2010-2011. Previously, she served as Senior Policy Analyst for the National Education Association and taught for 25 years as a speech-language pathologist in Connecticut. CAST co-authors for this study included Dr. Joanne Karger, Emily Dodd, Ge Vue.

About Thomas Hehir and Associates

Dr. Thomas Hehir, Professor of Practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, served as director of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs from 1993 to 1999. As director, he was responsible for federal leadership in implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and played a leading role in developing the Clinton administration's proposal for the 1997 reauthorization of the IDEA. Previous to 1993, he served as associate superintendent for the Chicago Public Schools, and a variety of positions in the Boston Public Schools. Associates for this study included doctoral candidates Todd Grindal and Hadas Eidelman.