

The

New Hampshire UDL Innovation Network

Year 6 (2023) Report



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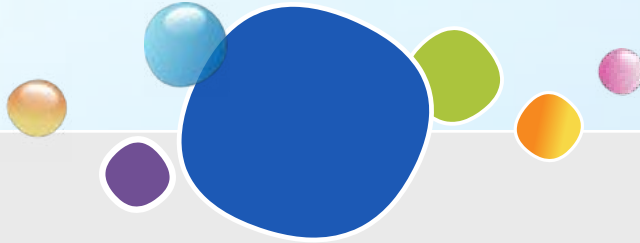


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A Letter from New Hampshire Department of Education

Commissioner Frank Edelblut

I would like to take a moment to honor and celebrate New Hampshire educators for their unwavering commitment and dedication to our students. I am particularly grateful for the educators who have volunteered to improve their practice through the Universal Design for Learning Innovation Network, and who exemplify a profound commitment to growth in their classrooms and schools. Their investment in continuous improvement has been instrumental in fostering a culture of educational expertise throughout the state.

Through the strategic application of the UDL framework in instructional planning, our educators are breaking down barriers to learning and providing all students with an enriching curriculum and a sense of control over their own learning journey. The sustained educational innovation within our state is a testament to the commitment of our educators. We are working towards a future where all of our students have a personalized educational experience that not only ignites their passion, but also encourages them to build upon their strengths, enabling them to realize their full potential and create promising futures for themselves.

I take immense pride in the dedication shown by these educators who are diligently laying the professional foundation for UDL across New Hampshire. I look forward to an exciting and transformative year ahead as NHED takes over the leadership of this valuable work. Together, we are shaping a brighter future for all learners in New Hampshire.

Sincerely,
Commissioner Frank Edelblut



A Letter from CAST

When the New Hampshire UDL Innovation Network began over five years ago, it was hard to imagine the deep impact it would make throughout the entire state. Although every educator who joined the Network was already working diligently to serve the students of New Hampshire, it has been inspirational to see teachers' passions sparked. Their dedication to fostering inclusive education and personalized learning experiences has made a profound impact on students across the state. They have created a more personalized and supportive learning environment for students with varying needs and skills and have empowered them to take agency over their own learning.

A deep thank you to all of the Network participants! Your passion for education and the positive influence you have on your students are truly commendable, and your hard work and commitment are valued and appreciated by the entire community.



Jennifer Levine
Chief Academic Officer: PreK-12

**A groundbreaking
partnership focused on better
outcomes for thousands of
New Hampshire's learners.**



The New Hampshire UDL Innovation Network

Introduction

[The New Hampshire Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) Innovation Network](#) utilizes the agency, commitment, and reflective practice of educators to transform teaching and learning for students throughout the state. The Network is a partnership between the [New Hampshire Department of Education \(NHED\)](#) and [CAST](#), the non-profit organization that authored and maintains the [UDL Guidelines](#) and utilizes cutting-edge professional learning protocols to build the capacity of educators to understand and apply UDL to practice. Since its inception in the Spring of 2018, the Network has grown into a

vibrant community of over 600 educators representing nearly 70 schools. CAST's professional learning team coaches schools to use UDL as a lens for continuous school improvement focused on teaching and learning, school culture and environment, professional learning, and school leadership and management. This expansion of UDL implementation beyond the classroom has empowered administrators to examine policies and practices and teachers to create inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Activities

The goal of the NH UDL Network is to build the capacity of NH educators to design accessible learning that builds the agency of every NH student. When educators apply UDL to practice, students actively participate in their own education, and they become more skilled in the art of learning itself. Recent Network data about the changes in expert learning practices among students provides evidence of this shift. And it is the expert learning of *teachers* upon which CAST has built a strategic buffet of professional learning opportunities. CAST's model utilizes job-embedded and teacher-facilitated activities that introduce, model, and facilitate understanding and application of UDL. Recent Network data shows positive changes in teacher confidence and capacity to reach all students. This report provides an overview of the 2022-2023 Network activities and how they contributed to the Network accomplishing this year's goals.

“The Network has really boosted my confidence and encouraged me to take risks with UDL in my classroom.”

Fall and Spring Network Meetings

CAST led a Network-wide conference in the Fall and Spring that served as a platform for educators to network with and learn from colleagues across the state. The conferences balanced opportunities for teachers to engage in new learning, guided application of learning, and allowed for discussions with like-minded peers. As they do each year, these Network meetings inspired an exchange of ideas about accessible learning design and celebrated the accomplishments of Network educators.

To address the learning variability of participants, CAST offered multiple learning options throughout the day. Many educators dove into hands-on design labs where they not only had the opportunity to construct innovative lessons or reimagine their classrooms with support from CAST's UDL experts, but they were also able to share ideas and expertise with their peers. Others attended interactive workshops where they focused on critical aspects of UDL, such as teacher and student goal-setting and accessible educational materials. For participants new to UDL, an introductory session was offered (and this year, it was led by the New Hampshire Department of Education's own UDL consultant!). The introductory session was also attended by Network educators wanting to deepen their capacity to coach other educators to apply UDL.

“Participating in the Network meetings has really helped broaden my understanding of how UDL can be applied in a variety of school settings. I always bring home new ideas to try...and a renewed dedication to the practice.”



Whether looking for a comprehensive overview of UDL or a deep dive into specific aspects of design or schoolwide implementation, participants were encouraged to design a learning pathway that would support their own unique goals. No matter the format, participants reported each opportunity provided valuable insights, expert guidance, and practical strategies they could immediately apply to their classrooms and schools.

“I really enjoyed the setup of being able to move and join the topic that fit your needs the best.”

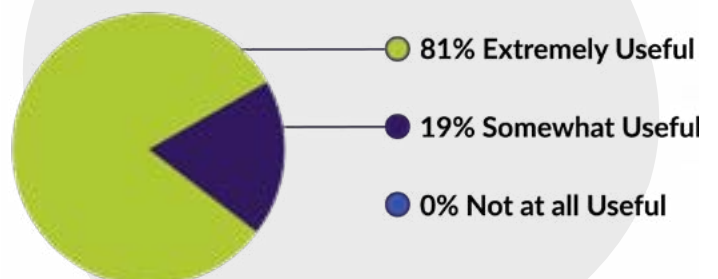
“At the Fall Network Meeting, I participated in a discussion about how to help students reflect on their own learning choices. My notes from that day were full of question marks. But after I returned to school, participated in instructional rounds, and set a common UDL goal with my teaching team, I found that I returned to my notes from the Network meeting and began to test out some of the suggestions I had jotted down. At the Spring Network Meeting, I was able to share some of my successes with my tablemates at a breakout session.”

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the Network meetings was the opportunity for participants themselves to formally share their own learning journeys. Through recorded videos, roundtable discussions, and live sessions, educators were both learners and teachers, imparting their wisdom and lessons learned to their peers. Given the NHED’s multi-year commitment to UDL, the number of educators and the strength of their learning increases every year. Without a doubt, the powerful exchanges that occurred between educators are the core of the Network and fostered a sense of collaboration and camaraderie that extended far beyond the event itself.

“It’s great to talk with other schools and see what they are doing. Because our school district is small, it’s beneficial to hear new voices and perspectives.”

“The CAST UDL meetings provided a safe space to learn more, ask questions, and hear from experts as well as other educators.”

Respondents to the end of year survey:
How useful were the Network Meetings in terms of supporting your learning?



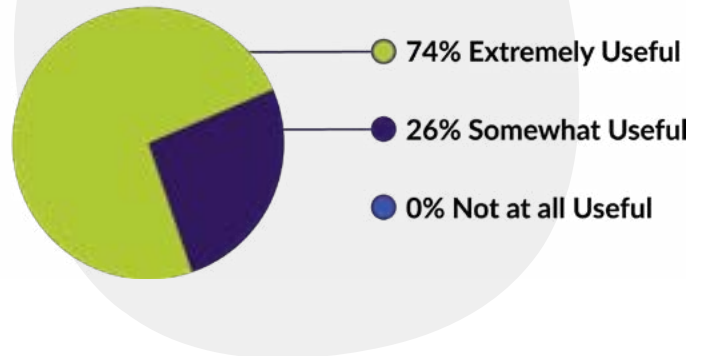
Teacher-Centered, Job-Embedded Learning

Central to the mission of [CAST's model for professional learning](#) is the belief that the most impactful professional learning is teacher-centered and job-embedded. Though the statewide days at a central conference location were valuable, the most meaningful UDL learning occurred in participants' own schools, where they embarked on a journey of experiential learning. CAST facilitated, modeled, and taught two essential school-based protocols: Instructional Rounds and Lesson Design Studios. As reported by participants and observed by CAST staff, both protocols were instrumental and transformative learning opportunities. In addition, they were a fun, generative, and sustainable means for learning about UDL.

The **Instructional Rounds** process led by CAST brings school-based teams together to deepen understanding and guide their application of UDL. These small teams immerse themselves in a series of classroom observations during which they collect data on the lessons taking place. The data collected is never aligned or assigned to a single teacher, but rather, the sum of the data is investigated as a sampling of school-wide instructional practices. Using a strategic sequence of steps, teams collaboratively synthesize and analyze the data, looking to uncover trends and patterns. They focus on what works well across classrooms, identify any remaining barriers to learning, and forge plans to minimize those barriers. Instructional Rounds help educators see strong relationships between student learning and learning design and, given this, are a powerful tool that builds educator confidence.



Respondents to the end of year survey:
How useful were Instructional Rounds in terms of supporting your learning?

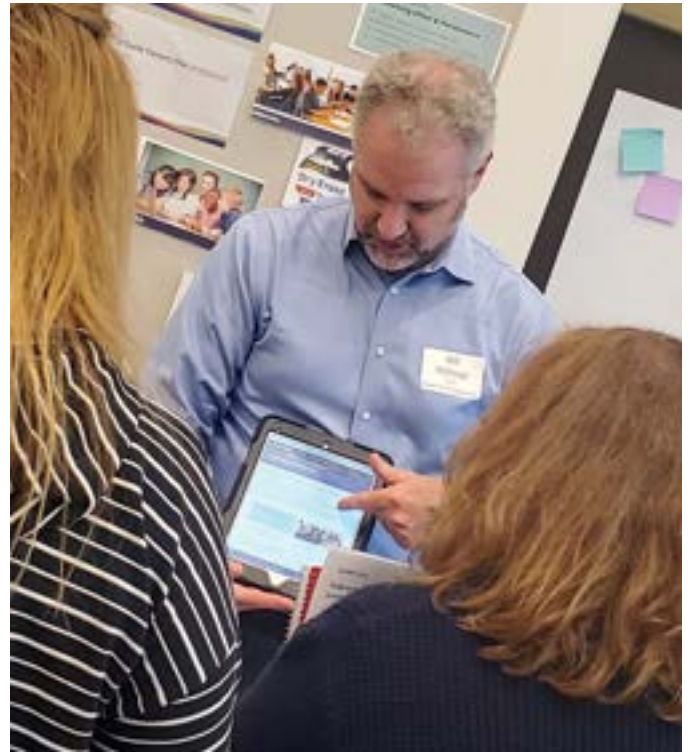


The goal of Instructional Rounds is for educators to learn from their collective experiences and continuously improve their instructional practices. In schools that joined the Network this year, the Instructional Rounds catalyzed learning about UDL. In schools that have been involved in the Network for several years, Instructional Rounds built relevance for school-wide UDL implementation. And in a few schools, Instructional Rounds were led by CAST and/or Network members themselves to share UDL with colleagues school-wide and deepen UDL implementation.

“Instructional rounds are extremely valuable as part of my growing knowledge of UDL practices. It is a wonderful way to see theory/methodology in action!”

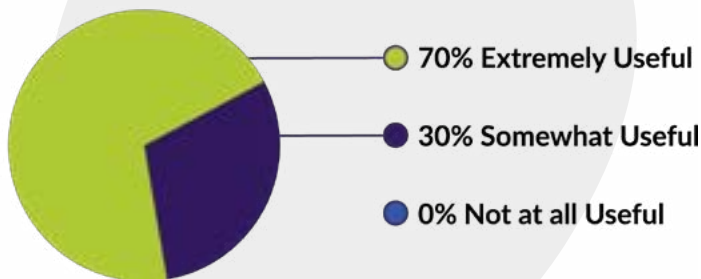


The **Lesson Design Studio** protocol also provided a powerful avenue for educators to shape their own learning within a classroom context. During a Lesson Design Studio, teams of educators collaborate to craft a universally designed lesson, sharing their current understanding and teaching each other about how and where that understanding might best be applied to an instructional design. Once designed, one teacher volunteers to teach the lesson in their classroom while the other team members observe, each focused on an individual student's experience of the lesson. After the lesson, a series of brief interviews are conducted with several students highlighting what worked in the design and what may need further refinement. The team then creates a visual map of the lesson using a design thinking protocol called Journey Mapping. The team organizes and analyzes the observations and student feedback. This analysis guides the team's reflections, fuels rich discussions, and, ultimately, enables the team members to use student experience as a means for identifying possible barriers in the lesson as well as in all future instructional designs.



CAST's professional learning protocols are designed to serve as conduits for educators to engage in hands-on, teacher-led learning experiences. By immersing themselves in the authentic context of their own schools, educators tap into their collective knowledge and co-create powerful learning opportunities. The protocols are intended to be used over time to generate both instructional questions and instructional solutions, allowing educators to continuously refine their own practice, even without the direct support of CAST UDL experts.

Respondents to the end of year survey:
How useful were Lesson Design Studios in terms of supporting your learning?



"I loved the lesson design studio and was able to tweak the goals for my group."

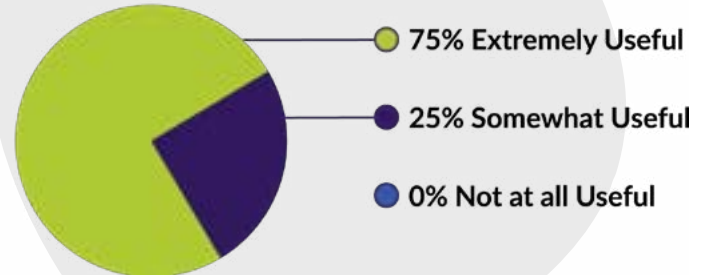
Leadership Development

A most important consideration in CAST’s professional learning model is the building of internal capacity in schools and districts to scale and sustain the work. To ensure that the impact of participation in the UDL Innovation Network extends beyond the project’s duration, CAST has prioritized empowering NH school leaders with the skills and knowledge to guide the implementation of UDL. Recognizing their pivotal role, CAST designed and delivered a year-long professional learning series for principals and superintendents to learn about UDL schoolwide implementation. During each session, school leaders engaged in data analysis and collaborative planning. They focused on cultivating a universally designed school culture, explored strategies to create inclusive classrooms, developed systems and management practices that support UDL implementation, and designed targeted professional development opportunities. The **Implementation Deep Dive Academy** sessions were recorded and continue to be available to Network school leaders.

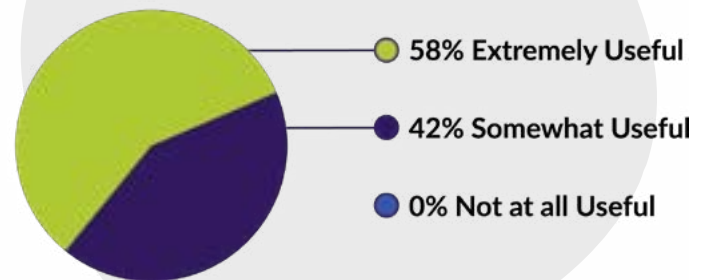
Equally vital to the success of UDL implementation are the teacher leaders and instructional coaches who serve as guides for classroom-level transformation. To build their capacity, CAST designed and delivered a year-long professional learning series about leading colleagues in the classroom application of UDL. During monthly **Coaching Academy** sessions, these educators collaborated, exchanged ideas, and deepened their understanding of UDL’s impact on student learning. They learned effective facilitation techniques to empower their colleagues to apply UDL in their own classrooms and to reflect on the impact on student learning. The Coaching Academy sessions were recorded and continue to be available to Network educators.

“Even though this is my third year in the Coaching Academy, I always leave with a new outlook on an idea.”

Respondents to the end of year survey:
How useful were Implementation Deep Dive Academies in terms of supporting your learning?



Respondents to the end of year survey:
How useful were the Coaching Academies in terms of supporting your learning?



Through these targeted leadership and coaching initiatives, CAST equipped educational leaders in NH with the necessary skills and knowledge for UDL to become deeply ingrained in school culture, positively impacting teaching, learning, and the educational experiences of all students.

Building Agency

Expert learning fuels Universal Design for Learning implementation throughout a school community. Throughout 2023, CAST's professional learning offerings have both honored and built on the expert learning of students, educators, and administrators. As teachers set goals focused on improving their instructional practice, their students set goals focused on academic learning, and administrators set goals for improved leadership. The CAST professional learning activities serve as a catalyst, structure, and support. In time, students become architects of their own education, teachers and administrators unlock new dimensions of professional growth, and schools themselves build an internal capacity to transform culture and systems. UDL fosters a learning environment that inspires innovative thinking, supports collaborative learning, and fosters an environment that honors the learning agency of every student, teacher, and educational leader.

Student Agency

No professional development opportunity can claim to be successful if there are no changes in students themselves. As the Innovation Network matures and participating educators become more confident and consistent in applying UDL to their practice, the way their students learn is changing. When teachers design lessons that encourage students to co-design goals, build their own learning plans, choose how to demonstrate what they learned, and reflect on their successes and areas for growth, students become agents of their own learning. Student agency is both a standard and a metric for UDL implementation.

One teacher highlighted this transformation in student ownership of learning by stating, "Having the learning be more student-focused has allowed students to come out of their comfort zones and really take the lead in their own learning." Another teacher observed, "[Students] are more apt to create and understand goals for their learning. They acknowledge the learning as something they are doing and involved in instead of something being done to them."

"My students feel empowered. They know when they show up in my room everyday they are loved, cared for, and seen. This creates a safe space for them to take risks and try things outside of their comfort zone."

"...the framework has helped me plan my teaching and environment to facilitate independence and ownership over students' own learning."

"My students have become more independent in almost every area."

"Reflection has become a major part of my classroom philosophy, and my students have come to know themselves as learners."

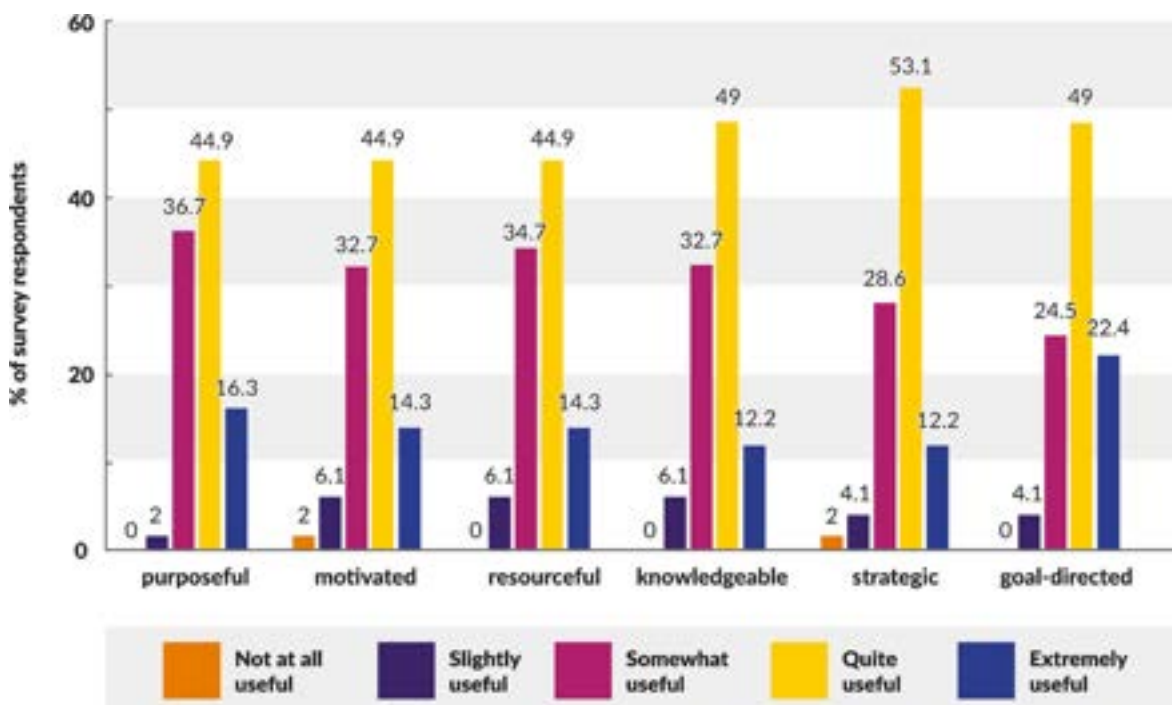
“My students understand what it means to be an expert learner. They are very comfortable now in creating their own goals and advocating for the tools and resources that help them to be successful.”

“My students feel comfortable in working with me to design lessons. They understand the goals and collaborate with me to design how they will achieve the goal. They are not afraid to try a strategy and abandon it for another strategy if it is not working for them.”

This transformation can be particularly profound for students with disabilities who are not always perceived as capable of directing their own learning. One teacher in the Network explained, “My students fall under the special education umbrella. They have become increasingly knowledgeable about what their goals are and how to advocate for themselves. Their confidence has increased in tandem with taking agency over their learning.”

Of the participants who responded to CAST’s end-of-year survey, **61% reported the Innovation Network had been quite or extremely useful in supporting students to become more purposeful in their learning and more knowledgeable; 59.2% said it had been quite or extremely useful in helping students to become more motivated to learn and more resourceful; 65.3% said it had been quite or extremely useful in helping students to become more strategic; and 71.4% said it had been quite or extremely useful in helping students to become more goal-directed.**

How useful has UDL been in supporting students in the following areas of expert learning?



Educator Agency

In addition to increasing student agency in learning, teachers and administrators express how their participation in the Innovation Network has given them a new sense of agency in their jobs. Some appreciate the opportunity to design their own professional learning and make it work for their unique settings. One participant shared, **“There is a lot of choice, so we can cater our professional learning to our jobs.”** Another stated, **“The ability to meet with colleagues from my district and to ‘hone in’ on skills that meet my individual teaching needs was invaluable.”** By universally designing professional learning opportunities, CAST has allowed educators to take control of their professional growth and tailor their learning experiences to meet their own specific teaching needs and goals.

Beyond feeling empowered as learners, Network educators regularly express excitement about sharing their learning with colleagues and creating a vibrant community of educators eager to amplify the impact of UDL in their schools. One teacher described how **“a group from the two elementary schools reconnected and [made] plans to join forces to move forward with our UDL learning and to bring our learning to our colleagues.”** Others have used the Instructional Rounds as a means of sharing their learning: **“Our team has agreed to continue with the instructional rounds, to invite more teachers to our cohort, and to share our learning with our colleagues.”** This shared learning ultimately extends beyond individual classrooms, creating a ripple effect that can revitalize entire educational communities, empowering educators and students alike.



Systems Level Capacity

The goal of the Innovation Network is to build in schools and districts an internal capacity to be self-sustaining in the scaling of UDL. Although many schools are new to the network, those that have been involved for several years report they have created the necessary internal structures to carry on the work on their own. The Implementation Deep Dive Academy was a primary lever for building system-level capacity as it taught school leaders to use data to identify and address schoolwide problems of practice. Examples include leaders who created new professional learning structures, started Professional Learning Communities, and built robust opportunities for general and special educators to engage in co-teaching. In addition, one school leader created a system of having a UDL representative in each department to support building resources for their peers. Another created new positions dedicated exclusively to the implementation and scaling of UDL. One participant shared, **“We are blessed with an extraordinary UDL Team Chair and TWO UDL Coaches. That combination, plus support from the administration, means we are poised to continue our UDL journey independently.”**

The NH UDL Innovation Network began as a project design and today is a dynamic professional learning ecosystem of students, teachers, administrators, and educational systems committed to ongoing learning about and implementation of UDL. The Network has leveraged statewide gatherings, virtual series, school-based workshops, job-embedded protocols, and curricular consultations to build the capacity of NH educators to understand and apply UDL theory to practice. No matter the number of years of participation, Network members report their engagement has resulted in a renewed energy for the work of teaching and learning, a refreshed commitment to accessibility and ensuring all students excel academically, and a profound willingness to grow and change as learning designers.

What's Next?

“Keep the momentum going! NH could be a leader in this country in terms of UDL and keeping public school education meaningful and relevant for the changing times and needs of students.”

– NH UDL Network member

During the 2023-2024 school year, CAST will gradually transition its facilitation of the UDL Innovation Network to the New Hampshire Department of Education. This shift aims to make New Hampshire the first state in the nation to systemically embed UDL at the highest level, committing its support to every school in the state. To facilitate the transition, CAST’s implementation specialists will remain committed to supporting participating schools and districts, running the two annual Network conferences, visiting schools for Instructional Rounds and Lesson Design Studios, and offering one-on-one support to team leaders.

Simultaneously, CAST will provide comprehensive training to NHED’s newly formed UDL team, helping them to understand UDL at the deepest level, teaching them about CAST’s unique coaching protocols, and

shadowing them on school visits. Over the course of the school year, CAST implementation specialists will slowly release leadership of the Network over to the NHED team, ensuring a smooth transition.

New Hampshire has emerged as a national frontrunner in the implementation of Universal Design for Learning. Through the NH UDL Innovation Network, the state has enhanced the abilities of its educators to craft learning experiences that ensure access and agency for every student. In the forthcoming years, it is anticipated that the NHED will continue to strengthen and expand this capacity, working towards the state’s ultimate objective of providing deeply effective personalized learning for each and every student. This original goal is well within reach and poised to be accomplished, given the dedication and collaboration of educators statewide. Universal Design for Learning is a framework that summarizes research about human learning so that educators can better anticipate and design for the natural learning variability of their students. Implemented with fidelity, the UDL framework builds the capacity of NH educators to reach and teach every student.



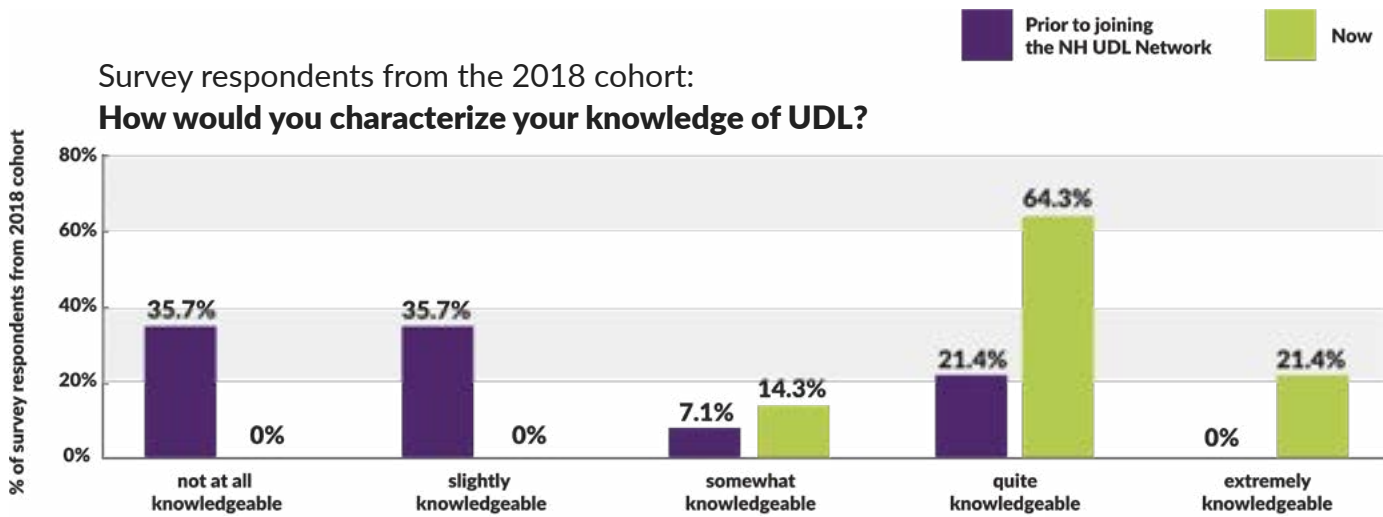
Continued Growth

CAST has measured participant knowledge and skill since the start of the project, with a particular focus on educators who have participated in the Network since 2018. Of those survey respondents who joined at the start of the project, none claimed that they had been “extremely knowledgeable” about UDL before joining the Network and only 21% said they were “quite knowledgeable.”

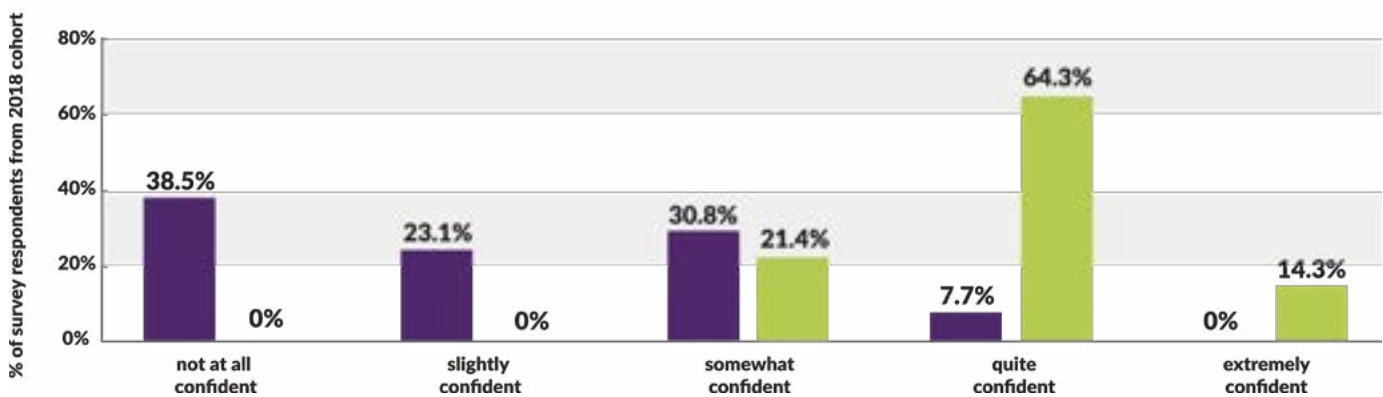
However, as the 2022-23 school year concluded, a remarkable shift occurred. 86% of those same respondents said that they now felt “quite” or “extremely knowledgeable” about UDL. Similarly, none of the respondents who joined in 2018 felt “extremely confident” in applying UDL to their practice at the start of the Network, and only 13% expressed that they were “quite confident.” Nevertheless, by the end of the 2022-23 school year, an impressive 79% reported feeling “quite” or “extremely confident” in their ability to apply UDL effectively.



Survey respondents from the 2018 cohort:
How would you characterize your knowledge of UDL?



Survey respondents from the 2018 cohort:
How confident do you feel in terms of applying UDL to your practice?



Appendix

Page 8 Table

How useful has UDL been in supporting students in the following areas of expert learning?

	Not at all	Slightly useful	Somewhat useful	Quite useful	Extremely useful
Purposeful	0%	2%	36.7%	44.9%	16.3%
Motivated	2%	6.1%	32.7%	44.9%	14.3%
Resourceful	0%	6.1%	34.7%	44.9%	14.3%
Knowledgeable	0%	6.1%	32.7%	49%	12.2%
Strategic	2%	4.1%	28.6%	53.1%	12.2%
Goal-directed	0%	4.1%	24.5%	49%	22.4%



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How would you characterize your knowledge of UDL? (Survey respondents from the 2018 cohort)

	Not at all knowledgeable	Slightly knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Quite knowledgeable	Extremely knowledgeable
Prior to joining NH UDL Network	35.7%	35.7%	7.1%	21.4%	0%
Now	0%	0%	14.3%	64.3%	21.4%

How confident do you feel in terms of applying UDL to your practice? (Survey respondents from the 2018 cohort)

	Not at all confident	Slightly confident	Somewhat confident	Quite confident	Extremely confident
Prior to joining NH UDL Network	38.5%	23.1%	30.8%	7.7%	0%
Now	0%	0%	21.4%	64.3%	14.3%



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