

# Connecting the Dots: California MTSS and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is a framework designed to address academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning in a fully integrated system of support. Teams use data to guide instruction and identify students who require additional support for increasingly intensive interventions based on need. Student supports are universally designed, differentiated, and integrated. MTSS offers the potential to create needed systematic change through intentional design and redesign of services and supports to quickly identify and match to the needs of all students.

In California MTSS, counties, regions and state educational agencies are the source of technical support, local educational agencies are the place of intervention and schools are the place of transformation. MTSS is a framework that supports equity-based inclusion within a multi-tiered framework.



## What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?

UDL is a research-based framework for guiding educational practice based on the premise that one-size-fits-all curricula create unintentional barriers to learning for many students, including the mythical average student. UDL focuses on planning instruction in such a way to meet the varied needs of students. Not a special education initiative, UDL acknowledges the needs of all learners at the point of first teaching, thereby reducing the amount of follow-up and alternative instruction necessary. UDL recognizes student variability and designs environments and

### Universal Design for Learning Guidelines



Provide Multiple Means of  
**Engagement**  
*Purposeful, motivated learners*



Provide Multiple Means of  
**Representation**  
*Resourceful, knowledgeable learners*



Provide Multiple Means of  
**Action & Expression**  
*Strategic, goal-directed learners*

lessons to remove barriers for all students. The UDL framework outlines how to provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression.

## How do MTSS and UDL align?

An effective MTSS framework considers student variability by planning multiple supports that are designed using UDL instructional practices that provide equal access to academic curriculum and optimize student engagement in order to address the barriers and strengths of individual students. UDL recognizes expert learning systems require parts of a system to work together as a whole.



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## Want to learn more about using UDL to support your MTSS work?

1) Check out these resources to support your MTSS work:

- [5 Steps to Get Started Using UDL](#)
- [CAST: The UDL Guidelines](#)
- [The UDL Wheel](#)
- [UDL at a Glance](#)
- [CAST Website](#)
- [National Center on Universal Design for Learning](#)

2) Consider where UDL fits within your developed design.

3) Examine your data to determine whether UDL is a priority area in your local MTSS implementation work.

4) Map currently available resources and identify any additional resources you would need to support your design priorities.

5) Match resources to your identified priorities for implementing MTSS.

