



Inyo County Office of Education  
Barry D. Simpson, Superintendent

# The Inyo Insight

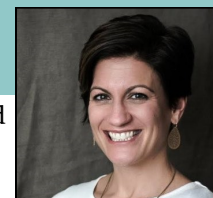
An Education Newsletter from the Inyo County Office of Education  
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## Learning Should Be a Conversation with Students

By Katie Novak



Katie Novak

As a little girl, I loved to line up my dolls and stuffed animals and play "school." I read books, wrote on my chalkboard, and gave tests to my class. But in my pretend world, the dolls and animals didn't interact with the teacher's plans or have a say in what and how they were learning. The game was all about me!

When I first became a high school English teacher 15 years ago, my classroom wasn't too different from my childhood playroom. I was often in front of the board presenting information. I assigned all students the same projects. I determined creative ways of mixing up instruction—designing posters, writing poetry, and working in groups—by myself, never by student choice. Although I connected with my students personally, I didn't teach them as individuals.

Five years into my teaching career, my district trained a cohort of teachers, including me, in universal design for learning, or UDL. The framework develops flexibility for classroom environments and lessons with the individual learner in mind. UDL transformed my teaching practices and gave my students more voice and choice in the design and delivery of curricula and instruction. Instead of a "one-size-fits-all" lesson, I asked students to share how they learn best and then partnered with them to design a menu of options—whether that meant collaborative group work, independent work, working closely with me, or a combination of strategies.

Once we made the switch, student achievement soared, students reported higher levels of engagement, and parents saw a difference in students' attitudes about learning. Not to mention, the federal

[Every Student Succeeds Act endorses UDL as best practice.](#) It's time that every teacher incorporates UDL into the classroom. Here's how to do so:

### 1. Move from content expertise to conversation.

Teachers have often been viewed as content experts who design lessons to transfer knowledge to students, with little feedback and few adjustments. But students are as unique as their fingerprints. Lectures and multiple-choice exams will not prepare them for an engaged future. That kind of instruction assumes students have no input to offer about our teaching and their learning. Starting conversations with students can be as simple as asking them to rate their agreement level with statements like, "My teacher helps us identify our strengths and shows us how to use them to learn." If they don't agree strongly, invite them to share why.

### 2. Switch from test prep to life prep.

Our job is to prepare students for a future none of us can comprehend. Rather than just meeting a set of standards, they need to master the *ability to learn*, to be resourceful, to set their own goals, and to stay motivated enough to take the long road to success. Instead of assigning the same novel to the whole class, for example, I encourage students to choose culturally relevant texts that matter to them in a hard copy, e-book, or audiobook format. I want them to know that the human experience captured in literature is wide-ranging and accessible in countless ways.

### 3. Empower students to take risks.

Students should choose how they express knowledge. For them to do so, teachers must craft an environment where all students have the freedom to take risks. After I assigned an argumen-

tative essay, I told my students to pick a topic and format that truly mattered to them. Some students produced videos, wrote music inspired by artists from Bob Dylan to TuPac, and crafted speeches and persuasive letters. Others started campaigns to convert an old transfer station into a dog park and to bring back the middle school camping trip. Learning was personalized and meaningful, even as students worked toward meeting the same rigorous expectations.

Without UDL, teachers merely deliver knowledge. With UDL, we have a framework of opportunities for students to be curious, self-directed, and passionate. If implemented successfully, UDL will help us to build a more creative world for students' future—one where they have much better outcomes than my dolls ever did.

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## Sierra Adventure Summer Camp

**Cost: \$20**

**Dates: June 17-21 (boys)  
June 24-28 (girls)**

Open to Inyo County Students currently in 5th-7th grade

For more information visit:  
[sierraadventurecenter.org](http://sierraadventurecenter.org)  
or call: 760-873-3262

**Register online  
starting May 3rd!**



Universal Design for Learning

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# The 11th Annual Inyo County COMMUNITY READS

Sponsored by the Inyo County Office of Education and Inyo Council for the Arts

## **Bridging the Gap: Holocaust Survivor Live Stream (Middle School Program)**

Thursday, April 11th—10am, Inyo Council for the Arts and LP Museum of Western Film History

Live stream presentation by a Holocaust Survivor through the Museum of Tolerance

## **ICA Student Art Show Reception**

Wednesday, April 24th—5pm, Inyo Council for the Arts

The Inyo County Student Art Show features art by students from across the county.

## **Family Art and Story Time**

Tuesday, April 23—4:30pm, Independence

Tuesday April 20—4:30pm, Big Pine Library

Join Inyo County Superintendent of Schools, Barry Simpson, for an evening of fun art projects, storytelling, and snacks!

## **The Book Thief Screenings**

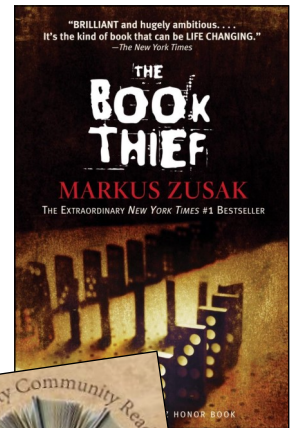
Wednesday, May 8th—6pm, Inyo Council for the Arts and Museum of Western Film History

Come see the movie at a free screening, all are welcome!

## **Lone Pine Community Dinner**

Wednesday, May 15th—5pm, Lo Inyo Multipurpose Room

Fun and free community dinner! The event is free but seating is limited, get a ticket at ICA before the event.



## History Day Results

Ten posters, four websites, one research paper and eleven exhibits covering a variety of topics captured this year's contest theme of **Triumph and Tragedy**.

The following students will be advancing to the state competition in May:

Ruby Randall, BES

Cora Van Nest, Kaki Saulque and Haiden Mull (group project), HSMS

Mylee Patton, Lo Inyo

Sierra Kingsford and Princess Luna (group project), Lo Inyo

Stephanie Valdez and Jaciel Isidro

(group project), Lo Inyo

Garrett Wilkinson, Damian Kingsford and Noe Rivera (group project), LPHS

The following students were also recognized for their hard work Madden Gladding, Adan Perez, Natalie Cortez, Danika Johnson, Rylie Denault, Tyler Norcross, Selina Webb, Isaiah Wilcox, Mirella Romero, Amayrani Avalos, Madison Harms, Samantha Valdez, Djenna Garnotel, Jenna McGuire, Edith Rodriguez, Liam Cariou, Nefti Ruiz, Shivam Bhakta, Jessica McGuire, Karlee Greene, Irma Camacho, Rebecca Tsosie, Luke Sullivan, Edgardo Ruiz, John Shepherd, Danny



Mendoza, Alexis Austin, Cameron Christianson, and Cristian Arango.

Thank you to coaches Dustin Ryan, Meghan Fuchs, Nadine Harry, Bob Heist, Megan Maybury, Sarah Civitano and Sarah Fogarty for working with their students to prepare them for the competition.

## English Learners in STEM Subjects



Learn strategies to enhance the classroom experience of ELs in STEM subjects! According to a report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018), the nearly 5 million students classi-

fied as ELs in public schools are falling behind when it comes to STEM education. Particularly, as it relates to learning science and mathematics, ELs lack opportunities to engage with challenging disciplinary practices and content. Preparing teachers so that all students can reach their full potential in STEM can transform the lives of individual students and society as a whole. **Join the NSTA Virtual Conference!**

Saturday—May 4, 2019 at 7am—11am

For more information and register for the conference, please visit their website [here](http://www.nsta.org).

## Save the Date!

### **SPEECH CONTEST**

APRIL 11, 2019

6th-8th Grade

Jill Kinmont Boothe School, 5pm

*The public is encouraged to attend the 59th annual Inyo County Speech Contest!*

