



Inyo County Office of Education
Barry D. Simpson, Superintendent

The Inyo Insight

An Education Newsletter from the Inyo County Office of Education

Volume 13, Issue 8

www.inyocoe.org

May/June 2021

Optimistic Closure

By Ilissa Twomey, Assistant Superintendent

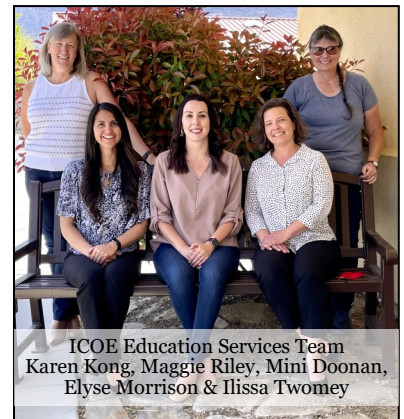
One of the [3 Signature SEL Practices](#) is optimistic closure. This is a time in the classroom when we reflect back as well as look forward. It provides a time for students to practice metacognition and active reflection. Closing is also a time to conduct formative assessment and invite feedback. For us here in the Ed Services department we have reflected back on this most unusual of school years and have much to be proud of and thankful for. We are thankful that you found value in our student programs and chose to use valuable instructional minutes to promote a college going culture through our virtual 8th grade Cerro Coso Day where over 150 students logged on. Students in grades 6-8 were able to participate in the county's comprehensive sexual education program. We were pleased to facilitate a virtual History Day. Three teachers from 3 districts guided over 70 students in conducting research and creating presentations of over 60 historical events for this project based learning program.

We are thankful that you made outdoor learning and science a priority for your students by participating in School Gardens, Taking Root, Branching Out, and Eastern Sierra Watershed field trips. We even had a few trout tanks out there in our classrooms! We feel honored that according to analytics you and others around the state have found our website useful. The [Content Area](#) section remains a valuable resource for subject specific resources. We also plan to maintain the [PD Calendar](#) with free to low cost learning experiences for you.

We are proud of our teachers and school staff who regularly participated in professional learning experiences to support distance learning and hybrid instruction, health education, and culturally responsive teaching...just to name a few. Our team put on a record number of workshops this year and we look forward to continuing to support your practice. We are proud of our

district and school site leadership who are behind the scenes making sure our schools can operate amidst a pandemic while also keeping abreast of the latest guidelines and instructional trends. Ed Services is happy to be able to provide that information and partner with districts regularly in collaboration for planning efforts on behalf of students. We also are happy to provide support and consultation in the areas of CALPADS and Aeries. Afterall, without accurate data it is difficult to make decisions and reflect on trends.

I want to thank our team pictured here for their flexibility, commitment to service and dedication to students. I would also like to welcome the newest member of the team (Class of 2038) Tessa Doonan...talk about an optimistic closure! As we look forward to 2021-22 and beyond, the recovery of our schools and students depends on contemplating and implementing a 'new normal' for our students. We invite you to envision what is possible, attend to your passions and keep an eye towards equity and empathy, as we create opportunities for students and make positive and meaningful change. Thank you for all you do in whatever role you play in supporting our students and we invite you to share your reflection and feedback for a better future using this [form](#).



ICOE Education Services Team
Karen Kong, Maggie Riley, Mini Doonan,
Elyse Morrison & Ilissa Twomey



Class of 2038

Splash into Summer Learning

Learn from the comfort of your own backyard. Pull up a lounge chair and join these virtual learning experiences

~**Check our [PD Calendar](#)** for afterschool events in May; the calendar will be updated regularly throughout the summer! Happy Learning!

~**Student Wellness Conference** (July 14-15): Hear dynamic keynotes and live breakout sessions anchored in the *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child* framework will deepen our scope of student support and services. Units are available for this SEL-focused conference. More information and registration can be found [HERE](#)

~**From Surviving to Thriving** series (June 2, 9, 16 & 23): Dr. Michele Borba will guide participants through each chapter of her latest book, *Thrivers: The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine*. She will outline and provide applicable ideas to help students learn and grow based on the seven essential character traits that help children thrive, including the ability to nurture a caring heart, develop a strong mind, and cultivate a determined will. [Register](#) and attend when you can.



Learning Should Be a Conversation with Students

By 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:



Universal Design for Learning

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 argumentative 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.

Copyright © 2018 by ASCD. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.

**BE A SUB:
MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

Info Session:

**May 6
4:30pm
Via Zoom**

bit.ly/3nqi21r

Inyo & Mono County Schools
are looking for
Substitute Teachers

⇒ Energetic & Responsible Adults
⇒ Bachelor's degree required

For a limited time all costs will be paid for through the Inyo/Mono Consortium.

For more information contact
Mini Doonan, 760-873-3262 ext. 2106
or mdoonan@inyocoe.org

Summer Learning Opportunities *Continued*

~**Reflection & Goal Setting** (June 14): The move to hybrid literacy instruction has revealed barriers to literacy learning that may have always been there, but for which we now need to plan for more intentionally. Join CAST to reflect on what you have learned from this past year? What do you want to continue to do next year? [Registration Link](#)

~**Create Eastern Sierra Summer Arts Institute** (June 21-22): Join Mono COE for arts training incorporating SEL. For more information see the [CESSAI website](#).

