

Berquist, E. (2013). Universal design for learning, conceptual change and teacher education: An exploration of preconceptions and beliefs about practice. (Doctoral dissertation, Towson University, 2013).

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#### Dissertation Abstract

Across the United States, school leaders are focusing on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a framework for meeting the challenge of learner variability and designing high-quality, standards-based instruction (Hall, Rose & Meyer, 2012). The three studies presented in this alternate format dissertation describe and analyze the beliefs, knowledge and practices of administrators, teachers, and preservice teachers about UDL. In *Administrators' Conceptions about Universal Design for Learning: An Opportunity for Conceptual Change*, phenomenological research methods were used to analyze data collected from interviews with 15 administrators. Results are presented through six emerging themes based upon the beliefs and understandings of these administrators regarding UDL. In *A Mixed Method Study of Teachers' Conceptions about Universal Design for Learning*, teacher beliefs, knowledge and practices about UDL are examined through a mixed methods study conducted with teachers participating in a UDL professional development system. The article also presents conceptual change as a theoretical framework to assist those responsible for designing professional development relating to the implementation of Universal Design for Learning. Finally, *Preservice Teachers' Conceptions about UDL* reports quantitative data about the conceptions of preservice teachers in regard to UDL. This descriptive study provides insight into the underlying assumptions of the UDL framework and examines results in regard to a dissatisfaction based conceptual change model. In each study, conceptual change is presented as a theoretical framework to assist school leaders and higher education faculty as they develop an understanding for, and strategies regarding, implementation of Universal Design for Learning. The powerful nature of pre-conceptions and current conceptions and the associated alterations necessary for conceptual change about UDL are challenges for teacher educators and individuals responsible for professional development. If these beliefs are not addressed in the earliest stages of the conceptual change process, there is little chance that they will change. UDL is quickly becoming part of the fabric of our educational system; it is imperative that instruction about UDL is high-quality and relevant. The results of these studies will provide necessary insight into the beliefs, knowledge and practices of administrators, teachers, and preservice teachers, in order to recommend future instructional practices that are fundamental to changing understandings, impacting practices, and ensuring that the UDL framework is wholeheartedly adopted by educators.