



## CIDDL Research and Practice Brief 3 Interview Transcript

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Nicholas Hoekstra: hello, and welcome to the CIDDL research and practice briefs my name is Nicholas Hoekstra. The purpose of the CIDDL research and practice briefs are to have conversations around innovative uses of technology in special education, early childhood education, related services and leadership personnel preparation programs. Today we have Dr. Loui Lord Nelson - author, UDL consultant and host of the popular podcast UDL in 15 minutes as our guest expert to share with us some of her work around UDL and the use of podcasts. So welcome. Do you mind if I call you Loui?

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Loui Lord Nelson: Oh that's fine that's perfectly fine.

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Nicholas Hoekstra: Welcome, we thank you for joining us today.

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Loui Lord Nelson: Thank you so much I'm really honored to be here, thank you.

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Nicholas Hoekstra: So, to start with um.

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Nicholas Hoekstra: Can you tell us a little bit about your work around UDL and how it can be used in teacher preparation and what are some of the issues that you're trying to address with UDL?

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Loui Lord Nelson: So my work within the realm of universal design for learning has pretty much been in every corner and so that's everything from working as the UDL coordinator within the Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation, where I worked with over 700 teachers and helping them implement it. And then working, when I was at CAST for my postdoc, and helping them with professional learning so designing that and we predominantly worked with teachers in the field, during that time.

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Loui Lord Nelson: But through that experience and my experience in Columbus Indiana that led me to author the book *Design and Deliver: Planning and Teaching Using Universal Design for Learning*. And that book and the supports that I provide to that book are used in a significant number of teacher training programs across

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Loui Lord Nelson: Both the United States and then well, I should say both but also other locations internationally. So that's a huge honor. So I know that that voice is there and the influence of educators, with whom I've worked and their voice being in that book is influencing. So I would say that when it comes to what I'm trying to achieve, My

background is in special education. I was a special education teacher and when I was in graduate school there at KU - Rock Chalk, Jayhawk -

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Loui Lord Nelson: I always knew that what I wanted for my work to be was to actually influence general educators in their inclusion of students with disabilities, but then also seeing inclusion more broadly and understanding that we have students with needs that don't necessarily have some sort of a label and universal design for learning provided me that space and that framework, and so I latched on really quickly.

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Loui Lord Nelson: And that's... that's my voice that I bring to the table and it doesn't matter if I'm working with educators in low resource areas so, for example, work I've done in Uganda and Malawi, or if I'm working in high resource areas that are here, maybe across the US or in Singapore or throughout Europe, that the voice is still the same. What I'm promoting is still the same. Is that framework is about inclusion and it is about ensuring that every single learner is gaining access to and having the opportunity to grow, and grow toward becoming expert learners.

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Nicholas Hoekstra: Excellent that's super important. When you were working with, you know, a large number of teachers, for example, at the Bartholomew school district, what were some of the, the technologies that you use and what were some of the ways that you managed to provide support and training to such a large number of teachers across a wide school district.

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Loui Lord Nelson: Yeah there's a lot of different directions that I went. So right off the BAT, I met with every principle in their 17 different buildings and found out what they had already been doing.

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Loui Lord Nelson: What they felt was going well, where they felt the gaps were and what their plan was for their building. Not only just in the realm of universal design for learning but kind of what they were seeing building wide within other areas, because of course part of my job was to help them see how UDL was the umbrella over everything that district, that's what they use as they're guiding framework.

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Loui Lord Nelson: And then from there, it was working directly with teachers or just department chairs and getting their voice of what did they see going on and where did they see the gaps and where did they see the successes and sometimes in line. And then from there, it was creating trainings that were specific to that building to that department to this teacher's needs.

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Loui Lord Nelson: Sometimes that was an individual classroom and leading clouds leading a

lesson, modeling sometimes those Gym brown bag lunches, the technology use, A lot of it... so I did a weekly blurb. Essentially, like in the newspaper world, for those who are old enough, it's always important to have your information above the fold. Those are the big deal to have your byline above the fold.

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Loui Lord Nelson: And so I would always send email tips and tricks - what have you - that would be short enough that if they open their email in just that preview view that they would see the whole thing. And then, you know, as the... The district has always been very key in how they're utilizing their technology in their classrooms as instructional pieces. As they're part of instruction they don't lead or guide there, they don't leave the instruction there, they're part of enhancing the instructions. That was so helpful and working with those who specialize in that area and ensuring that our voices were the same, the message was similar. So that's just kind of a scattering but because it's maybe it's a guide of how we did these these things.

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Nicholas Hoekstra: I think that's an important message that the technology was there to enhance and to support, but not to lead the instruction. I think that's a great kind of takeaway message. And this dovetails very nicely into the next question that I want to ask you: speaking of the byline above the fold, you're the host of a podcast called UDL in 15 minutes, which is a podcast that typically is around 15 minutes. A nice, short piece of media. Can you tell us a little bit

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Nicholas Hoekstra: Can you tell us a little bit more about your podcast and how your podcast and similar, kind of the podcasting art can be used within teacher support and teacher preparation?

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Loui Lord Nelson: Sure sure. So I'll back up just a touch and talk about the design of the podcast because typically when you hear "podcast" we all think of just the audio part. But I knew immediately, as the idea formed in my head, that I needed to be accessible for everyone, and so, along with the podcast, the audio is also partnered with what I call a photo montage. So, photos are sent in by my guests and I create a YouTube clip, that is, the same audio as the as the podcast, but then there's there's the description, with the pictures used. And then, on top of that, I do another YouTube video that has audio descriptions, because although someone might have low or no vision,

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Loui Lord Nelson: they want to also participate and enjoy whatever those pictures are that are going along with the podcast. So I provide that also. There's also a transcript of every episode provided, and then I also do an associated blog, which dives into some aspect of that podcast. So it takes it in a little bit of a different direction. So when it comes to why I was driven to do the podcast, it would be for both educators in the field and the pre-

service. We get a question all the time: What does UDL look like?

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Loui Lord Nelson: And I think when people ask that question, of course, what they're asking is "what are the experiences?" what, "what can I anticipate my experiences to be?" and so I really wanted to create a podcast that provided a space for educators implementing UDL to share their experiences. What, what's a nugget out of their lives that they would like to share that would help others

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Loui Lord Nelson: see what UDL looks like in action. So that was the driving force and that's the design and I do know that the podcast is in, again, a lot of pre-service programs just because I get follow up emails from both students in the field, and then the professor's. I created dice for questions for either podcast clubs or book club, and then I've enhanced some of the questions as professors have said, "well, we're working on this, could you help me craft some questions that would help my pre service teachers really think more deeply about these issues?" So I've, I've worked with those folks too. I am excited when I hear that pre-service teachers are hearing these podcasts because I think it's another avenue to that understanding of what it's like to walk into the classroom the first time. And what it takes to designed, really to design.

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Nicholas Hoekstra: Fantastic, yeah it's a little slice of reality, a little slice of the lives that they're going to be walking into.

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Loui Lord Nelson: Yes.

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Nicholas Hoekstra: Um, this is perhaps a bit of an obvious question, but What opportunities do you think Universal Design for Learning has in improving special education, early childhood education, and related service personnel preparation, as well as leadership personnel preparation?

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Loui Lord Nelson: Absolutely, so the framework... when there is a quality understanding of all that's involved in the framework, it can help shift mindsets. And it's that mindset shift that we need to have to establish these truly inclusive environments. I really do believe that. Rarely is it resources that are getting in the way and I can, I strongly stand behind that because, again, I've worked with educators in extremely low resource environments, but when students are fully included it has more to do with.

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Loui Lord Nelson: That mindset, from where the teachers and those administrators are coming, how they're designing those environments. And then, when I talk about that depth of information or depth of knowledge there's a graphic organizer that we all know that has principles and guidelines, the checkpoints, you know some pictures of the brain and the

executive learner again, sorry expert learner indicators. But for people to really understand what variability means for them to really understand what accessibility and flexibility and choice and rigor and goals... those are such key underlying components of this framework and

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Loui Lord Nelson: When educators, be it in the classroom or administrators or supporting, have a deep understanding of those pieces and seeing where they fit and how they should be used in a very intertwined way, then the experience of designing and the experience with implementing is just enhanced. It's, yeah, it improves greatly. Of the dangers that I see is when people learn to heart, like they just learn the graphic organizer. Or, I'm around folks who can talk real well, but then I'm in there setting and I'm like "you don't really get it." Because of that mindset.

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Nicholas Hoekstra: I see. So I guess one kind of follow up final question here, how do you think UDL can support positively the use of technology?

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Loui Lord Nelson: Oh yeah! So again when people really understand the design of the framework and they understand what is promoting, they will do it in their design. Then, how you're going to use your technology and why you're going to use your technology changes. So earlier, like I said, and then you pointed out, that the technology isn't the driver, it is used to enhance to improve to create that level of accessibility that is necessary.

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Loui Lord Nelson: But if we're using... if the technology is the guiding tool and that's what's pushing along what's going to happen in that classroom, then you're not going to have the deep learning. But when you have something that's helping us understand "oh I should be thinking about how this is helping our students engage with the learning" and how it's going to represent that information to them and how they can use that to really show what they know, and, and help them really move through their executive functioning better, right? Then, then that technology is a useful piece.

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Loui Lord Nelson: When I think about all of our learners, And i'm not going to get a percentage right, but I know that our speech and language associations have let us know that there are probably over 50% of our kids who have communication needs but don't have a communication device. in our lectures, right? and so if you've got people who really are invested in Universal Design for Learning and their quest to help those students, really express who they are, and express their knowledge and express what they can do, that they're going to turn and look for those devices. they're going to look to find how those students can be better included within their environment. Rather than having that whole and just saying "well they're not able to participate XYZ."

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Nicholas Hoekstra: Technology as a bridge to the, to some more of the engagement, to expression, to getting the kids actively participating in the learning.

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Loui Lord Nelson: Yeah absolutely.

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Nicholas Hoekstra: Well, in closing, do you have any um do you have any resources or tools that for those that would like to learn more about your work.

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Loui Lord Nelson: Sure, well. I would love it for more people to come in hear UDL in 15 minutes and I know my guests would really appreciate that too. So, you can find all those episodes at my website, which is [theudlapproach.com](http://theudlapproach.com).

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Nicholas Hoekstra: and we'll provide a link to that in our publication.

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Loui Lord Nelson: Great. Thank you very much and there's like over 64 of them now. As I said, there's also the associated blogs, and so that's an additional level of information that those blogs are always filled with links out to other pieces of associated information. So, you can keep going down that happy little rabbit hole as much as you'd like to.

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Loui Lord Nelson: I do know that there are still folks in the field that are, you know, "what's the research behind all this?" Well, I have another podcast called UDL Research in 15 Minutes, where I interview researchers. And that's just starting off, but it's been a great joy and, in fact, one that's going to come out here really soon is talking about the needs of students who have experienced chemotherapy and how that affects their learning and how UDL could be used and should be used to create inclusive environments, and so getting people to think outside of maybe just kind of where they sit.

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Loui Lord Nelson: But then also helping them understand the research that is behind this. So my quest is to get through all of it and that's going to take me like 16 years. So that's okay we can go forever.

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Nicholas Hoekstra: Excellent. Well, thank you, Loui for sharing your time with us today and discussing with us your work around UDL and your, your podcasts. We appreciate your time.

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