

## Addressing the Natural Differences Among Learners

*Educator Katie Novak explains how inclusive education really works in the classroom and at home to help parents become informed partners in improving education for all learners*

### Let Them Thrive by Katie Novak, Ed.D.

Until recently, schools used traditional models of education that were focused on teachers providing a “one-size-fits-all” curriculum to all students. It’s how many of us were educated—seated in rows, sitting quietly listening to a lecture, and taking the same multiple-choice test.

Katie Novak, Ed.D., a mother of four with 15 years of experience in teaching and administration, is one of the key people working to shed this traditional model and introduce “personalized” education.

In her new book, *Let Them Thrive: A Playbook for Helping Your Child Succeed in School and in Life*, Novak reveals the most effective strategies for supporting all kids in becoming successful, lifelong learners. She introduces the research-based framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and gives parents clear guidance for how best to work with their children and their children’s teachers.

Novak encourages parents to be aware of their role in supporting schools, writing, “Our teachers are up against a lot. Understanding the struggle that teachers face daily in the classroom is important, so we can see the classroom through their eyes and become partners in educating our kids. The shift to student-directed, personalized learning requires significant effort and change on the part of teachers, schools, and families.”

In the traditional education model, there was a sharp emphasis on “fixing” students so they could fit the outdated mold. UDL is a framework that ensures all students have options and choices about how they learn, how they share what they have learned and how they work through meaningful, authentic, valuable challenges.

UDL is endorsed as best practice in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind in 2015. CAST, an educational organization based in Massachusetts, is the founder of UDL, first laying out the principles in the 1990s. Novak offers the analogy of UDL as a “buffet” of multiple options, as opposed to a “casserole.”

- A “casserole” / “one-size-fits-all” lesson of traditional education: Students sat in rows, teachers assigned the same book to everyone, or delivered a lecture while students sat quietly and listened, and then they all took the same multiple-choice test, wrote an essay, or designed the occasional poster.
- A “buffet” lesson of UDL / personalized education: Instead of assigning the same text to the class, teachers focus on a theme, like tolerance, and students choose texts that have meaning to them. They could read a novel from the library, read an e-book on their iPad, listen to an audiobook or choose to read with peers or a teacher using short, meaningful texts. To share their knowledge, they can write essays or poetry; produce short movies or make book trailers; record podcasts; design infographics or suggest even more creative options.

Novak writes, “What is best for our kids is best for them in our homes and within their classroom walls. Both parents and teachers need to provide them with options so they can personalize their journey to achieve great things.”

(cont...)

KATIE NOVAK, EdD  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF UDL NOW!



LET THEM  
**thrive**  
A Playbook for Helping Your Child  
Succeed in School and in Life

Foreword by Paula F. Goldberg, Executive Director, PACER Center

### BOOK DETAILS

CAST Professional Publishing

[castpublishing.org](http://castpublishing.org)

September 1, 2017

Nonfiction | Education | Parenting

Paperback, \$14.99

ISBN: 978-1-93058-316-0

170 pages

eBook, \$14.99

ISBN: 978-1-93058-317-7

132 pages

For all students to be successful, they need a more flexible school environment; teachers must understand and appreciate student differences; and parents should be aware of their role in supporting schools and this new idea of “personalized” education. *Let Them Thrive* erases the lines between our homes and schools to optimize access to quality education for all our kids.

## About the Author

**Katie Novak, Ed.D.**, is an internationally renowned education consultant as well as assistant superintendent of schools at the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District in Massachusetts. With 15 years of experience in teaching and administration, an earned doctorate in curriculum and teaching, and four books published by CAST Professional Publishing, Katie designs and presents workshops both nationally and internationally focusing on implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and universally designed leadership.

Dr. Novak is the author of the best-selling book, *UDL Now! A Teacher's Guide to Applying Universal Design for Learning in Today's Classrooms*. Her newest book, *Let Them Thrive: A Playbook for Helping Your Child Succeed in School and in Life*, was endorsed by the PACER Foundation. Novak is also the coauthor of *UDL in the Cloud* and *Universally Designed Leadership*, which have been endorsed by leading professors in the field of education and state departments of education.

## Story Ideas / Key Messages

- Let Them Thrive: A practical understanding for parents of how education works—and how it can work better—for your children
- Back-to-school 2018: Learn how to support and advocate for your child's education from a parent and educator with 15 years of experience in teaching and administration
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL): A framework that aims to eliminate barriers to learning and help achieve greater opportunity and academic achievement for all learners, including those with disabilities, English language learners, economically disadvantaged students, and gifted and talented students
- Becoming a champion for teachers in your community: Understand what your child's teacher is up against and how to best support him or her
- Raise Your Expectations of Your Child: Teaching how to have a growth mindset through struggles and failure

## Praise for the book

“Universal design for learning (UDL) is an elegant framework for addressing the quite natural differences among learners in curriculum design. In this highly readable book, Katie Novak lays out UDL principles and practices in a plainspoken and useful way, showing how inclusive education really works in the classroom and at home.”

—David Flink, Cofounder and Chief Empowerment Officer of Eye to Eye National, and author of *Thinking Differently: An Inspiring Guide for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities*

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**Katie Novak**

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“In an engaging and conversational voice, Novak shares valuable tips about how parents can become informed partners in the effort to improve education for all learners, especially those with disabilities. She offers specific classroom-based examples of how teachers can customize their lessons to meet individual students' needs. Throughout the book, she makes the case for why parents and caregivers are so important to this process.”

—Paula F. Goldberg, Executive Director and Co-Founder, PACER Center

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