Focus Area #2: Represent Content in a Variety of Formats

https://vimeo.com/442704395/48392c09ac

I'm Sue Monthie senior instructional designer for Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth. In this brief video, I will introduce you to the second area of focus, *represent content in a variety of formats.* This area of focus encourages the sharing of content with students in a variety of formats, to provide students with multiple ways to interact with information and ideas.

By providing flexible learning materials which align to the learning objectives, we build engagement and address learner variability while reducing barriers in the learning process.

The first step in learning is to perceive and process the information provided. Learners differ in the way they perceive and comprehend information. Also, an individual processes information differently, depending on time and context.

Instructors may inadvertently create barriers to student learning if the resources they choose and create are difficult or impossible for some students to use. We can address this issue by providing the same information in multiple modalities, such as text, images, video, and audio. Flexible learning materials allow students to choose and adjust the content to their needs. For example, providing only text content can impede the progress of students with a sensory disability, learning disability, language challenges, or cultural differences.

It's important to support student focus by reducing cognitive load and minimizing distractions. This can be done by presenting content with clear, simple organization of learning materials, and guidance on how to best use them. All elements in course materials should directly support the learning process. Be sure to include diverse representation of cultures, race, gender, age, experiences, and interests in learning materials, ensuring that learning materials provide content that are relevant to students' lives and experiences increases student engagement and understanding.

We encode and make meaning from new information by making connections to our prior knowledge. Provide content that has relevance to students to maximize student motivation, knowledge retention, and deeper learning. Guide information processing to improve students' ability to remember, comprehend and transfer learning by highlighting big ideas, patterns, and connections between concepts. By providing multiple ways to engage with the course material, we support students' ability to construct meaning from the information.

To get started, find places in your lesson where you can provide options for students to access alternative content formats. Look for pain points where students seem less motivated or often have more difficulty mastering the learning objectives. Here are some suggestions for ways you can represent content in a variety of formats.

- Follow best practices for accessibility by providing captions and transcripts for audio and video content.

- Follow visual best practices such as using readable text size to ensure sufficient color contrast between text and backgrounds, and layout visual elements clearly so it's obvious how they support the related text.
- Follow audio best practices. Test any audio to ensure volume, pace, and clarity to ensure audio is comprehensive.
- Ensure you are creating an inclusive environment by ensuring diversity of representation in materials.
- Support information processing and comprehension with strategies such as modeling, scaffolding, and chunking when presenting new information.
- Include diagrams or charts to support textual information and help explain challenging concepts and connecting different ideas.
- Keep the course design clean and organized, providing clear guidance for use and navigation of learning materials.
- Incorporate interactive components that allow for student choice and autonomy.

Area Focus #2 - *represent content in a variety of formats* - aligns with the UDL guidelines *to* provide *multiple means of representation* by intentionally providing options for perception and comprehension. It also supports UDL guidelines for providing *multiple means of engagement* by connecting to students' prior knowledge and helping them see the relevance of learning objectives.