What Do Families Need to Know About UDL?

The principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that families should know:

✓ The Universal Design for Learning is a framework for planning that can be applied at all levels of the educational system resulting in a flexible, open and accessible curriculum.

✓ UDL is a planning methodology that supports inclusion but is not the only tool needed to achieve inclusive education.

✓ UDL recognises that there is no single way to learn, and therefore, there should not be a single way to teach. Different forms of motivation, representation, and expression, should be facilitated (3 principles).

✓ UDL implies that we focus on the ability and not on the disability, it tells us that we must not label students.

✓ UDL gives value to the diversity found in every classroom, plans for it and leaves behind the deficit model to focus on a skills model.

✓ UDL recognises that what is disabling is the context and not the people.

Key messages that families can promote:

✓ UDL promotes a learning model that takes into account all children.

✓ The core of UDL is that teachers must know their entire group of students. In this way, each one of the activities of the classes is planned according to the diversity of students, the environmental barriers are recognised and planned for, the previous knowledge of the students is built upon, and various materials and didactic strategies are used so that everyone can participate in the learning experience.

✓ It is also recognised that some students may require a particular adjustment in order to participate. Adaptations and reasonable accommodations must be done in some cases even if UDL is being used.

✓ Applying UDL does not mean that all students learn the same content, but rather that each and every one advances in their learning process by sharing in the same learning experience.

✓ UDL uses many means of communicating concepts, from reading/writing, sound and visual, spatial, and touch. Every sense should be stimulated so that the teacher can provoke development and learning in their classroom group.

✓ In this design, children are not evaluated in the same way, that is, boys and girls are not compared in relation to the learning of others, but in relation to their own learning progress.

✓ UDL applies an interdisciplinary work and approach involving different subjects covering the same topic which reduces the academic load and makes learning more efficient and meaningful.

✓ Many teachers involve families in their designs. This is ideal because the knowledge provided by family members enriches the pedagogical experience of all children.

✓ The UDL is not a specific methodology for students with disabilities who are in the regular system, it is a planning methodology that provides answers to diversity in the classroom, in which the teacher's knowledge of the students is critical.