

Design options for welcoming interests and identities

A suggestion for implementing the strategy 'Design multiple means of Engagement' from the Guide: [Universal Design for Learning](#)

Includes:

Why this matters

Optimise choice and autonomy

Optimise relevance, value, and authenticity

Nurture joy and play

Address biases, threats, and distractions

Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Universal Design for Learning](#)

Strategy: [Design multiple means of Engagement](#)

Suggestion: [Design options for welcoming interests and identities](#)

Date

05 July 2026

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inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/universal-design-for-learning/design-options-for-welcoming-interests

Why this matters

This guideline helps us design learning opportunities that are engaging and affirm the identity of every learner.

This is a critical step to ensuring learners are able to access and engage with the learning process ([CAST, 2024](#)).

[Design options for welcoming interests and identities](#) prompts us to consider learner variability at the outset and offer options to:

- [optimise choice and autonomy](#)
- [optimise relevance, value, and authenticity](#)
- [nurture joy and play](#)
- [address biases, threats, and distractions](#).

The guideline also reminds us to consider:

- How will these options support learners in reaching their goals?
- Could any of these options create barriers or unnecessary challenges?
- Will all learners have fair and equal access to high-quality choices?
- How do these options reflect and respond to learner variability?

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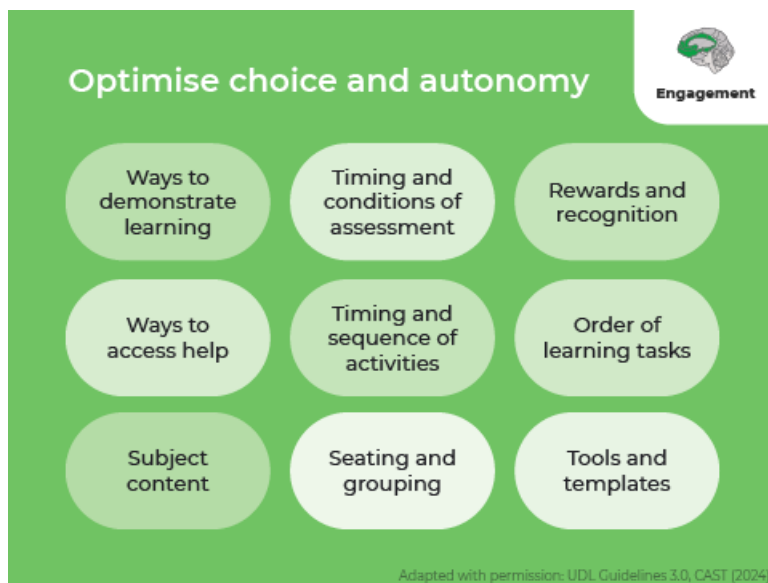
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Optimise choice and autonomy



Source:

[UDL Guidelines 3.0, CAST \(2024\)](#)

<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/engagement/interests-identities/choice-autonomy/>

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Optimise relevance, value, and authenticity

Learners will vary in what they find relevant or valuable.

Consider these ideas:

- Offer flexibility within learning activities so they can be personalised to learners' identities and experiences.
- Design activities so learning outcomes are authentic, communicate to real audiences, and reflect a clear purpose.
- Provide tasks that enable active participation, exploration, and experimentation.
- Include activities that foster the use of imagination to solve novel and relevant problems or make sense of complex ideas in creative ways.

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Nurture joy and play

Embed options and flexibility to support exploration and play, and spark joy ([CAST, 2024](#)).

- ✓ Nurture playfulness through outdoor play, sensory play, imaginative play, storytelling and play through the arts.
- ✓ Incorporate opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and discovery across all learning areas.
- ✓ Create space for learners to find joy through connections to their identities, sense of self, and communities.
- ✓ Create space for learners to take pride in their progress.

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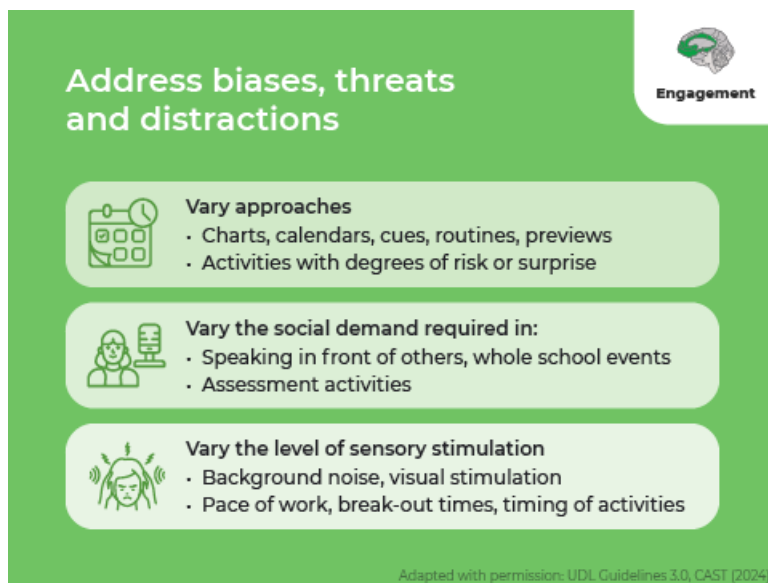
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Address biases, threats, and distractions



Address biases, threats and distractions

Engagement

- Vary approaches**
 - Charts, calendars, cues, routines, previews
 - Activities with degrees of risk or surprise
- Vary the social demand required in:**
 - Speaking in front of others, whole school events
 - Assessment activities
- Vary the level of sensory stimulation**
 - Background noise, visual stimulation
 - Pace of work, break-out times, timing of activities

Adapted with permission: UDL Guidelines 3.0, CAST (2024)

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Useful resources



Design options for welcoming interests and identities (UDL Guideline)

This UDL guideline invites educators to consider how to create learning environments that affirm the dignity of every learner and support access to learning for all.

This guideline supports the UDL Engagement principle.

Publisher: CAST (2024)

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