



Course Design Model Explanation

As an Adult Basic Education instructor, my starting point for planning any course is with the ABE Articulation Guide. From the learning outcomes provided in the guide, I determine course goals. These are ultimately the answers to the questions:

- What do I want my students to know?
- What do I want my students to do?
- What do I want my students to value (or take away from this course)?

The next step in my design process is to consider the students in my class; who are they, why are they taking the course and what skills may they be bringing to the classroom? The types of classroom activities are often determined by the culture of the students; for example, intermediate level (up to Gr. 10) adult students tend to be less sure of their academic goals, and may be less comfortable in a school setting than students at the provincial (Gr. 12) level. I also consider the assessment process (how will I measure what the students know) and the learning context (how will students access the content; face-to-face, online, textbooks, etc.).

I use a blend of three different schools of learning during implementation of my courses. My lessons tend to be teacher-centred to begin with, introducing the topic and basic facts or vocabulary. After short lessons, students are asked to try some practice questions – as I circulate I can observe whether they have understood the basic concept (behaviourist school). For online components, students complete short quizzes that are graded immediately and their score(s) uploaded so I can see their progress. Once the basics have been introduced, we then progress to problems that require the students to use some or all of the tools they have just learned (cognitive school). Nearing completion of a unit, we would turn to active learning where students use their “tools” to answer new problems such as case studies or projects that synthesize ideas across units.

Evaluation is in four parts. Learners are continually evaluated informally (formative) (e.g. classroom observations, short quizzes) which allows me to make revisions to the design and perhaps revisit content that was not understood. Formal evaluation (summative) (e.g. tests, assignments) could take place at several points within a unit (if a long unit) or at the end of a unit. Many of the subjects I teach build upon the skills learned in the previous unit, so summative assessments are also a good tool for revision of the design. Feedback from the students (e.g., unclear instructions, insufficient timelines, etc.) is also important. Finally, as an instructor, I constantly evaluate what I have designed – did the approach I used for a certain topic make sense (work?), are students engaged and motivated (if not, what needs to change?), are students receiving timely feedback?