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Learning Design Philosophy

Joshua Brewer, co-founder and CEO of Abstract and Principal Designer at Twitter once stated, "Socrates said, 'Know thyself'. I say, 'Know thy users'. And guess what? They don't think like you do." As an educator and a lifelong learner, I believe when designing instruction we must strive to make it challenging while truly understanding and individualizing design for learners of all ages and skill levels.

My approach to learning design can be summarized in four words. These words guide my design and choices as an educator and instructional designer: individualized, motivating, cognizant, and engaging.

Individualized

Utilization of the ADDIE (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate) model of instructional design guides each course from beginning to end. Prior knowledge is identified and used to connect and guide course content both for in-person and online learning. The needs of all learners are addressed including cognitive, motivational, and physical needs. Technology and the means by which instruction occurs are chosen based on what works best for the learner, rather than what is newest or flashiest. These techniques combine to create the most effective learning environment possible.

Motivating

Motivation is surveyed prior to instruction and used as a guide. Course goals are challenging but attainable and demonstrate clear expectations. Learning objectives vary in structure and levels from lower to higher order thinking through a combination of The Knowledge Dimension and The Cognitive Process Dimension. Instruction captures learner attention and allows them control and choice. Formative assessment is used regularly in order to assess and navigate the instructional flow and learner understanding.

Cognizant

Course design is vigilantly cognizant of cognitive overload and strives to maintain it at a minimum. Content is meaningful and purposeful while limiting extraneous information. Learning design principles are integrated throughout including the 12 Principles of Multimedia Learning. Technology and resources readily available are taken into consideration when choosing course delivery method. Age and diversity are taken into account during the design process in order to make the most appropriate and effective learning decisions.

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Engaging

Learners should all have a proactive and engaging role in their learning. This includes having a hands on approach with plenty of practice and feedback both from the instructor and peers during live sessions and on assignments. Multimedia is chosen carefully and integrated into the course in a way which adds value, understanding, and captures attention. Mistakes are seen as learning opportunities and and having a growth mindset is fostered through the encouragement of taking learning risks. Learners are given autonomy and choices which allow them certain controls over aspects of their education.

Over the course of obtaining my Master of Education in Learning Design and Technology at the University of Southern California, I have had the absolute pleasure to learn and grow with peers from varying industries around the country. Their fields varied greatly including K-12 education, military, higher education, and corporate companies. Although our fields and backgrounds differed greatly, these foundational skills of learning design and theories could be applied into all of our course designs. Through the use of these foundational learning principles, and an ever-evolving approach to education, the most effective learning design and educational environment can be achieved.