Design Blueprint for Parental Involvement Teacher Communication Course

Michelle Cordero

macorder@usc.edu

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Dr. Christine Mendoza

Rossier School of Education

University of Southern California

Abstract

This Design Blueprint for *Parental Involvement Teacher Communication Course* provides an introduction to a course designed to help parents of first-generation American immigrant students establish and maintain an open line of communication with their child's teachers. The course focuses on fifth grade students, as it is a pivotal age where children are about to transition to secondary school where parental involvement can become more difficult. Parents participating in the course should expect to be able to 1) check their child's grades online, 2) write a professional email to their child's teacher, 3) schedule parent-teacher conferences, and 4) gain confidence and self-efficacy in communicating with their child's teachers. The paper also discusses the prerequisites for the course, the expected format, and instructor qualifications. Various topics of design are covered in this paper, including learner profiles, course analysis, lesson analysis, cognitive task analysis, and approaches to teaching.

Needs Assessment

As parents of elementary school students, being involved in a child's education is an essential part of helping them grow and succeed. All too often, parents of first generation American students have trouble communicating with their child's teachers and having an active role in their education. Consequently, these students may struggle more in their studies when they are often the ones who would most benefit from parental involvement. Parents of first generation students often have a great desire to help their children in any way they can, but simply do not know how to. This can cause them a great deal of stress, frustration, and a sense of helplessness. While most schools encourage parental involvement, few take time to teach parents the hard skills they need in order to successfully create open communication with their child's teachers. As a first-generation American student myself, and as an elementary school teacher, I have seen many parents throughout the years who want to help their children, but don't know the proper ways to go about communicating with their child's instructor. Due to this lack of open communication, they may not even know their child is struggling until report cards are distributed. This behavior often continues into higher grades and students continue to struggle whether it be academically, socially, or because of behavior. The Parental Involvement Teacher Communication Course will assist parents in establishing and maintaining open communication with their child's teachers. This in turn will create a healthy learning environment for the student where everyone is working together in the child's best interest.

Whiles schools individually encourage parents to communicate with their child's teachers, parents of first generation American students can often be scared or intimidated by the American school system due to cultural differences. A district wide course for communities with

a high immigrant population would alleviate this and assist in opening up a comfortable parent-teacher dialogue. By designing a course for parents of first generation American fifth grade students, parents will be able to (1) check their child's grades on the district portal, (2) create and send professional emails to their child's teacher expressing thoughts and concerns, (3) request and set up parent-teacher conferences, and (4) feel comfortable speaking with their child's teachers. It is of utmost importance that this course be implemented for all parents of first generation American fifth grade students. Fifth grade is the last year before children transition into secondary school where communication with teachers and keeping up with their child's studies can become more of a challenge. Based on information collected from parents, teachers, and administrators, it was decided that it is imperative parents become comfortable and learn these skills before this transition so that they can assist their child and help them succeed. According to Smith and Ragan (2005, p.45), "The innovation model examines changes or innovations in the educational system or organization." This course would be an innovation model as no program such as this has been previously used in the school and will add goals to the organization.

Description of the Learning Environment

The instructor for the Parental Involvement Teacher Communication course has prior experience working with first generation American students and their parents. The instructor has delivered several educational programs to immigrant parents and has a strong interest and personal connection to first generation American students, possibly having been one themselves. They have shown a profound understanding of the reservations immigrant parents may have and their thoughts and feelings about the American school system. As a requirement, they are fluent

in the language spoken by the majority of learners attending the course and can translate easily. The instructor views their role in the parental communication training as (a) helping participants understand and become comfortable with the way schools work in the United States, (b) promoting success of the child by establishing open parent-teacher communication, (c) assisting parents of first generation American students to gain skills needed in order to assist their child with school, and (d) increasing parents self-efficacy of communicating with their child's teachers. They have proven very comfortable integrating media into their trainings in order to deliver instruction while promoting the comfort and familiarity of face-to-face instruction. The instructor has been working with the education department for the past five years and has a wealth of experience interacting with professionals, parents, and students.

Currently there is no program in place to address this issue. Educators usually encourage parents to have an open line of communication with them, but do not give them the tools or knowledge in order to be able to do so. Because immigrant families may not have the technology required for online courses at home, the course will take place at the elementary school where their children are enrolled as students in the evening. At the school there are a variety of technologies available such as promethean smart boards and laptop computers. The school taking part in this program has about 400 students and 27% of them are first generation American students with immigrant families. The classroom being used has the capacity to hold 20 adults comfortably. This is a mastery oriented course where the success of each student is the ultimate goal, there is no sense of competition among the learners. The philosophy of the school is aligned with that of the county school board. They are in agreement that all families should have as much support as possible and be involved with their child's education. Whatever the school

can do in order to achieve this is usually encouraged. Key stakeholders are in agreement to this philosophy as they want the school to improve and be the best possible.

Learner Profile

Cognitive characteristics. Participants in the Parental Involvement Teacher Communication Course immigrated from a foreign country and their children are first generation fifth grade students. They have varied levels of education ranging from eighth grade to college graduates. They also have varying socioeconomic status and may not have a job. The learners have proficient reading skills, knowledge comprehension, and skills of communication, although quite possibly in another language besides English. These participants can communicate with partners and small groups. They can follow along with a presentation when in their known language, and can ask questions when they are confused or would like further clarification.

***Ability*.** Participants have varied levels of computer literacy and knowledge, but all can turn on a computer, enter website URL, view pre recorded videos, navigate the computer with a laptop trackpad as instructed. The participants are adults who have reached Piaget's Formal Operational Stage of cognitive development. After reaching this stage, adults are able to think hypothetically and act upon those hypothetical thoughts and ideas (e.g. keeping contact with my child's teacher will keep me informed and better allow me to assist them to the best of my abilities). Learners will have varying levels of education but have at least a seventh grade reading level.

***Prior knowledge*.** Examining the prior knowledge of the learners is critical in order to ensure the content being taught in this course is appropriate for the audience. For example, knowing what a computer is, how to turn one on, how to access a certain website, and having an

email account are crucial knowledge which the learner must have before the initial training. In order to test their prior-knowledge, participants will be required to complete a two part survey. The first part of the survey will test if they can turn on a computer, type on the keyboard, go to the website instructed, and log in to an email server. If learners cannot complete these tasks, they will be shown a video which will instruct them. They will then be reassessed. Learners must master these skills in order to participate in the course. The second part of the survey will be a pre-assessment. Learners will be tested on their knowledge about communicating with their child's teachers (i.e. how to set up a parent-teacher conference), key skills needed to establish communication, their comfort levels and expectations for themselves and their child's teachers in the education process, and they will be asked to draft an email to their child's teacher which will be compared to their final draft at the end of the lesson. This pre-assessment will help the instructor of the course tailor the classes and speed based on the collective knowledge of the group of learners.

Motivation. Participants in the Parental Involvement Teacher Communication Course feel motivated to master the skills being taught. They are motivated by clearly set goals, positive expectancies, and because they value the task at hand. While learners may have varied interest in establishing communication with their child's teachers, most will feel eager to better support their child's education.

Value. Learners who are new to the United States may experience anxiety or apprehensiveness about the American education system, as it may be quite different than what they experienced in their home country. Learners may have previously had troubling experiences with the education system and feel fearful about taking part. Statistics on the importance of

parental involvement and communication will be included in initial training in order to ease these feelings and give value to their participation in the course as well as materials which are relevant and useful to learners. As this is a voluntary course, learners are self-motivated because they are doing it for the betterment of themselves and their child.

***Self-efficacy*.** Self-efficacy plays a major role in motivation as it is the learner's confidence in their ability to accomplish the tasks presented to them. If the learner has low self-efficacy about the course, they are less likely to participate and more likely to fail. The instructor must gauge the learner's self-efficacy before the start of the course. Learners will be asked to evaluate their level of self-efficacy through the use of a Likert-scale questionnaire with questions such as, "I can confidently set up a meeting with my child's teacher." A similar questionnaire will be given at the end of the course. They will be questioned on their comfort levels and expectations for themselves and their child's teacher in the education process.

Social characteristics. Participants in the course will have varying levels of connections to each other. As this course will be given at the start of the new school year, many will be strangers who have never met. Those who know each other will likely be more easily influenced by their fellow classmates. Because there is no sense of competition, learners will not feel the need to outdo each other. Learners will have similar backgrounds, therefore they will feel a sense of comradery and want each other to master the skills taught in the course.

Potential issues with power, equity, and inclusion. Participants in the course will likely be immigrants from countries outside of the United States who have children in fifth grade. These parents often do not understand how to navigate the U.S. school system and do not know what to expect or what is expected of them. They may feel apprehensive of communicating with

their child's teachers and because of this the teachers may negatively stereotype them as immigrant parents who do not care about their child's education. This is usually incorrect. Parents who have immigrated to the U.S. often do it to provide a better life for their children. They want to do everything in their power to help them, but do not know how to navigate the U.S. school system. According to Carreon, Drake, and Barton (2005, p.471), "many of these parents experience immigration as a process of isolation that makes it difficult to create social support networks that can sustain their efforts in regard to engaging in their children's schooling." This assumption of immigrant parents has contributed to an non-inclusive school culture.

Task Analysis

Course Analysis

Throughout this course, learners will acquire skills which they will have to demonstrate mastery of. The overall goal of this course is that learners will demonstrate how to be involved in their child's education through parent-teacher communication. While there will be many types of learning outcomes as per "Gagne's Types of Learning Outcomes", overall it will be a intellectual skill as learners will have to think and demonstrate through actions the skills they will learn. It is classified as a "problem solving" learning outcome as they will have a learned capability which will involve application and selection of different possible rules.

Course Outcomes. Learners will demonstrate how to be involved in their child's education through parent-teacher communication as the learning goal of this course. The learning outcomes are as follows:

By the completion of this course, learners will be able to:

- Create a professional email to their child's teacher expressing their thoughts and concerns. (metacognitive/create)
- Accurately demonstrate all of the steps in order to check their child's grades on the county parent portal. (procedural/apply)
- Use the school's conference website to set up a parent-teacher conference. (Procedural/apply)
- Recognize the importance of involvement through parent-teacher communication by providing three reasons. (conceptual/apply/motivation)

Major tasks. The tasks which will be taught in order to meet the overall course goal are as follows:

1. Using a computer, navigate to the district parent portal website, create an account and sign in.
2. Once signed in, examine child's grades. Take note of any questions, discrepancies, or concerns.
3. Practice translations with Google Translate.
4. Navigate to email website and create email if needed.
5. **Create and send professional email to child's teacher.**
6. Navigate to conference website and set up parent-teacher conference.

Lesson Analysis

This lesson will focus on a critical part of parent teacher communication, the ability to draft and send a professional email. Although all of the tasks in this course are important and are an integral part of parent-teacher communication, this task was chosen for a few specific reasons.

Drafting and sending an email to your child's teacher requires many prerequisite skills which must come together in order to be successful. Parents by this point should have basic computing skills and be able to create an email, type, use a translating website if needed, understand the structure of an email, and be able to express their thoughts and concerns. This is the most difficult task in the course because it falls under Gagne's learning outcomes as intellectual skills: problem solving.

A cognitive task analysis (CTA) was conducted in order to gather knowledge on how to complete this task. The subject matter expert interviewed is a 5 year veteran lead teacher at a school where over half of the student population comes from a first generation American immigrant family. The subject matter expert (SME) is on the school's leadership team and firmly believes in doing everything possible to encourage parents to be involved, especially immigrant parents. They have a master's degree in educational leadership and have created programming in attempts to establish a more welcoming environment for students and parents alike.

Terminal learning objective. The terminal learning objective for this lesson is, "by the end of this lesson, the learner will be able to create a professional email to their child's teacher expressing their thoughts and concerns". By completing this task, learners will be thinking at a metacognitive level as they are being required to create something new.

Cue. You know when to start this task when you have something you would like to say to, or ask of your child's teacher. Potential reasons to send an email message include, but are not limited to:

- A question pertaining to something school related.
- Concern about a grade they received.

- Concern about something that happened at school that day.
- Desire to inform the teacher about an issue concerning the child.
- Desire to inform the teacher about an incident which occurred outside of school but may affect the child during school hours.

Condition. Once the parent determines what they would like to say to the teacher, they should write down notes on a piece of paper so they do not forget any pieces of information. If the issue that has prompted the email is upsetting, they should wait until calming down in order to send the message with a clear mind. They should then open their email server at either a computer, smartphone, tablet, or on any other technological device which can send an email message. If needed, have a translator website open and available. In order to perform this task, the learner must have a clear mind and have an idea of what it is they want to say to their child's teacher. Certain conditions must be available such as relatively fast wifi or data speeds and a charged technological device.

Standards. In order to master the tasks in this lesson, learners must be able to open the email server, type out a coherent message to their child's teacher expressing their thoughts and concerns (with the use of a translator app if necessary) following the basic outline of a professional email as instructed, and know where to press send.

Equipment. Equipment required include a computer, tablet, smartphone, or any other internet enabled device with the capability to send and receive emails, as well as a pencil and paper to jot down notes prior to writing the email.

Cognitive Task Analysis

The selected task involves successfully sending a professional email to a teacher. The CTA (below) is a comprehensive list of the action and decision steps needed to complete the task based on my interview, research, and observations. Figure X depicts the CTA action and decision steps visually in a flow chart.

1. **Open** email server page of your choice. (Gmail, Yahoo, Outlook, etc.)
2. **Login** to email server.
    a. IF you do not have an email, THEN go through the steps to create one on your chosen email server.
3. **Type** the email of the child's teacher in the "to" section.
    a. IF you do not have the email of the child's teacher THEN contact the school, check the school website, or contact another parent and ask them for it.
    b. IF writing to two teachers in the same email, THEN type both of their email addresses here by pressing enter when finished with the first, then typing the second email address.
    c. IF asking questions addressing different teachers, THEN continue with the questions for just one teacher, and create a new email for the second teacher when finished.
4. **Type** a short topic of the email in the subject line indicating what the email is about in no more than five words.
    a. IF the email is about a specific grade the child received, THEN type, "concern about (child's name) grade".

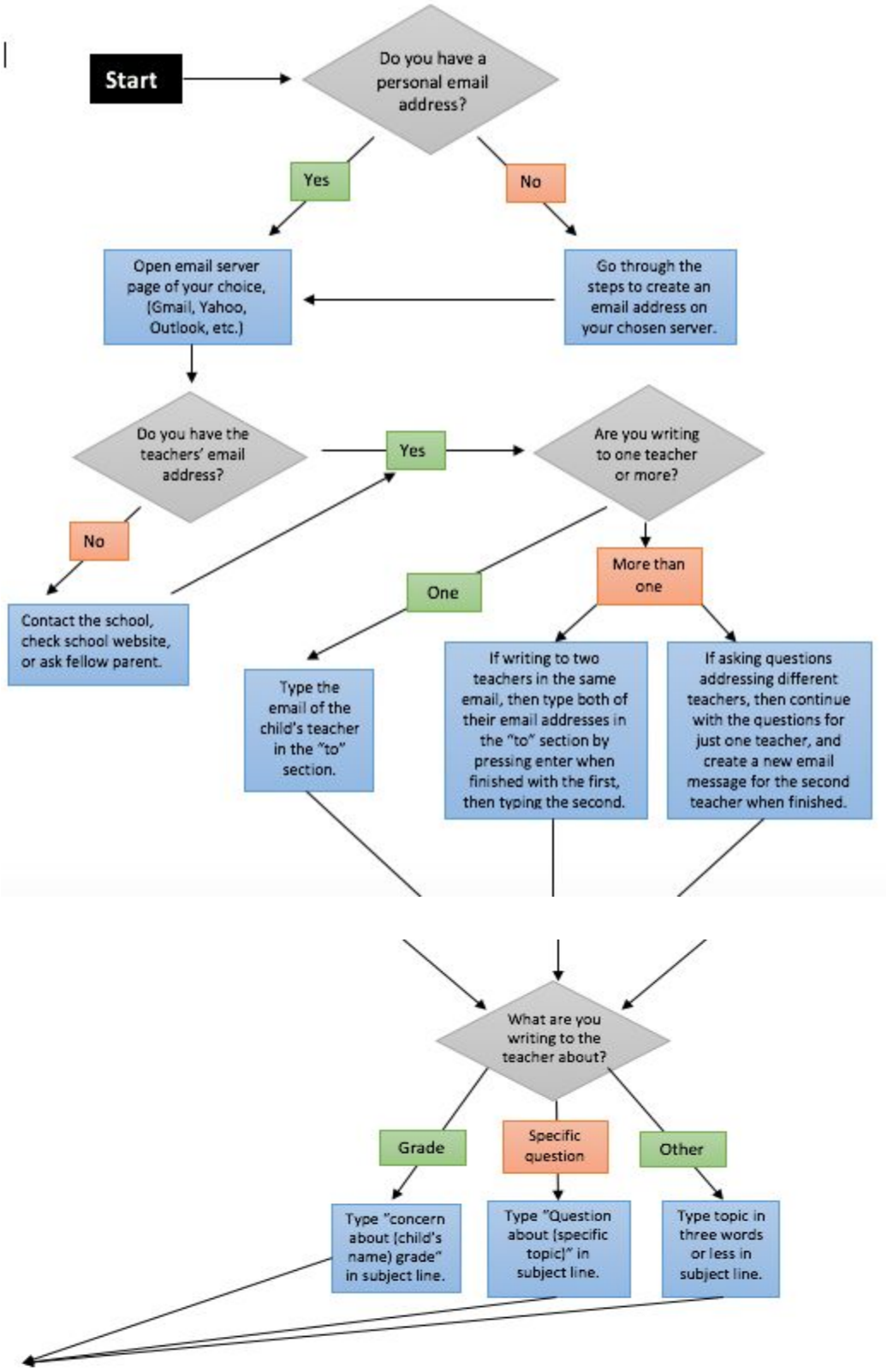
   b. IF the email is asking the teacher a question about something specific, THEN type, “Question about (specific topic)”.
   c. IF the email is concerning anything not stated above, THEN state the topic in three words or less.

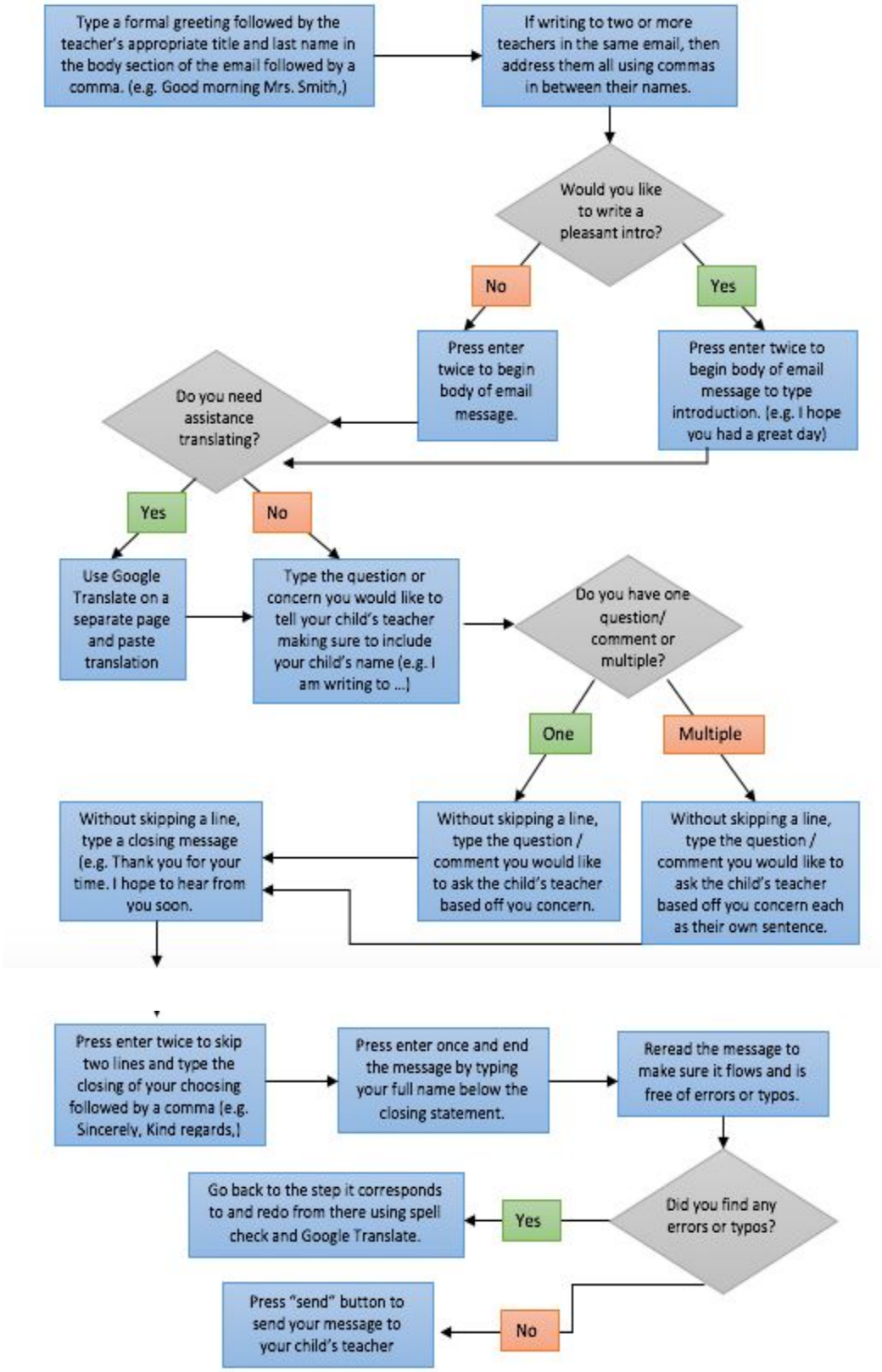
5. **Type** a formal greeting followed by the teacher’s appropriate title and last name in the body section of the email followed by a comma. (e.g. Good morning Mrs. Smith,)
   a. IF you are writing to two or more teachers in the same email, THEN address them all using commas in between their names.
6. **Press** enter twice to begin body of email message.
   a. IF you would like to write a pleasant introduction, e.g I hope you are having a lovely day, THEN type this one sentence first and continue onto step 8.
   b. IF you choose not to write a pleasant introduction, THEN continue to step 8.
7. **Type** the concern you would like to tell the child’s teacher making sure to include the child’s name (e.g. I am writing to …).
   a. IF you are having trouble coming up with the words to say in English, THEN open Google Translate on a separate page and paste translation.
8. Without skipping a line, **type** the question you would like to ask the child’s teacher based off of your concern.

   a. IF you are having trouble coming up with the words to say in English, THEN open Google Translate on separate page and paste translation.
   b. IF you have multiple questions, THEN type them each as their own sentence.

9. Without skipping a line, **type** a closing message (e.g. Thank you for your time. I hope to hear from you soon).
   a. IF you are having trouble coming up with the words to say in English, THEN open Google Translate on separate page and paste translation.
10. **Press** enter twice to **skip** two lines and type the closing of your choosing followed by a comma (e.g. Sincerely, Kind regards, With appreciation).
   a. IF you are having trouble coming up with the words to say in English, THEN open Google Translate on separate page and paste translation.
11. **Press** enter once and end the message by typing your full name below the closing statement.
12. **Reread** your message, making sure you followed the format and reviewing what was typed for errors (e.g. each sentence begins with a capital letter).
   a. IF you find any errors, THEN go back to the step it corresponds to and redo from there using spell check and Google Translate.
13. **Press** the send button to send your message to your child's teacher.

Figure X. Parent-Teacher Email Communication


Start
Do you have a personal email address?
Yes
No
Open email server page of your choice, (Gmail, Yahoo, Outlook, etc.)
Go through the steps to create an email address on your chosen server.
Do you have the teachers' email address?
Yes
No
Contact the school, check school website, or ask fellow parent.
Are you writing to one teacher or more?
One
More than one
Type the email of the child's teacher in the "to" section.
If writing to two teachers in the same email, then type both of their email addresses in the "to" section by pressing enter when finished with the first, then typing the second.
If asking questions addressing different teachers, then continue with the questions for just one teacher, and create a new email message for the second teacher when finished.
What are you writing to the teacher about?
Grade
Specific question
Other
Type "concern about (child's name) grade" in subject line.
Type "Question about (specific topic)" in subject line.
Type topic in three words or less in subject line.


Type a formal greeting followed by the teacher's appropriate title and last name in the body section of the email followed by a comma. (e.g. Good morning Mrs. Smith,)
If writing to two or more teachers in the same email, then address them all using commas in between their names.
Would you like to write a pleasant intro?
No
Yes
Press enter twice to begin body of email message.
Press enter twice to begin body of email message to type introduction. (e.g. I hope you had a great day)
Do you need assistance translating?
Yes
No
Use Google Translate on a separate page and paste translation
Type the question or concern you would like to tell your child's teacher making sure to include your child's name (e.g. I am writing to ...)
Do you have one question/ comment or multiple?
One
Multiple
Without skipping a line, type a closing message (e.g. Thank you for your time. I hope to hear from you soon.
Without skipping a line, type the question / comment you would like to ask the child's teacher based off you concern.
Without skipping a line, type the question / comment you would like to ask the child's teacher based off you concern each as their own sentence.
Press enter twice to skip two lines and type the closing of your choosing followed by a comma (e.g. Sincerely, Kind regards,)
Press enter once and end the message by typing your full name below the closing statement.
Reread the message to make sure it flows and is free of errors or typos.
Did you find any errors or typos?
Yes
Go back to the step it corresponds to and redo from there using spell check and Google Translate.
No
Press "send" button to send your message to your child's teacher

Prerequisite Analysis

In order to successfully master the task of sending a professional email to their child's teacher, there is some prerequisite knowledge the learners will need to have in order to be successful in this task.

1. **Open** email server page of your choice. (Gmail, Yahoo, Outlook, etc.)
    a. **Recall** how to reach email server page of choice. (Remember)
2. **Login** to email server.
    a. **Remember** their login information. (Remember)
    b. **Recall** steps to login to email server. (Remember)
    c. **Generate** an email address for themselves. (Create)
    d. **Outline** how to use email and its purpose. (Analyze)
3. **Type** the email of the child's teacher in the "to" section.
    a. **Execute** steps to open a new email message. (Apply)
    b. **Locate** the email of the teacher. (Remember)
4. **Type** a short topic of the email in the subject line indicating what the email is about in no more than five words.
    a. **Identify** what the email's contents will entail. (Analyze)
    b. **Operate** a computer keyboard. (Apply)
5. **Type** a formal greeting followed by the teacher's last name and appropriate title in the body section of the email followed by a comma. (e.g. Good morning Mrs. Smith,)
    a. **Apply** appropriate rules for greetings in email. (Apply)

b. **Label** what the different sections of an email are called. (Remember)

6. **Press** enter twice to begin body of email message.
    a. **Recall** which is the enter key on a keyboard. (Remember)
7. **Type** the concern you would like to tell the child's teacher making sure to include the child's name.
    a. **Compose** appropriate expression of concern or question. (Create)
        i. **Recall** concerning grade from district parent portal or general concern. (Remember)
        ii. **Apply** appropriate rules for expressing concerns in a professional manner. (Apply)
    b. **Operate** a computer keyboard. (Apply)
    c. **Implement** Google Translate website when language assistance is needed. (Apply)
8. Without skipping a line, **type** the question you would like to ask the child's teacher based off of your concern.
    a. **Produce** question which can be asked to resolve issue. (Create)
9. Without skipping a line, **type** a closing message (e.g. Thank you for your time. I hope to hear from you soon).
    a. **Apply** appropriate rules for ending a professional email. (Apply)
10. **Press** enter twice to **skip** two lines and type the closing of your choosing followed by a comma (e.g. sincerely, kind regards, with appreciation).
    a. **Identify** which is the enter key on the keyboard. (Remember)

b. **Implement** knowledge of different appropriate closing statements. (Apply)

11. **Press** enter once and end the message by typing your full name below the closing statement.
    a. **Recall** which is the enter key on a keyboard. (Remember)
    b. **Operate** a computer keyboard. (Apply)
12. **Reread** your message, making sure you followed the format and reviewing was what typed for errors.
    a. **Assess** the message written. (Evaluate)
    b. **Implement** Google Translate website when language assistance is needed. (Apply)
13. **Press** the send button to send your message to your child's teacher.
    a. **Identify** which is the send button on the email. (Remember)

Learning Objectives for One Lesson

The terminal learning objectives and enabling learning objectives for the task of sending a professional email to a child's teacher, as stated below, are aligned with the overall learning goal of this course. One of the direct learning goals of this course is that the learner will be able to send a professional email to their child's teacher. Through this process this goal can be achieved.

1. Having decided what they will be emailing their child's teacher about, the learner will be able to **open** their email server effectively.

2. Given the open email webpage, the learner will be able to correctly **login** to the email server using the email information they previously created for themselves.
3. Having logged in to their email server, the learner will be able to accurately **type** in the email of their child's teacher by looking up the correct email address.
4. Having typed in the teachers email, the learner will be able to **type** a short topic about what the email concerns in the subject line using no more than five words.
5. Having completed the subject line, the learner will be able to **type** a formal greeting which includes the teachers appropriate title and last name followed by a comma (e.g., Good morning Mrs. Smith,).
6. Given the completion of the greeting, the learner will be able to **press** enter twice on the keyboard correctly leaving one open line below the greeting.
7. Having pressed enter twice, the learner will be able to **type** the concern they would like to express to their child's teacher using professional language and including the child's name.
8. Having expressed their concerns, the learner will be able to **type** a question they would like to ask their child's teacher with the same level of professionalism as prior step without skipping any lines.
9. Having asked their question of the teacher, the learner will be able to **type** a closing message using professionalism and politeness without skipping any lines (e.g., Thank you for your time, I hope to hear from you soon).

10. Having typed an appropriate closing message, the learner will be able to **type** a closing sign of their choosing after skipping two lines (e.g., Sincerely, Kind regards, With appreciation, etc.).
11. Having typed an appropriate closing statement, the learner will be able to end the message by **typing** their full name below the closing statement.
12. Having written their full name to end the message, the learner will be able to **reread** the message with diligence, making sure they followed the correct format and correcting any errors they may find until no errors remain.
13. Having reread the message and corrected any errors, the learner will be able to **press** the send button correctly.

Learning Activities

General Approach

The purpose of the Parental Involvement Teacher Communication course is to assist parents of fifth grade students who have recently immigrated to the United States to become involved in their child's education. This will be done by establishing and maintaining open communication with their child's teacher. This portion of the course will teach parents how to communicate in a professional manner with their child's teacher, thus allowing them to form a cohesive relationship where they can work together in the best interest of the child. The purpose of this section is to give a general overview of how instruction will be approached throughout the entirety of the course based on observations of learner prior knowledge.

Learner characteristics and prior knowledge. Participants in this course are parents of first generation fifth grade students. They are proficient in reading, writing, and knowledge

comprehension, although possibly in a language other than English. They can communicate within small groups, follow a presentation in their known language, and can ask questions when they need further clarification.

Participants have varied levels of computer literacy and knowledge, but all have basic computer skills. Their prior knowledge will be assessed before beginning the course. Remediation will be given if needed in order for all learners to have the basic knowledge required to begin the course.

Cognitive load theory. In order to properly manage the cognitive load of the learners in this course, steps will be taken in order to keep them from feeling overwhelmed. Once the prior knowledge assessment has been completed, the instructor will provide crucial pre-training to those who demonstrated a need for it. This will reduce feelings of stress and help prepare the learner for the course.

Throughout the course lessons will be segmented and scaffolded into manageable parts ordered from easiest to most difficult thus allowing learners to absorb information before moving onto more challenging sections. Aligning, or "placing printed words near corresponding parts of graphics" (Smith and Ragan, 2005, p.144) will be crucial in this course. Many of the learners will not have a perfect grasp on the English language and for most it will not be their native language. Aligning will reduce the need for visual scanning and reduce cognitive load.

Instructional strategies. Overall the course will involve a supplantive instructional approach with a few generative strategies. According to Smith & Ragan (2005, p.142), "Supplantive strategies, as compared to generative instruction, tends to supplant, facilitate, or scaffold more of the information processing for the learner by providing elaborations that supply

all or part of the educational goal." This was chosen due to the fact that many of the learners are expected to begin the course with low prior knowledge and high anxiety while the tas of writing a professional email to their child's teacher is complex and well defined.

Generative instructional strategies will specifically be used during the task of deciding what to write to the teacher in an email. During this task, learners will have to decide what the topic of the email will be and what it will consist of after having checked their child's grades or decided they needed to communicate with the teacher. This cannot be guided by the instructor as it requires the a large amount of processing on the learner's part based on their prior knowledge of their child.

Specific Approach

The specific task chosen from the course which we have been focusing on enables learners to write a professional email to their child's teacher. This task was chosen because email is the standard communication tool used in schools for communication with teachers. The lesson protocol using the nine instructional events, as stated by Smith & Ragan (2005), will be used to gain attention, inform the learner, stimulate recall,present materials, provide guidance, elicit performance, provide feedback, assess performance, and enhance retention and transfer, mainly in a supplantive way as learners are likely coming into the task with little prior knowledge. While the task itself will be taught in a supplantive way, the content of the email itself is individualized, thus learners will develop their own methods for deciding what they wish to speak to their child's teacher about.

Stimulate attention and motivation. The purpose of this instructional event is to establish communication between parents of first generation American fifth grade students and

their teachers. This will enable parents and teachers to be on the same page about the child's education and schooling, thus creating a better overall learning and school experience for the child. In order to gain learner attention and increase motivation, this lesson will begin with a group discussion on how important they feel it is to have open communication with their child's teacher and how they normally feel using technology to communicate. They will be shown a short PowerPoint presentation which depicts research and statistics demonstrating the importance of parental involvement and communication, as well as first hand accounts from parents, students, and teachers. This will establish purpose for the learners. They will then be informed on what they are about to learn thus facilitating learning as stated by Smith & Ragan (2005).

Objectives. After stating what the lesson entails, the instructor will cover the specific objectives which will be taught in this lesson. This will be done aloud and with the use of a PowerPoint presentation which will be projected on the SmartBoard in the classroom and controlled by the instructor. Having the PowerPoint presentation will allow learners to follow along and have a visual of what they are expected to have mastered by the end of the lesson.

Overview. This portion of the lesson will be highly supplantive, as it will mainly entail the instructor speaking to the learners, giving an overview of the lesson, and guiding them through their practice. The instructor will state the goals of this lesson and what learners will be learning and expected to achieve. This will be done vocally as well as through the use of a PowerPoint presentation. The following sections describe information and strategies which will be used throughout different portions of the lesson.

Stimulate Prior knowledge. It is important for prior knowledge from previous sections in this course to be stimulated as they will assist the learner in this highly cognitive task. It is

important for learners to have a few specific computing skills in order for them to successfully master this learning task. Remediation will be given if needed in order to "catch them up" to where they need to be in order to be successful. Prior knowledge will be stimulated by asking them to complete a series of simple computer tasks, correcting misconceptions when needed.

Analogies and metaphors. An analogy comparing writing an email on a computer to writing a letter with a pen and paper will be used. Learners will be asked to recall the parts of a letter and to write one on paper. The class will go over the different parts together.

Suggest learning strategies. Instructors in this course will use a variety of learning strategies to best help their learners achieve. Besides those listed above, instructors will Use examples from their own lives and ask questions that trigger recall. They will diligently correct misconceptions while identifying discrepancies and discussing evidence contrary to the perceived thought. The instructor will ask learners different reasons why they would need to get in contact with their child's teacher through email. As suggestions are given, the instructor will write them on the board, showing learners all the different benefits this task has. Learners will copy down the list and take it home in order to remind them of situations where an email is entirely beneficial. THis will raise their self-efficacy and confidence.

Present Information and examples. During this activity, Information will be presented in "expository sequence" (Smith & Ragan, 2005). Definitions of different concepts will be presented on a PowerPoint presentation, followed by good and bad examples of the concept. If the instructor feels that the learners are understanding a certain concept well, they will ask them to give their own examples. During the bad examples, instructors will lead the conversation pointing out mistakes. While presenting the good examples the instructor will point out what was

done correctly. They will also ask learners if they can come up with any examples of what could be done differently, but still be considered correct.

Observe Demonstration. For some of the concepts, such as deciding the topic of the email, a demonstration will be done by the instructor using the "think aloud" strategy , where they vocalize their thoughts in order to show learners the process they are going through. This technique demonstrates to learners the thought process normally used during each step of drafting an email to a teacher. Through this learners will become comfortable in practicing the steps themselves.

Provide for and guide practice. At this point in the lesson each learner will have a laptop at their desk. General information, examples, and guidance have been given for each step of the process. The instructor will now guide the learners through drafting their own email to their child's teacher. Slides of each step in the process will be displayed on the SmartBoard and the instructor will walk around the room monitoring progress. The class will move together through the process step by step. Reminders of easily made mistakes and misconceptions will be reminded as learners go through the process.

Throughout their practice, the instructor will take different opportunities to ask questions aloud which will recall certain information given during explicit instruction. Learners will be able to raise their hand and attempt to answer. The instructor will also ask a variety of "what if" questions, taking volunteers to respond or giving the correct response to the group themselves.

Provide feedback. Formative feedback will be given throughout the lesson. This will be in the form of "informational feedback", which according to Smith & Ragan (2005, p.136), "give[s] learners the opportunity to consider information about the appropriateness of their

responses during practice". While learners are practicing drafting an email to their child's teacher, the instructor will be walking around, monitoring progress, and giving feedback. If the instructor sees that a learner is missing the mark and seems confused, they will ask them why they did that in order to see their reasoning. The instructor will correct misconceptions and assist the learner in correcting their work.

While giving feedback, the instructor will be sure to do it in a low voice near the learner they are speaking to. These parents may have low self-efficacy in their abilities and calling out their mistakes for the class to hear will not assist them. Giving them specific feedback quietly will help them fix their misconceptions while not showing it to others. If there is a situation where many learners have the same issue, then the instructor will have a general discussion about it to the entire class, not calling anyone out specifically.

Enhance transfer. Transfer allows learners to to apply the new knowledge gained from this task to future learning tasks and real-life situations. According to Smith & Ragan (2005), there are two types of transfer. "Near transfer" happens when the task learned is applied in a way similar to which it was learned, while "far transfer" allows the learner the ability to apply the learned task, or any part of it, in situations different than those previously practiced. A major goal in near transfer for our task will be that learners will use their new skills to send emails to others, not just their child's teachers. A major goal in far transfer will be that learners will be able to use their new found skills to professionally communicate with school members in person. Both types of transfer will be enhanced through techniques utilized by the instructor. They will use comparisons and analogies, present information in small, controllable segments, and administer authentic tasks which will show meaningful, real-life applications.

Authentic assessment. At the end of the lesson, after all previous steps and activities have concluded, the instructor will administer an authentic assessment. The learner will be tasked with taking everything they have learned and drafting an email to their child's teacher entirely on their own from start to finish. The purpose of the authentic assessment is to determine if learners have achieved the goals for instruction through a summative task.

Based on the results, remediation may be necessary for some learners. They will be asked to watch an instructional video online which reviews what was learned in the lesson. They will be able to pause and review. They will be assessed through the use of a rubric which they will hav access to before and after the assessment. This is so they are aware of what is expected of them and can compare it to how they did. During remediation they will be able to have one-on-one time to ask the instructor questions or clarify certain topics.

Conclusion

Reflection

Creating this instructional design blueprint has been one of the most daunting task I have ever had to complete in my educational or professional life. When beginning this task, I couldn't even think of an idea. None of them felt good enough. They seemed far too simple or incredibly complicated. There were many moments where I doubted my abilities and felt immense frustration. The biggest moment of frustration was when I was interviewing my subject matter expert for the cognitive task analysis. We both felt the task was so incredibly simple that there was no way it could really be broken down into many steps. They also seems frustrated when I kept probing and trying to get more information, it made me feel a bit silly. My "a-ha" moment came when I was typing up the CTA. I realized that even the simplest task, which most of the

population regards as second nature, can truly be broken down into multiple steps in order to teach others. I found myself breaking up the task into more pieces while realizing certain steps had to be taken before moving on.

I would not say I am a master in any of this quite yet. I know that I will be looking back at this assignment often to remind myself of how things should look. I do feel that my instructional design skills have grown a great deal, as has my self-efficacy for it. The next time I conduct a CTA I know I will feel more comfortable and have a better grasp of how to go about it. One of my greatest worries becoming an instructional design has always been designing courses and materials of which I do not have much knowledge of. This entire process has calmed me and given me a great deal of knowledge and reassurance that I can do it.

I plan to use what I have learned in this course in my professional workplace. This will help me practice and improve my school by successfully applying the ADDIE model and everything else learned to different tasks and instructional problems.

Summary

Students with parents who are involved in their education often achieve better grades, have better social skills, and show improved behavior. A large contributor to effective parental involvement is parent-teacher communication. Immigrant families with children who are first generation American students in the U.S. often want to be involved but have trouble communicating with their child's teachers because they feel intimidated or don't have the proper knowledge. Thi causes a disconnect between home and school which can cause negative effects on the child.

The Parental Involvement Teacher Communication Course was designed to teach parents the skills they need to successfully establish and maintain open communication with their child's teachers. It is also intended to increase their self-efficacy and confidence in relation to their role in their child's education. The course takes into account the prior knowledge, socioeconomic status, and language abilities of the learner as well as their fears, worries, and frustrations in terms of communicating with schools and teachers. It is optional and advertised as a safe space for immigrants, regardless of their situation. The impact from this course is expected to show immediately in the increased amount of parent-teacher communication which will establish a supportive learning environment for the child both at school and at home.

References

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