Wells' Design Model

Jason Wells

University of Arkansas

In developing an instructional design, one must start with the end in mind. In this particular case, success in learning a stated objective is the goal. The Wells' model has been created with secondary level students in mind with the understanding based on several principles that have been found critical to learning a set objective. Once the learning objective has been established, the content itself can be created. This is illustrated as, "an instructional designer's job is to create something that enables a person or group of people to learn about a particular topic, develop or improve a set of skills, or encourage the learner to conduct further study" (Brown, Pg.6). The Wells' model design includes the following phases: analyze, learn, knowledge, and feedback. Model phases have been selected because of critical importance to see the learning of an objective. Any group of learners can start in any particular phase to reach success. Constructivism will be the base learning theory for the present model below. The Wells' model is built upon the idea behind the Constructivist theory for which students "create their own meaning and understanding" (e.g. "Constructivist view of learning," n.d., para. 1). Students testing this model will find this extremely important as their learning environment will be a blended online setting. The course in question for method trials is American History with 160 students ranging from gifted and talented students to students with special learning conditions. While creating the Wells' Model, the main consideration given went to student ability to personalize the learning upon what their current level of knowledge is. Debra Marsh pointed out in her book, "Blended Learning: Creating Opportunities for Language Learners" that a top priority of this type of learning was the student center focus on setting the development of content. Marsh's principle will be remembered as a focal point in the design of the Wells Method. Figure 1 at the top of the next page illustrates the four phases and as they connect together along with it repeating as needed.
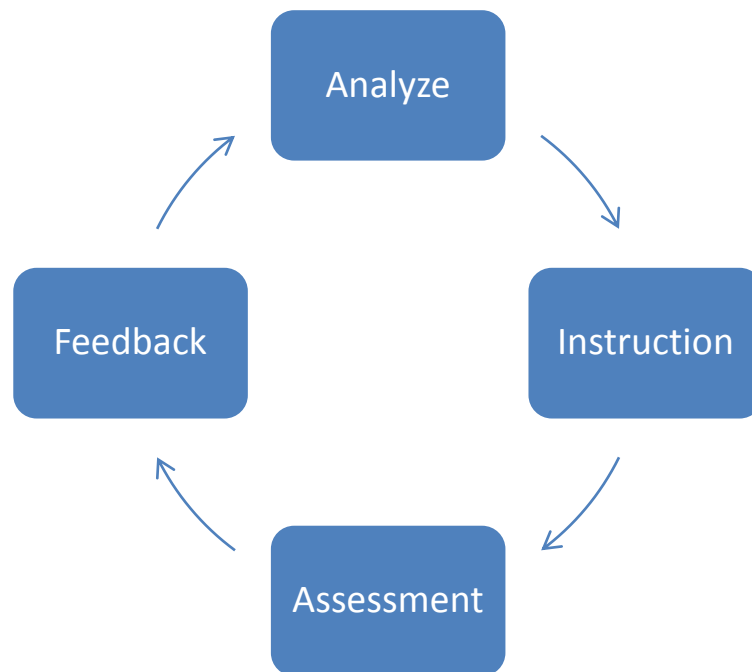
Figure 1

       The first phase is to analyze. This is the most critical phase of any instructional model. Within this section, the instructor will be able to set the objectives and goals for the lesson. "Goal setting plays a prominent role in social-cognitive learning models of academic achievement" (Morisano, 2010). For this case, chapters will be used as the set guide for the purpose of providing the instructional method here. Debra Marsh, noted that students should be presented with a clear plan or outline for the content to be studied (2012). In this particular case, plans created may vary between students or schools, depending upon previous knowledge and calendars. Analysis will take the form of a pre-test of knowledge to be presented along with a student survey. Analysis will include examining learner characteristics as those will play a role in determining the success of the methods along with selecting the desired delivery method to develop for students.

The next phase will be developing instruction. It will be within this frame students will be learning the content itself. This may involve: self-study, collaboration, real world examples, or stimulations. One point to remember is that the best delivery method must be selected for the content at hand. Students will focus on making a connection that holds meaning. Many of the focal points in the learning phase include: realistic environment, multiple perspectives and modes, followed by student ownership in learning (Brown, p. 32), In this phase, students will drive their own learning at the pace that meets their individual needs with guidance from instructors. By following this type of learning environment, students will learn to focus on areas of need and the most effective use of time. Another prominent need here again focuses on the overall learning objectives should be met in the student instruction.

Following instruction will be assessment development on the topic. Within this phase, students will present knowledge based upon the set learning objectives at the start of the content. Assessing students can come in the form of a standard test, collaborative project with classmates, discussion/debates or a simulation event. The key to finding the right assessment is to examine the task and objectives. This is how students will placed with the correct measurement tool. This phase should be considered to "enhance student learning" (Stiggins, 2007). Assessment can be "best suited to guide improvements in student learning are the quizzes, tests, writing assignments, and other assessments that teachers administer on a regular basis in their classrooms" (Guskey, 2003). In the case of designing an assessment, it is important to focus on one that goes back to the first objectives. The development of a correct formal or informal assessment should not be taken lightly; it should be done as a way to prompt learning. Based upon the assessment results followed by phase four, students may continue forward or review. This reflects upon the need for development of proper assessments.

Finally, developing feedback will be the last step in this instructional design. Feedback will be centered on each step of the process. As assessments are developed in the third step, the thoughts of feedback will be considered. In fact, feedback plans will be considered and placed into action throughout the process. As students are continually being assessed for their learning, being able to provide correct feedback and guidance will lead to a higher success rate. The key is proper feedback.

Once, the design method is put into place in a classroom setting, the next question comes about. Is it a success? Overall, the method itself needs to be evaluated to ensure that the full purpose and intent is being carried out. This becomes the goal of the evaluation. In order to process an evaluation for the course in question, instructional facilitator for Social Studies will lead process for the administration. Clearly defined rubrics will be the guide for evaluating the Wells Instructional Method in the course. Student survey results will also play into evaluating the method reaching the students. The data included will be collected in the school year to which the method is used for the course. To compare this method with others previously used for the same students, data with be compared with those gathered in other years. However, priority remains to determine success using the phases mentioned above. After reviewing all of data collected and organized, it will be passed on to the course instructor and campus administration. The results will be then used to improve the course design, including the methods used to pair students with correct delivery methods. The overall goal is to continue finding success year after year with the method presented.

In the end, there are many ways to design a method for learning inside a course. The Wells method as presented in four phases. Phase one consists of the analysis process. This process overall will consist of the development of the pre-content knowledge of the students.

One may reference this as the foundation of the entire method. Phase two is instruction

development which will be made up of the delivery method of content. This maybe based off of

the analysis of each student as per phase one. In phase three, assessment development focuses on

developing accurate assessment methods to produce the best results to meet the content

objectives. Finally in phase four, will be the feedback development. Feedback will be present in

all areas of development for the students; however, most importantly feedback in the final stage

will provide information going forward or reviewing the content that was just assessed.

References:

Brown, A., & Green, T. D. (2011). The essentials of instructional design: Connecting

fundamental principles with process and practice. Boston: Prentice Hall.

Constructivist view of learning. Retrieved October 20, 2014 from:

http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/atrisk/at7lk6.htm

Edwards, Julie. (2006). How to assess student performance in history: going beyond multiple

choice tests. Greensboro: Serve Center.

Guskey, Thomas. (February 2003). How classroom assessments improve learning. *Educational*

Leadership, V. 60 (5). Retrieved from: http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-

leadership/feb03/vol60/num05/how-classroom-assessments-improve-learning.aspx

Shapiro, Edward S. 2010. *Best Practices in School Psychology,* V. 2.

Stiggins, Rick. (May 2007). Assessment through the students eyes. *Educational Leadership,* V.

64 (8). Retrieved from: http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-

leadership/may07/vol64/num08/Assessment-Through-the-Student's-Eyes.aspx

Marsh, Debra. (2012). Blended learning: Creating learning opportunities for language learners.

New York City: Cambridge University press

Morisano, D., Pihl, R., Shore, Bruce., Hirsh, J., Peterson, J. 2010. Setting, elaborating, and

reflecting on personal goals improves academic performance. *Journal of Applied*

Psychology. 95 (2). 255-264.