

## **Design Philosophy**

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IST 520: Theories of Learning and Instruction

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My design philosophy is centered around the idea that people learn best by doing. As instructional designers, we want learners to come away from our lessons with the knowledge and confidence they need to perform in the real world. I believe that this confidence must be built by a combination of intrinsic learner motivation, lessons built around authentic problem-solving scenarios, and guided practice in an environment where failure is both safe and encouraged. In my own learning experiences, I have often struggled with motivation. Passive learning experiences haven't ever been inherently motivating for me. What gets me excited about learning is the opportunity to engage and fully participate in the learning process in a hands-on way.

My passion is working with adult learners, particularly those who are typically seeking out learning experiences outside of traditional educational settings. Because of this interest, I am particularly influenced by Malcolm Knowles' principles of adult learning (InstructionalDesign.org, 2018). In accordance with these principles, I believe in giving adults control over their own learning, which allows for inherent learner motivation and results in a more valuable learning experience for the learner. I also agree that adults learn best through experience—especially experiences where they can build upon existing knowledge and construct their own meanings and mental models in a constructivist fashion (Western Governors University, 2020).

I have only been working in continuing education for about 10 months now, but I have found continuing education students to be some of the most diligent, motivated, and engaged learners I have ever worked with. Continuing education students are using their limited time and resources to seek out learning opportunities, so they want to get the most out of the courses they choose to take. I take this responsibility seriously and always want to ensure that their experience is centered during the learning process. I strive to design learning experiences and activities that, as much as possible, give continuing education students direct experience with the subject they are learning. I want to move past the passive lectures and talks often associated with adult education and create engaging, experiential learning experiences that are relevant and valuable to continuing education students.

## **Closing comments**

Like others who have posted before me, I definitely struggled balancing work, life, and school this semester, but I am proud of myself (and all of us!) for pushing through and producing

quality work during this course. I really appreciated the opportunity to dive deeper into some of the learning theories we covered during our first semester, as well as more contemporary learning design models like 4CID and communities of practice. While the content felt overwhelming at first, in hindsight I can see that Drs. Evanick and Fischer did a great job of helping us build on our existing knowledge to construct a deeper understanding of the different theories and models covered in this course. I feel like I'm coming out of this class with a clearer understanding of what theories and models speak to me as an instructional designer and how I want to design future lessons moving forward. Thanks for a great semester, everyone!