One Pagers

By: Dr. Manny Straehle

How to Write Evidence-Based Instructional Objectives Effectively

More than a decade ago, Dr. Manny Straehle, President and Founder of AERE, began teaching for higher education institutions. He found that performance and success of the students hinged on his ability to write effective instructional objectives. A few years later, while working as a consultant with many credentialing organizations, Manny again used instructional objectives to identify tasks and knowledges, particularly with job task analysis activities. Ultimately, these objectives identified the competencies for individuals' seeking a certification. After using instructional objectives for two distinct professions, Manny decided to pursue his dissertation on examining the role on writing effective instructional objectives related to student's academic grades and self-regulation. Below are short evidence-based guidelines, based on Manny's professional experiences, on ways to write instructional objectives that could help your assessment and educational endeavors.

What Is An Instructional Objective?

As I stated in my book, **Higher Education, Online Learning, and College Student Performance: Effects of Instructional Objectives on Self-Regulation and Students' Performance in Online and Non-Online Classes**, "...instructional course objectives [are] the intended learning outcomes of a student or what should be achieved and assessed of a student upon completion of the course. **In other words, instructional objectives are what the student should know and/or do at the end of a course of study"** (Straehle, 2010).

How Should I Write Instructional Objectives?

While there are various methods, many researchers recommend that the instructional objectives should determine:

- What the learner should do (clearly stated and observable)
- The learning conditions
- Some standard the learner should accomplish/achieve
- Competency level

Does AERE Have A Preferred Instructional Objective Approach?

When designing courses, AERE uses our own proprietary FLASH3! instructional design model which relies on Henich, Modelnda, Russel and Smaldino's (2002) ABCD approach to writing instructional objectives.

- **A**udience
    - Learning is focused on a learner's outcome rather than the instructors teaching outcomes
- **B**ehavior
    - Selecting action verbs that clearly describes the objectives (avoiding weak verbs such as understand, assist, and know)
    - Identifying behaviors that are relevant and based in the "real-world"
- **C**onditions
    - Selecting a situation where the learning behavior would be observed
- **D**egree
    - Selecting a criterion that would be an acceptable performance, which often includes a time for the learning to occur and how accurately the student will learn the objective in that time frame.

AERE uses a number of approaches when writing instructional objectives. A more detailed guide on writing instructional objectives, including the references mentioned above, is available from Dr. Straehle's book.