

Educational Support Cell (ESC) TLDE *Tips & Strategies*

The Pre-Assessment and the Outcome: Ties that Bind

For nearly a year now, we have delved into the Army Learning Model (ALM). As you have followed our *Tips & Strategies*, you may have caught the more-than-subtle-hints we have dropped: the ALM simply supports good teaching practices to promote student learning. This volume of our newsletter operates similarly as we examine the necessity of the pre-assessment when working towards an outcome.

The Pre-Assessment

Allow me to digress for a moment: Let's put you in the role of a track coach, hired to lead a team of runners to victory. As the coach, your processes for considering your athletes and the type of training you will put them through to win their events correspond to how we at SWCS look at the pre-assessment and how it ties to the outcome. If your outcome is to win a marathon and you realize that you have a bunch of sprinters on your team, then your training plan will look much different than having a team of endurance runners who already possess the necessary skills to run a marathon. The experiences and performance levels of the athletes on



your team should determine ultimately how you tailor your team's training plan. So, how do you determine initially who you have on your team? There are lots of ways. You could ask the runners to describe their experiences with running races and to reflect on what they do well and on what they can improve. Or, you could put the runners into a race and see how they perform to determine

their baselines for a specific event. I am sure you have numerous ideas—or, a concept for a **pre-assessment**—too.

In this analogy, like at SWCS, the outcome or desired end-state doesn't change, but if you know where your students start in relation to your subject matter, then you can determine what types of experiences to provide your "athletes" rather than a one-size-fits-all training package. By knowing their starting points, you can craft your lessons to reach the desired outcome in the most effective, efficient manner. Pre-assessment information gives you the flexibility to work towards the outcome rather than approaching learning activities in a lockstep fashion.

The ESC provides support for the uniform application of SWCS educational processes across the Institution to include:

-Support to Curriculum & Instruction [Courses and Instructors];

-Support to Leadership & Professional Development Initiatives;

-Support to the development and implementation of program evaluation and assessment systems; and

-Support to the design and implementation of SOF Career Pathways.

For more information, contact Mr. Geoff Jones at geojones@soc.mil, (910) 396-2518.

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The Outcome

As you can see, there is great utility in using a pre-assessment, but this useful tool becomes an actual **necessity** when we consider using an outcome to guide learning. An outcome moves beyond the typical Terminal Learning Objective (TLO) to state how the experiences offered in the course will change the learner. What can the learner do now that he/she couldn't do on the first day of the course? By pre-assessing that learner at the course's starting point, you have a baseline to use in evaluating how that learner has changed throughout the duration of the course. Right?

Additionally, the outcome encompasses more than the TLO by stating not only what learners should be able to do at the end of a course in relation to their mission, but also who we want those learners to **BE**. This means that the outcome should infuse one or more of the ARSOF attributes into the learning process through course expectations and activities as the instructor/facilitator/coach develops the learners accordingly. Thinking of a course outcome in this manner demonstrates the need for us to then craft our learning activities so that the desired knowledge, skills, and attributes become apparent (a topic for a future musing of the ESC's *Tips & Strategies*).

Wrap-Up

To revisit our discussion, the pre-assessment functions as a formal (pre-test) or informal (discussion on experiences) means of judging the needs of your learners. Based on the pre-assessment results, you can determine the following: where and how to start your instruction; how and when to group students for peer-to-peer work; and most importantly, what sort of support the class needs to move everyone towards the desired outcome.

Without a doubt, these are some pretty weighty concepts (and for some of you maybe before the second dose of caffeine for the day). But remember this takeaway: when you need a hand scoping an outcome or designing pre-assessments for your courses, the Educational Support Cell stands ready to assist.

For assistance with transforming your classes or course into a facilitated, outcome-based experience, contact Mr. Jones (geojones@soc.mil) and the ESC.

Considerations for Crafting an Outcome

1. Determine what your course does for the Army/SOF.
 - a. What gap does it fill?
 - b. What knowledge or skills does it provide that SOF needs?
 - c. What does the gaining unit expect from a graduate?
2. Identify the typical strengths and weaknesses of the unit/individuals who receive your course.
 - a. Do your students demonstrate weaknesses in certain attributes?
 - b. What can you comfortably develop in your course?
3. Develop a statement that describes the impact or change that your course will cause in a graduate. Describe the desired outcome of the course (#1), and include what attributes you will develop purposefully in each student (#2).