

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

## **ALM: Facilitators vice Instructors**

The Army Learning Model (ALM), and let me be honest here, just good educational practice calls for creating learner-centric environments. It just makes good sense. The point of teaching isn't that the instructor spends the day espousing how much he knows; it is to get the learners to investigate the topic and to understand the operational relevance of their studies and then to apply those studies in as real a situation as possible for a school setting.

TRADOC PAM 525-8-2 calls for transforming "classroom experiences into collaborative problem-solving events led by facilitators (vice instructors) who engage learners to think and understand the relevance and context of what they learn" (p. 10).

Think about it. You didn't learn to drive a car by watching a video of someone driving a car. Sure, you most likely sat through Drivers' Education classes, but you really **learned** how to drive in the parking lot behind the old [insert store name here] or on the deserted back roads of [insert town name here].

So, if we are going to make the change from transmitting knowledge to facilitating learners' acquisition of knowledge through "collaborative, problem-solving events" (see box above), we need to change our pedagogical framework from one of Direct Instruction to one of Facilitation....from the instructor doing the work to the students doing the work.....from being an Instructor to being a Facilitator.

### The AAR: An easy win

Let's consider the After Action Review (AAR). Ask a Soldier to describe a "typical" AAR and he/she most likely will relate something like, *we discuss what happened; we identify who screwed something up, then we list 3 sustains and 3 improves*. Revisited, the AAR can be an integral part of the learning process if conducted as a **FACILITATED** or **GUIDED DISCUSSION**.

As such, talking points are developed that get at the event's (class/lane/activity's) learning objectives and overall course outcome. The questions have to be open-ended and force students to explore the **WHY** and **HOW** rather than just summarize the **WHAT** and **WHO**. These questions should always be crafted in advance and should be standard for the event---this eliminates the challenge of framing questions in real-time and ensures that the same foundational experience is given to each student who comes through the course.

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.

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## Facilitated Classrooms

Take the concept discussed for the traditional AAR and transpose the process on a classroom environment and you have created a facilitated classroom. The process is similar in that one takes the learning objectives and the course outcome, determines what class content is supportive to these components, and then creates activities or discussion points that prompt and probe student learning. Within this context, an instructor also has the opportunity to determine with which knowledge/skills/abilities each student enters the learning activity and can adjust the activity accordingly, slowing down or accelerating as needed to reach the desired outcomes.

Contact the ESC for a 4 page "HOW TO" and self-assessment rubric entitled, ***Guided Discussion or AAR?***

## Role of the Student

We've discussed the transformation of the instructor's role to one of a facilitator, but the role of the student must also transform for this concept to succeed. No longer can students expect to come to a classroom and be told what they need to know. They have to be prepared to T\*H\*I\*N\*K. ....and they have to be prepared.

Some form of student preparation should precede a facilitated environment. After all, it is difficult to work with questioning students when they don't possess the answer ***somewhere***. *Somewhere* can be in readings or research that are assigned prior to the learning activity, buried in material that is available in the classroom for research, or even in activities that were done in a previous class, setting, module, or course. Regardless, if *somewhere* doesn't exist, then the facilitator becomes an instructor and must give the information prior to it being utilized.

## Building Competencies

This sort of pedagogy fits nicely with our previous discussion (volume 5) regarding the development of ARSOF attributes through learning activities. In a problem-based environment, students have to become problem-solvers (a component of ADAPTABILITY) and become more responsible for their own learning and preparation (PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY). In a collaborative environment, students have to work as TEAM PLAYERS. The opportunities for the attributes to "show themselves" lead directly to opportunities for cadre to develop students into true ARSOF professionals.

Transforming our learning environments to engaging, collaborative settings that demand thinking is a positive shift for any educational institution. Facilitation is a skill to be acquired by our instructor-pool, and it will pay large dividends in student readiness for the future of ARSOF.

*For assistance with transforming your classes or course into a facilitated experience, contact Mr. Jones ([geojones@soc.mil](mailto:geojones@soc.mil)) and the ESC.*