

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

Strategies for Creating a Facilitated Learning Experience

In Volume 7, *Facilitators vice Instructors*, we explored the idea of creating learner centric environments.....the transition of the role of the instructor from one who is responsible for transmitting knowledge to one who facilitates the LEARNERS' acquisition of knowledge and skills through "collaborative, problem-solving events" (TRADOC PAM 525-8-2).

In this volume, we take a deep-dive into several strategies for setting up this facilitated experience beyond the concept of Guided Discussions (discussed in V.7).

Strategies for Creating a FLEX

1. Know Thy Learner
2. Monitor Who's Working
3. Put the Information and Skills into Action
4. Train to the Threshold of Failure

The Facilitated Learning Experience(FLEX)

A FLEX operates in two ways:

- 1) With learners **discovering** knowledge or skills, or
- 2) With learners **using** knowledge or skills.

In either case, the instructor's role is the key to success. Following are a few strategies to consider when setting up a FLEX.

Know Thy Learner

Instructors must have a handle on who their learners are and what capabilities they have already. Every module, if not every lesson, should begin with some sort of a pre-assessment to gauge the learners' existing knowledge and skills. *(Also, as an instructor, it is important that you have an OUTCOME for each module/lesson so you know the end-state desired; a discussion for another ESC TIPS & Strategies volume.)*

For example, why teach the foundations of patrolling to a class of former Rangers? A better option might be to put the class out on patrol and see how they do. The learners who seem closer to accomplishing the outcome/end-state can serve as peer-mentors or lead the team. Those students who have not progressed as quickly can receive some extra attention or do some additional studies. Also, you may not need to start your instruction with Patrolling Basics, but actually start with a more advanced lesson such as React to Ambush.....Or you may need to start with the basics and spend a week there.....You won't know unless you assess your students' capabilities early and often.

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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Monitor Who's Working

Not what you may be thinking---your students should work harder than you do every day! This strategy for creating a **FLEX** means that we motivate our students to **DISCOVER** knowledge and skills for themselves. In your lessons, you set up your environment to give your learners the opportunities to “figure things out” for themselves. This can be structured in several ways: in a blended manner (using technology or other means to find the answers); through collaborative structures (using one another to find the way); or by just good old trial and error.

Put the Information and Skills into Action

In any engaging environment, the learner gets to **USE** newly acquired information and skills in a relevant manner. You can have your learners use the new information and skills by setting up activities that are operationally relevant---check out the box for strategies that will engage students.

As we discussed earlier, knowing your students will help you figure out how to set up these activities for the maximum benefit of **all** your learners. Sometimes, this may be putting the students who “get it” in leadership positions, but also it can include grouping all the high-flyers together for a special mission and concentrating the ones who need extra attention together on a separate activity to build missing skills.

Strategies for Engagement

- Discussions
- Case Studies
- Problem-Solving Exercises
- Scenario-based Practical Exercises
- Group Projects with specific, defined Roles for Each Member

Train to the Threshold of Failure

The environment in which we operate spans the spectrum from Simplicity to Complexity. We understand Simplicity as characterized by ease and order. Complexity includes difficulty and chaos. Training with too much simplicity is not challenging and will have a negative impact on your learners. Training with too much complexity is destructive and will erode their confidence and motivation.

As a facilitator, your role dictates that you attain that “sweet spot” pushing your learners to become more competent by keeping their training right before that threshold of failure. Not an easy role, but one that will maximize the training value of your **FLEX**.

Wrapping it up

As we have discussed in the past, creating a **FLEX** transforms the role of the instructor, but also alters the role of the learner. Our students must be prepared and willing to **T*H*I*N*K** as well as to take responsible for their own learning. We have smart, adaptable candidates who attend our courses. If we wish to develop them to their full capabilities, we should structure our learning environments to give them opportunities to think, and then to test and modify their actions in a safe environment.

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