Backward design: Transforming Family Science courses from classroom to web Jane E. Newell, Ph.D., Anthony G. James, Ph. D., CFLE, & Megan K. Taylor Kuykendoll, MS, CFLE Department of Family Science & Social Work, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

Abstract

An engaged student population requires educators to grapple with the demand for web-based courses. Transforming a traditional face-to-face course to a web-based format involves significantly more than simply "putting it online". Utilizing "backward design" to convert 3 core family science courses, faculty members share their methods, best practices, successes, and challenges across the development process.

Begin with the End in Mind: Backward Design

Compared to a F2F course, it is crucial that the online instructor utilize learner-centered teaching methods, and the traditional "sage on the stage" model will not successfully engage students in an online environment (Saulnier, 2009). Instructors need to translate, transform, and pedagogically reengineer (Collis, 1996) their online courses to create an environment where students are active and engaged. To facilitate this transformation, the backward design model has been used in the creation of these Family Science core courses:

- FSW 245 Children & Families
- FSW 361 Couple Relationships
- FSW 481 Adolescent Development

This model requires faculty to critically examine and revise learning objectives before creating any assessments or activities (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). It is particularly important that the learning objectives offer measurable outcomes in order to be able to assess their achievement. These revised objectives then create the roadmap for the design of the learning environment in a web-based course.



Design & Teaching Methods

Objectives: From Broad to Specific

Regardless of format, every course has its broad, overarching objectives. The web-based format requires instructors to:

- **<u>create</u>** specific sub-objectives defining measurable outcomes for each overall objective
- **<u>connect</u>** every assignment and assessment to the objectives for each module
- **clarify** objectives at the start of each module

	Broad Objectives								
	*	Obj. 1		*	Obj. 2		*	Obj. 3	
Specific skills	1a	1b	1c	2a	2b	2c	3a	3b	3c
	Module Objectives Breakdown								
	Module 1			Module 2			Module 3		
	• 1a			• 1b				2a	
	• 1b			• 1c			• 2b		
	•	3a		•	2b -			3b	
	•	3c		•	2c			3c	
	Application and Integration								

Engaging Students through Interaction Creating engaging online spaces requires instructors to consider how the course design impacts a variety of important relationships.



Opportunities & Challenges

• <u>Smaller class sizes</u>

- Great for 1-on-1 interaction and engagement
- Problematic administratively (ie workload)
- **Disinhibition effect**
- Students more willing to authentically share and discuss sensitive topics
- Opportunities for discussion must be managed strategically to avoid potential problems
- <u>Reading/Writing Intensive</u>
- Students work gradually through scaffolded assignments, can take their time
- Very time-sensitive and demanding of faculty time

Reflections

A critical aspect of online course design involves assessment, reflection, and revision. Both student and instructor feedback is needed, and there are a variety of ways to obtain it:

- External
- Mid- and end-of-term-evaluations (anonymous)
- Internal
- Informal surveys, reflective papers, & comments

"The feedback the instructor gave on all the assignments was very constructive and helpful which allowed me to progress on all my assignments." - FSW 245

"Dr. Newell is incredibly passionate about the subject and greatly engaged with her students. I have never felt more valued or cared for as a student as I did in Dr. Newell's class. Her thorough comments demonstrated that she actually took the time to read my assignments and care for me as a student." - FSW 361

"The material was very interesting and reflective in nature. I feel like I was able to learn not just about the material, but about myself as well." - FSW 481

• <u>Technology</u>

- Many tools available for integration within LMSs
- Requires more faculty knowledge and time to troubleshoot with students
- Group Collaborative Work
- Students work gradually through scaffolded assignments, can take their time
- Can be time-sensitive and time-intensive for faculty

• <u>Cycle of Revision</u>

- Students and instructors reflect upon the course
- Instructors incorporate feedback into the course template; can be very time consuming

Implications

- Backward design Applicable to F2F classrooms
- Flexibility for both students and faculty
- Resource requirements: training for faculty, administrative support/buy-in, time
- Information society requires pedagogical approaches that adapt to the needs of society
- Access to the field of family science
- Access to education as social justice
- Opportunities to assess how family science content is taught across CFLE approved programs

Conclusions

The field of online education is continuing to grow, and Family Science courses should be represented in that growth. **Online courses can** better reach individuals engaged in communities outside university settings, such as jobs, families, and place-specific **commitments.** Family Science is a field that can meet the needs of this growing student population.

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