Secondary Newcomers and SLIFE Students (Rule 19)

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Introduction

This eLearning training solution was developed to address the lack of resources and recommended strategies available to educators and district leaders who require support while transitioning Newcomer and SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) students into Nebraska school districts. To bridge this gap, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) introduced a unified online training platform designed to assist districts across the state. The course aims to educate district leaders on available resources that support compliance with state requirements and to guide them in implementing effective strategies. Additionally, the training outlines proper protocols while emphasizing the rights of these students, as defined in Nebraska State Statute 79-201.

Front-End Analysis

Following the learner analysis, the target audience for this training solution includes educators and district leaders who lack experience or training in transitioning Newcomer and SLIFE students into their districts. The analysis revealed that many smaller school districts in Nebraska often lack an English Learner (EL) instructor or educators who are familiar with the protocols involved when integrating these students. To bridge this disparity, the proposed solution offers an engaging and accessible eLearning experience that equips participants with the necessary resources and knowledge of state requirements to support smoother transitions for these students and their families. NDE has designed this self-paced online course to offer flexibility and provide certification upon completion for those educators and leaders seeking assistance in this capacity.

Instructional Design Decisions

In my role as the instructional designer, I employed the ADDIE model, while incorporating Backward Design during the Design phase. ADDIE - an acronym for Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate – is a systematic framework for instructional product development (Dempsey & Reiser, 2001). As mentioned, I utilized Backward Design within the Design phase which begins by identifying desired learning outcomes and then working backward to structure meaningful instructional activities and assessments. This approach ensures alignment between learning goals and assessment tasks, with a strong emphasis on authentic practice. Authentic Learning, which involves presenting learners with real-world contexts and challenges, is particularly relevant to this training, as it supports the development of practical strategies for assisting Newcomer and older English learners with limited formal education (Dempsey & Reiser, 2001).

My instructional approach is grounded in Constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of learners' prior experiences—in this case, their experiences with transitioning Newcomer and SLIFE students into their school districts. Encouraging participants to draw on their existing knowledge aligns well with this model, especially considering that many lack access to the necessary information and support systems for a successful transition process.

This course promotes authentic learning by recognizing that learners bring real-world experiences that serve as a foundation for constructing new knowledge through the course modules (Driscoll, 2005). Constructivism is inherently learner-centered, focusing on active

participation in the knowledge-building process. To support this, the course includes interactive experiences that foster engagement and deepen understanding.

Additionally, "connect" activities are embedded throughout the course to help bridge the gap between the training content and participants' real-life professional contexts. These activities, centered around authentic scenarios, are designed to enhance the relevance and practical application of the training, ultimately supporting effective integration of Newcomer and SLIFE students into Nebraska school districts.

In selecting a platform for this eLearning experience, Instructure Canvas was chosen as it is the Learning Management System (LMS) used by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) for all official training courses. Its intuitive, user-friendly interface helped minimize navigation challenges for participants, ensuring a smooth user experience. Additionally, Instructure Canvas incorporates artificial intelligence features that support randomized assessment questions and enhance accessibility, making the platform inclusive and adaptable to diverse learner needs. To enhance engagement and reduce redundancy in the course's knowledge checks, we planned for gamification to be incorporated into one of the assessments. However, we were unable to find a satisfactory source that was free as NDE did not consider a paid source as an option.

Pilot Implementation and Reflection

Four secondary educators in Nebraska participated in a pilot program of the eLearning training course. Participants accessed the full version of the course, which was delivered through the Instructure Canvas Learning Management System (LMS). The course consisted of four comprehensive modules, each divided into smaller segments to reduce cognitive load and

support knowledge retention. The primary goal of the pilot was to evaluate the course's effectiveness in meeting learning objectives and to gather feedback on participant satisfaction. Feedback from the post-assessment survey indicated an overwhelmingly positive perception of the course, with only minor suggestions for improvement related to the scenario-based assessment elements. Participants noted an inconvenience with the initial setup we constructed within Canvas in which video scenarios and follow-up quiz assessments were displayed independently from each other which required participants to navigate back and forth to review video content while answering quiz questions. To address this, we embedded the videos directly within the quiz environment, streamlining the learning experience. This adjustment also allowed us to reduce the number of segments per module, resulting in a more concise and user-friendly eLearning format.

Overall, the experience was positive. All four educators were already familiar with navigating Instructure Canvas, which contributed to a smooth interaction with the course. The content was clearly organized and concise, with much of it presented in a tutorial format focused on locating requirements within state statutes and the NDE Rule 19 handbook. Additionally, the scenario-based videos offered valuable insights into appropriate protocols for integrating Newcomer and SLIFE students into their respective districts.

Conclusion

In summary, this course enables asynchronous learning experiences while effectively addressing the limitations of in-person training. Using engaging, interactive content and scenario-based assessments, the course successfully replicates the effectiveness of face-to-face instruction allowing educators located in smaller districts to now have an effective resource to

guide them through a successful integration of Newcomer and SLIFE students entering their district.

My experience with this project has been both insightful and rewarding, offering a comprehensive, hands-on opportunity to design an eLearning course from start to finish. By conducting a thorough front-end analysis, I was able to identify the target audience, and their specific challenges related to integrating these student populations. With the support of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) at the Nebraska Department of Education, we created a user-friendly, relevant, and impactful training tool that acknowledges educators' prior experiences and supports the long-term success of the students and families entering these districts.

References

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Driscoll, M.P. (2005). *Psychology of Learning for Instruction.* Pearson Education, Inc.