

Seamless Transitions in Educational Program Delivery

Tara Laidlaw

TOPIC SELECTION

Topic:

Creating and using transitions in educational programs

Goal of Instruction:

Instructors in any context will be able to polish their program delivery by incorporating transitions between activities or topics.

Rationale:

I have taught this skill in the context of staff training at an outdoor education center and at a conference for environmental educators, and every time I lead this training, my students are surprised at how easy it is to “put the icing on” their program delivery by creating and using beautiful transitions. I usually teach this skill in a 60- or 90-minute workshop that includes other teaching skills and lots of discussion and interaction between the participants, so 20 minutes will be a perfect fit for isolating this particular skill with an individual learner.

Description / Background of Learner (who would need this instruction):

The audience that inspired the training is informal educators working at an outdoor education facility: new to teaching, new to kid-management, new to facilitating activities, perhaps still developing time-management skills, and still learning how to keep their groups of students moving either through a class or between different programs. However, the audience could be expanded to include anyone giving any instruction, since clean and deliberate transitions make it easier for any student to follow along in a learning environment.

TASK ANALYSIS

Goal of Instruction:

Instructors in any context will be able to polish their program delivery by incorporating transitions between two activities by analyzing each activity individually, identifying a quality shared between the two activities, and using the shared quality to create a cognitive link.

Performance Based Assessment:

Learners will go through the writing process for two different transitions, mapping each step as described in the tasks below and creating a written record of their thought process.

Learners will also practice the process twice without writing down each step, instead thinking through the process and only writing down the final transitions.

These written notes and transitions will serve as the basis for performance based assessment.

Tasks:

1. Identify a moment in a lesson where a transition must happen.
 - a. Find a place where one activity or concept ends and a new one begins.
 - b. Take note of what happens in each of the two activities.
 - c. Call the first one "Activity A" and the second one "Activity B".

2. Analyze each of the two activities individually.
 - a. For Activity A, identify all content topics (such as pollution in a watershed, geologic time scale, etc.) that are addressed during the activity, and write them down.
 - b. Also for Activity A, identify the big concepts (such as patterns, cycles, energy, etc.) that are addressed during the activity, and write them down.
 - c. For Activity B, identify all content topics (such as pollution in a watershed, geologic time scale, etc.) that are addressed during the activity, and write them down.
 - b. Also for Activity B, identify the big concepts (such as patterns, cycles, energy, etc.) that are addressed during the activity, and write them down.

3. Identify a point of similarity between the two activities.
 - a. Look at the written notes about the content and concepts from each of the two activities and choose either a content topic OR a big concept that is shared between both activities.
 - b. Write down specifically how Activity A relates to the selected similarity.
 - c. Write down specifically how Activity B relates to the selected similarity.

4. Using this similarity, write a transition.
 - a. "In [Activity A], we explored [the similarity] by [specific way from 3b]."
 - b. "Now, in [Activity B], we will explore [the similarity] in another way, [specific way from 3c]."
 - c. Rewrite 4a and 4b in your own words.

Questions to ask a subject matter expert (SME) related to the tasks:

1. If the activity is very long or complex, how do you choose which components to focus on?
2. What if there are no similarities between the two activities?
3. In what contexts can this process of creating a transition be applied?

TASKS, OBJECTIVES AND MEASUREMENTS

Objectives

1. Break down the two activities and identify key components (content topics and big concepts) in each.
2. Compare the activities' components and choose a component that is shared between both activities.
3. Summarize the similarity and differences between the activities in a transitional sentence.

Measurements/Evaluation (one per objective)

1. Has the student identified several key components, both topics and concepts, from each of the two activities? The student's written notes will indicate mastery of this objective.
2. Has the student identified a component that is applicable to both of the activities? The student's written notes will indicate mastery of this objective.
3. Has the student synthesized the shared component, as well as the activities' differences, into an understandable transition? The student's written notes will indicate mastery of this objective.