THE ASSURE MODEL

(From Instructional Media and Technologies for Learning by Heinich, Molenda, Russell, Smaldino, 1999)

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The ASSURE model is an ISD (Instructional Systems Design) process that was modified to be used by teachers in the regular classroom. The ISD process is one in which teachers and trainers can use to design and develop the most appropriate learning environment for their students. You can use this process in writing your lesson plans and in improving teaching and learning.

The ASSURE model incorporates Robert Gagne's events of instruction to assure effective use of media in instruction.

A nalyze learners

Before you can begin, you must know your target audience (your students). You need to write down the following information about your students:

General characteristics - grade, age, ethnic group, sex, mental, emotional, physical, or social problems, socioeconomic level, and so on.
Specific entry competencies - prior knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
Learning styles - verbal, logical, visual, musical, structured, and so on.

S tate objectives

Once you know your students, you can begin writing the objectives of your lesson. Objectives are the learning outcomes, that is, what will the student get out of the lesson?

The ABCD's of writing objectives are:
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- Audience (who are your students?)
- Behavior to be demonstrated
- Conditions under which the behavior will be observed
- Degree to which the learned skills are to be mastered.

Example: Fifth grade social studies students (Audience) will be able to name at least 90% (Degree) of the state capitols (Behavior) when given a list of states (Condition).

Select instructional methods, media, and materials

Once you know your students and have a clear idea of what they should get out of the lesson, then you are ready to select the:

- Instructional method that you feel is most appropriate to meet the objectives for these particular students.
- Media that would be best suited to work with your instructional method, the objectives, and your students. Media could be text, still images, video, audio, and computer multimedia.
- Materials that provide your students with the help they need in mastering the objectives. Materials might be purchased and used as is or they might need some modifications. You can also design and create your own materials for the students to use. Materials would be specific software programs, music, videotapes, images, but would also be equipment, i.e., overhead projector, computer, printer, scanner, TV, laserdisk player, VCR, and so on.

Utilize media and materials

Now it's time to do your lesson and use the media and materials that you have selected. You should always preview the materials before using them in a class and you should also use the equipment in advance to be sure it works and you know how to use it. If you use electronic equipment, don't assume that everything will work. Be sure to have a plan B. Hardware and software are created by humans. Humans make mistakes and so software has mistakes in it. Hardware can malfunction. Don't get discouraged if technology lets you down. Make sure that your instructional materials are suitable and working the best you can and then use it in the classroom.

Require learner participation

Remember, students learn best when they are actively involved in the learning. The passive learner has more trouble learning whatever we try to pour into his/her brain. Whatever your teaching strategy, you can incorporate questions and answers, discussions, group work, hands-on activities, and other ways of getting students actively involved in the learning of the content. It is up to you, the teacher, to make sure that all your students have opportunities to participate in the learning activities in the unit plan. Avoid lecturing for an entire hour. Listen to your students and allow them to become aware of the content. Allow them to learn as opposed to trying to "teach" them.

Evaluate and revise
This last stage is often neglected but it is the most important one. Anyone can develop a lesson and deliver it, but really good teachers must reflect upon the lesson, the stated objectives, the instructional strategy, the instructional materials, and the assessment and determine if these elements of the lesson were effective or if one or more of them need to be changed the next time the lesson is done. Sometimes a lesson may seem like it would be great, at least on paper. But then when you actually teach the lesson with a specific set of students, you might discover there were several things that did not seem to work. Your expectations might be too high or too low. The materials used might not have been appropriate for the grade level or the material might not be very motivating. The instructional strategy might not have got students interesting in participation or the strategy might have been difficult for you to manage. The assessment you used might have shown that students didn't learn what you tested for. This might mean that you did not accurately test for the stated objectives, the method of assessment needs to be revised, or the lesson did not permit enough time for the students to master the objectives.

You are not a bad teacher if a lesson does not work. You are a bad teacher if you don't reflect upon your lessons and work on revising elements of the lesson until your students become successful learners.