

## In the Classroom 79

# Increase Learning With Gagné's 9 Events of Instruction

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**Stan Skrabut:** Well, welcome back. Thanks, every so much, for taking time to listen to this podcast. It certainly means a lot. I know you could be doing other things. The fact that you're still hanging out with me, I really do appreciate it. Right now, we have a thunderstorm rolling through, trying to knock down some of this heat. It's been a warm summer. I really appreciate the rain and the coolness that's going to come after it. I'm looking forward to that.

Right now, we are still planning for fall 2020. What is it going to be? Is it going to be online? Is it going to be remote? Is it going to be face to face? Really can't tell. Things across the nation, we got spikes everywhere. We're not doing so well with this, but we still have to get ready for instruction. One of the things that I do know, doing this instructional technology bit, is you will have more success in delivering your instruction if you have a plan.

Many of the instructors I have met, have not learned about instructional design and how it can help them. They've been building courses regardless of modality, based on trial and error. Based on what they've seen others do in the past. That doesn't mean necessarily, the others doing it in the past have been doing it right. I'm not saying they haven't, I'm just saying I've seen a lot of instructors and so there is room for improvement in terms of instruction.

A lot of research have actually gone into instruction. By focusing on different instructional design principles and theories, it is a way to help you cut down on misspent time and energy. While increasing the outcome of what you're trying to do. That is to educate your students. Get them to the next level. I've decided that I'm going to talk about a bunch of these theories and principles and basically tools that you can add to your toolbox.

This week, we're going to take a look at Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction. So, Robert Gagné was an American educational psychologist, best known for his work called Conditions of Learning. His nine learning events will help you provide structure to your classes regardless of the modality. Whether it's online, face to face, hybrid, it doesn't matter, this will help you provide some structure.

Like I talked in Episode 77, of Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning cycles, Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction is just another tool for your instructional toolbox, That you can use it just to build better instruction. If you do this, your learners will appreciate it and you're going to get better outcome. There's more structure to it,

you're going to do good things. There's also a lot of flexibility on how you apply this. We're going to talk about it.

According to Gagné, learning occurs in a series of nine learning events. If you put these events in the right order, you are going to improve learning. Each one is a condition for learning which must be accomplished before moving to the next, in the order. For Gagné specifically, you need these nine steps in the order that I'm going to tell you about them. Those nine particular steps are: one, gain attention, two, inform learners of objective, three, stimulate recall of prior learning, four, present the content, five, provide learning guidance, six, elicit performance or practice, seven, provide feedback, eight, assess performance, nine, enhance retention and transfer to the job.

It doesn't sound too crazy. I think we've seen a lot of these things happen in our classroom. We're presenting content, we may have activities that we want them to work on and we have assessments. What Gagné's saying is, "We actually need all nine." I wonder if you have all nine in your instructions. Just something to think about, and I'll explain more in detail each one of these as we go on, but those are the nine.

The cool thing about Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction is it can be applied at the whole course level, at a module level or an individual class session, Depending on how much time you have. If you apply this layered approach, you're going to create some very powerful learning experiences. As we go forward, I'm going to try to provide examples of these. I also want to stress that it can be done regardless of modality, online, hybrid, face to face class.

As we go on, another thing I want to just bring your attention to, check out the show notes because I shared a number of wonderful articles that talk about Gagné's Night Events for Instruction. I sifted through all those, pulled out different parts so, definitely go check those out. There's good stuff.

All right, let's talk about the nine events. Number one, gain attention. When you're trying to gain attention, you want to present an introductory activity that engages that learners, that grabs their attention. One of the most effective ways to do this is to just tell them why; why you are teaching this particular course. It could be why you're focusing on this particular module. What you're trying to do is show how it's relevant to them and how it fits in the big picture. At a lower level, at a class, you want to explain how this class fits into the overall course.

There's different ways that you can do this. In addition to just emphasizing the why what you could do is you could tap into current events that are happening around the world. You could have a video, maybe you found a video that provides a wonderful introduction to the concept you're talking about. That's a great way of gaining attention, asking questions or statements, or making statements. Questions that just grab their attention. You may just want to do a survey. You pop a survey up, you take the pulse of the class, figure out what they're thinking on this particular topic, before you launch into your material.

Having a surprise. There was one strategy I found that was absolutely fascinating. This one workshop I was in, the instructor put a brown paper bag on each of our desks. There was something in the bag. He started going into his material, but everybody was thinking, "What the heck is in this bag?" It certainly was relevant to the class. I've done it with instructional guides and things like that, but I had to tie into the class. I thought that was kind of cool. It was novel, and there was a surprise to it.

You can also have students submit questions that they want answered in that particular module, as well as present a challenge to students. Those are some ways that you want to gain attention. That's the first thing that you want to do in that particular module or that particular class, is start off with gaining that attention.

Once you have gained their attention, you go to number two, inform learners of the objectives. You want to, at the course level, talk about the overarching course outcomes or goals that you're aiming for. At the module, you want to focus on the things that they're going to be doing or learning that are related just for that particular module. That module may last a week or two weeks, but just what those specific objectives are.

Now, you could put these objectives, if it's for the entire course, put them certainly in the syllabus or your learning management system. If it's for the module, it should be part of that opening piece for the module. That here's the objectives that we're going to work on for this class. Also, when you're using objectives, they should be part of any instructions that you're providing. If you have a discussion that you're going to be working on or an assignment, what is the object that you are focusing on? That should be part of those instructions. You want to let your audience know what they're going to learn and why it's important, very specifically.

Number three, stimulate recall of prior knowledge. Before diving into new content, you want to tap into what they've already done. This could be a short quiz. Maybe you do this with clickers, a survey or a polling that you want to tap into that prior knowledge. You can summarize the previous lecture. What you did yesterday, you can summarize that and start things out. If you had students complete an assignment or a discussion, you can summarize the results of that; the things that you pulled out as the key things they were taking away. Summarize that and bring that to the class. You can also ask your students, have these questions that you want to have them come forward and answer so that you can see if they are really grasping the content before you move forward. It's key that all your lesson plans should build upon each other. That should not be too hard pulling out a few questions to make sure that everybody is on track.

Number four, present the content. We're pretty good at this already. We present the content in multiple ways. We provide lectures, we have assigned readings, they may have projects they do, multimedia, by putting videos and podcasts and those kinds of tools into the course. All kinds of different ways that we are presenting content. Some of the things that I want to point out, is make sure that use multiple and varying ways of presenting content. Don't just give them just things to read over and over and over again, the same way all the time, vary it up. Make sure you that there's imagery in their, video and podcasts or other ways. You want to make sure that you

also chunk this content. Don't overwhelm them with just lots of stuff to read, break it up and have them focus on one little item at a time, as opposed to just sifting through the scroll of death as they call it.

When you're giving them the content, I would also suggest that you put it on the learning management system regardless of the modality. If you're doing face-to-face, seriously, I would also support your face-to-face class with the learning management system and put that content there. If you happen to favor lectures or you use a lot of lectures in your class, rather than just do a straight lecture, you can use interactive lectures, where you break up the lecture after, say, every 10 minutes and have them do a small activity based on what you just taught. You can use polls and clickers. This all increase engagement and also get it to stick.

You may have these breakout sessions, where they go play with the content such as discussion boards, wikis, blogs and other ways that you could have them interact with that content.

Number five, provide learning guidance. Basically, what you're doing is you're providing lots of examples of how the content can be applied. Those are the places where you're doing those foot stomps, to make sure that you put emphasis on things that are important. Also foot stomp those areas where students have historically tripped up and didn't necessarily get it right. When you are providing this learning guidance and you are creating activities, make sure your instructions are as detailed as possible. I talked about making sure that they include objectives, but you also want to have those written instructions that you're making them extremely clear.

Strategy that I use, I use Google docs for my instructions and I turn commenting on. If students are unclear about something, they have the opportunity to add a comment and I'll go in and clean that up and just make better instructions. Rubrics are also a great tool to help provide this guidance as students are working through the content. This will make it easier for students to stay on track, but it also makes it easier for you to grade. Also, naturally, your instruction should include timelines. When you're expected to get something back.

Other learning guidance that you should provide, is job aids, so creating checklists or mnemonics or concept maps, something that will help students create the understanding that you want. Have them gain that knowledge. Those are great tools to do that. Other tools for providing guidance we have case studies. Non-examples are great. Not only examples to show them how to do it correctly, but non-examples are showing them how something could be done incorrectly and things to watch out for. That's number five. Provide learning guidance.

Number six, elicit performance. Give practice activities where students can put the content into practice. Ideally, simulations, labs, other activities that allow them to really work with the content and that they can focus on it. The assignment should not be very large, they should just be small enough that they can focus on this and give them ample opportunity to really understand what is part of that objective. If you need to create a large assignment, consider breaking it down into smaller activities and spread them through the course. If you're having them write a massive program

plan, that they can do it in installments and you provide feedback. Each piece that they provide should build upon the previous work.

I'm a huge fan of practice quizzes so building a test pool and letting them go through these quizzes as many times as they want. I have talked about this in a previous episode and I will include that in the show notes.

Finally, group discussions. Sharing what they're doing between each other as part of a group is another way that they can practice what they're learning and the content.

Number seven, provide feedback. Providing feedback, you can provide feedback to individuals and the entire group. You have to make sure it's immediate, specific, corrective.

Feedback is essential to learning, it helps learners make those course corrections along the way. Nothing is more frustrating to a student than to turn in an assignment and hear nothing back. I've had instructors in the past. I have never received any feedback from the instructors, I just received a final grade and that was it. I never received any papers back, I never received anything back. I honestly, in some of the classes, I didn't even realize they were part of the class. For me, that's sad, because you definitely want as an instructor to be part of the class.

When you're providing feedback, certainly provide commentary on what they did correct and what they got to improve and provide some explanations. This feedback could be formative, as you're going along, during those practice sessions, you're helping them improve, but also summative, which is, when they do it in assessments, there you tie everything together and you provide that feedback.

I would also have to say, you don't have to provide all the feedback. If you have a class, you can use peer review. I do this in a graduate-level course where students have to turn in a program plan and what we do this, we do it in three stages. Two of those stages that there is student-peer review. They have to basically fill out a questionnaire. They can also provide direct commentary on the documents that they're provided. All that is turned over to the originating student who then makes adjustments and it keeps improving their product. This worked out absolutely wonderfully in the class and the students walk away with a product that they can use in real life. I just want to stress again Rubrics are also another wonderful tool for providing positive and negative feedback.

Number eight, assess performance. These are those major assessments like exams and quizzes, written assignments, oral questions, projects. Those are those major things. You can give pre and post-tests if you want to see where the progress is, but this is where we're really seeing if a student can do or demonstrate knowledge of the content that you provided.

When you are creating these assessments, try to mix it up, a variety of assessment opportunities. That way you're not playing to the strengths of one group of students. For example, if you give multiple-choice questions, some students are really good at it, some students are really bad. If that's the only way you give an assessment, it's

not very much in line with universal design for learning. Use a variety of different assessment tools.

There should be assessment throughout the course as they're moving along. I am not a fan of just midterms and final exams. I am not a fan. There's too much damage that can be done if a particular grade is worth 40% of the course and they don't do well on it. It's just too much damage. I don't think it really measures learning as well as it should.

The last one, number nine, enhance retention and transfer to the job. You want to continue to provide resources that allow this retention, facilitation of transfer of knowledge. Part of that is including reflective pieces that tie back to student personal experiences. As students, what they learned, how they plan to apply what they're learning to what they do. This is very much in line with andragogy and I happen to be a fan. I tie it to, what's meaningful to the students and make them reflect on it. How are they going to use this in the course?

One of the last things I do in the courses I teach is, the last discussion is a reflective discussion. I ask them to reflect on everything, everything about the course and really talk about what they're walking away with and how they're going to apply it in their life. I want them to think about that.

Very often, we close up a course and we don't have an action plan to go forward. You should be encouraging students to save the content that they're building into their own personal learning environments. This would also be a good time if there was a substantial project that they completed and they did well on it to put it into their portfolio, to take it forward.

Another strategy is that students can create their own job aids. You provided job aids previously, what can students develop to help them with that particular module or the course in its entirety?

Those are the nine different steps or the nine events for instruction. How do you put this into place? Well, one of the easiest ways that I know to put Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction into practice is to layout these events on a spreadsheet. On the spreadsheet, list the nine events on the top of the spreadsheet and then all the sessions down the left-hand column. Then you start filling out the appropriate cells. Now, these sessions, it could be for the entire course, places that you are going to be doing these different pieces or it could be that you're listing a module and how you're doing that or you could have another one for the particular class and how you are doing this.

This is a great way to see if you have layered your instruction, if everything is interconnected. You don't want to overwhelm your students. It allows you to also check to see if you're addressing your objectives and if you're providing variety in your assignments and assessments.

Spreadsheet, before you even start going to build, just pull out a spreadsheet, fill it out, and that'll really give you a good idea of what your class is going to look like.

Regardless of the model that we talked about, and this happens to be one particular model, I am a huge fan of using a spreadsheet to lay everything out. I am currently providing some workshops for faculty and I'm building them in a spreadsheet. I lay out, "Okay, these are the objectives I want to cover. How am I going to talk about them? What's the content? What questions am I asking? What tools am I using?" I just lay it all out on a spreadsheet and just follow the plan as I'm going forward.

All right. Here's a quick recap of Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction. Number one, gain attention. Number two, inform learners of objectives. Number three, stimulate recall of prior learning. Number four, present the content. Number five, provide learning guidance. Number six, elicit performance or practice. Number seven, provide feedback. Number eight, assess performance. Number nine, enhance retention and transfer to the job.

Remember, it can be done at every level of the course. You could do it across the whole course, you could do it for each module, you can do it for individual classes. This is a nice structure, it provides structure and it makes sure that you're tapping into the things that are important for learning. A huge fan of Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction. I've used it quite often.

With that, and before I let you go, here's a quick plug for my book.