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Course Reflection for EDUC 503: Learning and Motivation  
USC Rossier LDT Master's Program

My only previous exposure to earnest learning design prior to this semester was the Universal Design for Learning introduced during my teaching credential coursework. While a useful resource, the science behind the model was never fully explained, making the component principles seem like a disparate collection without a clear approach to implementation. On the other hand, I feel that my conception of teaching and learning has been greatly enriched and expanded by our Learning Design Toolkit; not only is there a substantial body of research to support each principle, but there are also steps to incorporating each principle into instruction and methods of assessing the degree to which learners are exhibiting each principle.

The principles of metacognition and self-regulation have been most influential to me, as I especially want to develop these within my elementary school students. In fact, these ideas are reflected within the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, a six-section framework that establishes instructional expectations for California teachers. Section 5 is devoted to assessment, and Standard 5.5 states that students at any grade level or subject area are involved in “self-assessment, goal setting, and monitoring progress.” Whether working individually, with peers, or with me, I want my students to make a habit of identifying their strengths and weaknesses and debriefing their thinking processes.

The Learning Design Toolkit, which has been the backbone of this semester's studies, can help to create an equitable environment in which learning is the focus, no matter a student's ability level. This is because the principles within the toolkit primarily focus on assets, rather than deficits, and lend themselves to approaching learning in a realistic, organized, and stepwise manner rather than an unrealistic, haphazard, and random manner. I look forward to planning lessons for my students this coming semester and beyond with the toolkit in mind.