

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE DESIGN

ITEC 5560

Development of Instructional Systems



WRITING THE HISET ESSAY  
FOR ADULT LEARNERS

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# Learning Experience Design Guide

(Adapted from *Designers for Learning Design Guide*, 2017)

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## Part 1: Learning Experience Description

### Learning Experience Title

Writing the HiSET Essay for Adult Learners

### Abstract

During lockdown, College and Career Readiness Instructors worked together to create a Google Classroom course for preparation for the HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) subtest, Language, which consists of English grammar, the essay writing process, and workshop on writing the essay that is specific to the HiSET. In a short time, we developed and published an online class that allowed our students to make progress in Language during lockdown. However, the course design is poor, with no eye towards the learning experience, and the majority of the lessons are text based and text heavy. It has left a gap in learning for our online and hybrid students in Language. Recently, we launched several online courses in Canvas that have been very successful in terms of student engagement and outcome. We intend to redesign the Google Classroom course as a Canvas course, using what we have learned from the other Canvas classes. This learning experience will be for writing the HiSET essay. One of the key problems we face with Language is that learners burn out. Students study Language after Reading, Science, and Social Studies, and sometimes after studying Math as well; it is their 4th or 5th subject and HiSET subtest and many are ready to be done. The challenge is to create a learning experience in writing the HiSET essay that allows for effective, contextualized, meaningful learning that leads to a passing score on the test. We are confident a well-designed Canvas course will address the gap based on our prior successes.

### Learner Audience / Primary Users

The primary users of this learning experience are adult learners who test at an NRS (National Reporting System) level 2 or 3 on their initial TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education). With a NRS level 2 or 3 in Language, these learners show they have a basic knowledge of English grammar and essay writing, but lack an intermediate, or high school level understanding. As a result, they need remedial lessons. However, to be working in Language, they have previously demonstrated



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college-ready reading abilities, having scored an NRS level 5 or 6 on a pre or post-TABE in Reading. Therefore, their reading ability and comprehension are sufficient to read and comprehend Language lessons.

The primary goal of learners is to increase their Language score to a 5 on a post-TABE, which allows them to take an Official Practice Test and then the HiSET Language test. Learners earning less than a 5 will be reassessed and instructed in areas of weakness. The secondary goal is to use the grammar and writing skills learned in real-life settings.

Adult learners in general feel traditional schooling has failed them. Even learners who liked school and were considered good students have emotional or mental walls up around school, and many have some form of a learning difference, whether diagnosed or not. This requires a unique approach to this learning experience, including: personalized learning, compassionate instructors or forgiving online programs, contextualized learning, a multi-style approach, and considering meaning when designing lessons.

These learners have demonstrated that having the tools and skills they need before learning begins increases their confidence in learning and improves their outcomes. Therefore, each lesson will remind them of a skill in which they have shown proficiency, and build upon it to reach the desired outcome. Starting with something that is not brand new will build confidence in lower level learners, while the personalized nature of the course will allow students to move more rapidly through the lessons in which they have more mastery.

## Educational Use

The curriculum will be developed and created by current instructors (our SMEs) once the design of the module is complete. Their collective years of experience and wisdom have previously combined to develop courses that not only are geared toward adult learners, but to the specific adult learners we teach in Adult Education in Eastern Wyoming. Additionally, creating our own lessons reduces costs both now and in the future and eliminates the issue of broken links or removed videos. There is already a slide show presentation for this module that was created based on official HiSET prep materials and CCRS. However, the current presentation requires an in-person class model, and the course will be online and hybrid.



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## Language

The lessons will be written, recorded, and/or filmed in English. Written lessons will have Immersive Reader available to turn type to speech; recorded lessons will have a transcript; filmed lessons will have closed captioning.

## Material Type

The module will be filmed in English using VidGrid inside Canvas, with supplementary written or recorded lessons. Written lessons will have Immersive Reader available to turn type to speech; recorded lessons will have a transcript; filmed lessons will have closed captioning.

In addition to written, audio, and video components of the instruction, the learning experience will include in-video questions, short self-check quizzes, assignments that model the performance context (a timed essay that mimics the HiSET essay, on a computer), as well as pre and post assessments and self-ranking of confidence levels.

For hybrid students, instructors can supplement this learning experience by answering questions in real time, giving real-world examples, talking through an assignment, and/or explaining a concept in another way

## Keywords

- Adult Education
- HiSET Essay
- HiSET Language
- Language Subtest

## Time Required for Learning Experience

Learners should expect to spend ten (10) hours to complete this learning experience. However, there is some personalized learning involved, which can alter the time required if a student shows early mastery or requires remedial intervention.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this Learning Experience, the learner should be able to:

- Read and understand the arguments of paired passages
- Choose a position for the essay
- Write a thesis statement (also called a central claim)
- Compose two arguments
- Support two arguments
- Write an introduction and conclusion
- Organize the essay into four or five specific paragraphs



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- Revise the essay

## Prior Knowledge

Learners should have scored a 2 or higher on a TABE Language test and 5 or higher on a TABE Reading test, and should have completed prior modules on English grammar and the writing process.

## Required Resources

Students need access to a computer with internet and must have a Canvas log in. They can receive either of those from their local instructor.

## Part 2: Learning Experience

### Instructional Strategies and Activities

Lesson: Writing an Opinion Statement on Paired Passages

*Warm-Up: Writing an opinion statement about something that matters to you (video with Vid Grid pop up question)*

Time: 3-5 minutes

Consider a topic you have a strong opinion about. It might be politics, your favorite athlete or team, a brand you prefer, or a favorite movie series. Without using the pronoun *I*, write an opinion statement that expressed how you feel. For example: Pepsi is better than Coke. Then, write the opposite opinion statement, i.e. Coke is superior to Pepsi.

Share with the class (via Vid Grid pop up if online).

*Introduction: Why is it difficult when you don't care about the topic? (Video)*

Time: 2 minutes

Introduce writing an opinion statement on any topic

"It's easy to express an opinion you hold strongly. But when you write the HiSET essay you won't get to choose your topic. It may be on something you don't care about, don't know about, or maybe even that you haven't heard about before. But for the purpose of this essay, you need to be able to create a central claim - an opinion statement - based on the paired passages you're given, and this is what you will be proving throughout your essay. Once you are clear on what constitutes an opinion statement, with a little practice, you can craft a well-written one, even if you aren't knowledgeable or interested in the topic."

Key idea: Your thesis statement (central claim) will need to be an opinion statement. You know you've written an opinion statement when you can write the opposite, or an opposing,



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statement. The thesis statement or central claim is what you will be proving throughout the entire essay.

## *Presentation / Modeling / Demonstration: Opinion Statements (Video with Vid Grid pop up question)*

Time: 15 minutes

1. Give examples of opinion statements with opposing statements (Use alternating colors).

Examples:

Violent video games should be banned. -or-

Violent video games do not cause youth violence and are a healthy part of childhood.

We should keep paper textbooks in our school district. -or-

Our school district should adopt e-textbooks.

Algebra should not be a graduation requirement for all students. -or-

Algebra should be a graduation requirement for all students.

2. Present statements, some of which are opinion statements and some of which are not.

Discuss, is this an opinion statement? Why or why not

3. Show a set of paired passages, then show 2 or more possible opinion statements that can come from them.

## *Guided Practice (Assignment, quiz)*

Time: 10 minutes

1. Give an opinion statement, student chooses opposing opinion statement (multiple choice)

2. Give statements, student marks "opinion statement" or "not opinion statement" (true or false)

3. Give a set of paired passages, student writes at least 2 opinion statements (short writing response)

## *Assessment (Short reading and writing assignment in the performance context)*

Time: 15 minutes

Given paired passages from previous HiSET tests, students read both passages and choose a side. They write their opinion statement and an opposing statement. Student's time is recorded to use later in the lesson on timing your essay.

## *Application (Video + Short writing assignment)*

Time: 30 minutes

Being able to express an opinion on a given topic is a crucial component of being a part of any organization. Employers, coaches, teachers, partners, and communities need to hear your opinions, expressed in a concise, accurate, productive way.



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This activity will help you take what you learned about opinion statements and put it into a community context.

**Context:** Your neighborhood has been experiencing some break-ins. Cars and homes have been targeted and the situation is escalating to break ins nearly every weekend. Last week your neighbor across the street found his home had been broken into and nearly \$5,000 worth of items had been taken. To combat the situation, some of your neighbors are organizing a neighborhood crime watch. They want to hear from each household how to best stop the crimes.

**Assignment:** Write an opinion statement that expresses your own ideas on how to monitor, report, and/or stop these break-ins.

