Daniel Townsend
Course Reflection for EDUC 587: Masters Capstone A
USC Rossier LDT Master's Program

The semester admittedly got off to a rocky start with the information that the design blueprints from EDUC 595 and assessment plans from EDUC 582 over the summer did not align with the intended frameworks. Classmates likened their feelings to the five stages of grief about performing what seemed like open-heart surgery on these papers. When grades on such large-scale assignments, not to mention the courses themselves, have already been given, there is generally a sense that such work is final—subject to revision in the context of the capstone, to be sure, but nonetheless not as theoretically askew as we came to find out they were.

The deep dive back into the EDUC 595 and EDUC 582 papers during EDUC 587 proved quite useful, however, because it emphasized the "simple yet elegant" way, in Dr. Yates' words, in which major steps, learning goals, terminal learning objectives, and critical behaviors should all align with one another. This alignment was extremely iterative, and sometimes tedious, but, along with the course-level Gagné analysis, offered a comprehensive way to examine outcomes for my learners (K-6 teachers) in service to the literacy performance of their students, especially English learners. The unit-level CTA, assessment of learning, and lesson activities, was sometimes challenging in that it required an application of previous knowledge about learning and motivation, as well as analysis and evaluation using the principles of instructional design (ID). However, this ID process will only become more ingrained and automatic over time.

If it does not already exist, a one-page "at a glance" document of the ID process could be helpful in further transfer of relevant knowledge and principles following completion of the LDT program—it is hard to believe that there are only five more months left before graduation! In both my remaining coursework and my professional work afterward, my next major intention is to further explore how elements of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can be incorporated in order to proactively plan learning materials that thoroughly take learner variability into account.