ARCHITECTURE

“The Learning Model entails the creation of a common framework for learning and teaching that extends across every discipline, course, and learning experience. All will be grounded in a shared approach . . .”

Kim B. Clark, President’s Report, 2006

Purpose
Architecture refers to the idea that once you have articulated learning outcomes, you then need to design learning experiences for the students that will achieve those outcomes. The emphasis changes from planning the teaching process, to planning and facilitating the learning process. At BYU-Idaho, the learning process we support has been described in general terms of:

Prepare – Teach One Another – Ponder/Prove.

Description
Architecture in a course is thoughtfully designing the course according to defined learning outcomes and from the perspective of the learning process in which students will engage. This design and planning process takes place at several levels. From the course perspective, Architecture means blocking out the class schedule according to outcomes or learning processes rather than by content. We plan the limited time according to what changes we hope to produce in the students and how we plan on doing so, not according to what we hope to cover.

From the perspective of planning instruction, Architecture means that we carefully plan and prepare our instruction around getting the student engaged in the material rather than around presenting the material. We consciously design the student interaction with us, with each other, and with the material as a means to achieving the learning objectives. We architect our instructional involvement achieving results, not around ‘getting the information out there.’

From the perspective of executing our instructional plan, Architecture refers to being mindful and explicit about the steps through which a student must pass to get to deep learning. How will students be motivated and prepared? How will students actively engage in the learning and teaching? And finally, how will students both internalize and externalize their learning through a process of pondering and proving?

Examples
Because the types and contexts of learning experiences are so diverse, the examples given here focus on building the cycle of student learning into the overall course design. The following three examples are built around different rhythms of the Learning Model process steps—one class, one week, and two week architectures. Some instructors don’t establish a rhythm all, but divide the whole semester by the three process steps. However you choose to integrate the steps of the Learning Model process into your course, it should align with your learning outcomes and fit your own skills and teaching strengths.

One-Class Cycle
The first example shows the process steps aligned to a single classroom experience. Students prepare before class through pre-assigned activities. They can then teach one another in class through a variety of activities and techniques. They ponder upon and prove their learning after class through reflection activities or post-class quizzes.

This is the most basic alignment to the learning process; many will use this because of its simplicity. In a course taught by multiple instructors, each might use different Prepare, Teach One Another, and Ponder/Prove activities, while engaging students with the same cycle of experiences.

One-Week Cycle
The second example models a one-week cycle for a
Tuesday/Thursday course. Note that preparation occurs both in and out of class. Students prepare for Tuesday by completing out-of-class assignments. Tuesday’s classroom activities are also preparatory, laying the foundational theory for application later in the week. A multi-day application of the learning process may work best when you are moving students along a progression of learning levels—for example, advancing students from basic recall, to comprehension, to application (see Learning Outcomes Taxonomies). Tuesday might be used to teach a key doctrine in a religion class or a theoretical principle in a physics class. Students then teach one another in group activities that occur out of class later in the week. The learning is proved in Thursday’s class and an end-of-the-week quiz that tests both basic knowledge and application.

Two-Week Cycle
The third example expands to a two-week cycle the idea of moving students along a progression of learning. The first two days are foundational, wherein key principles, doctrines, or theories are taught. Preparation activities and problem-based exercises support the work of the first two class periods. The third class period might provide an opportunity for students to engage in more focused and structured activities that are team-based and require multiple peer-based tools. Students can then begin to apply what they are learning in later assignments. The last day of class provides an opportunity to Prove this learning through additional application exercises done in class.

In the Family Foundations course, six key doctrines about the family are taught each in two week cycles. The key doctrines are taught on the first two days of class in large group settings. Students then work in labs on the third day of class where they engage in problem-based activities. The final class provides an opportunity to Prove learning and synthesize key lessons from the cycle.

TIPS
- Be explicit. Make your Learning Process architecture explicit in your course syllabus and review it on the first day of class.
- Keep it simple. Focus pre and post-class activities on one or two key learning objectives.
- Consider your grading. Consider grade categories that align with the Learning Model Process.

PITFALLS
- Overdoing it. The learning cycle described by the Learning Process reflects natural truths about good learning. The model provides a good way to think about learning and a framework for architecting the student learning experience. The goal, however, is the student learning experience, not the model.

KEY ARTICLES

OTHER RESOURCES
- Family Foundations Syllabus Synopsis
- Learning Outcomes Taxonomies
- Integrating Instructional Strategies with the Learning Model