

---

# Introduction

**T**he instruction and assessment practices of the nation's schools have come under criticism because of their perceived focus on the rote memorization of factual information. We see the acquisition of facts not as an end in itself, however, but as a foundation upon which higher-order teaching and testing can be built. Hence, we use the cognitive hierarchy of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956) to demonstrate how you can guide your students through increasingly complex thinking skills and assess proficiency with multiple forms of assessment at each level. It is important to remember that there is no single form of assessment that is applicable to all performances at each hierarchical level.

The underlying assumption of this book is that instruction for elementary students should proceed in an orderly fashion, from the general to the specific and from the simple to the complex. Just as our content examples serve as models for this progression within the Taxonomy for math, science, social studies, and English-language arts, they also serve as examples for this type of teaching in specialty areas, such as art, music, physical education, modern languages, and technology. You can simply adapt the model to the specialty area.

We advocate a four-step model of planning that entails a logical progression from (1) content area standards to (2) modified standards to (3) unit plan objectives to (4) daily instructional objectives in an understandable sequence of increasing specificity. Moreover, our view of teaching and assessment within each of the content areas is a progression from the Knowledge to the Evaluation levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956). This sequence is embedded in the interrelationship between instruction and assessment within the curriculum.

While the curriculum is largely driven by state and national standards, many teachers are confounded or even intimidated by the vagueness and lack of detail in the language of the standards. We hope that the easy-to-follow, general-to-specific model proposed in Chapter 1, Deconstructing

the Standards, helps to alleviate these concerns. This chapter shows you how to create clear and precise instructional objectives for various content areas as prescribed by national and state standards. You learn to deconstruct the broad-sweeping goals of the standards and transform them into unit plan objectives (more specific) and daily instructional objectives (most specific). We guide you through modifying the original standards and then designing unit plans around them, which ultimately serve as the basis for your daily instructional objectives. The examples are built around national content area standards, and you can easily adapt the model for use with your own state standards.

Chapters 2 through 7 center on Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956), a pyramidal structure that proceeds from the simple to the complex, whether we are looking at measurable objectives, paper-and-pencil tests, performance-based assessments, or portfolios. We demonstrate how the teaching of higher-order thought processes is much more effective when proceeding from a baseline level.

Chapter 2 exemplifies how objectives may be written within a cognitive hierarchy that describes simple to complex thought processes that can be applied to any subject area. These daily formative assessments lead to summative assessments through major paper-and-pencil tests (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) and performance-based projects (Chapter 6), which may be appropriately categorized in your students' portfolios (Chapter 7). Just as instructional objectives proceed from the simple to the complex via the Taxonomy, so should the items on paper-and-pencil tests. Hence, the chapters focusing on true-false, completion, multiple-choice, matching, short-answer, and essay items demonstrate how to write these items within appropriate levels of the Taxonomy. You and your students together can place them in their portfolios according to taxonomic level.

We advocate that you organize the contents of your tests in ascending order of difficulty: They should be "steeply graded" (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2007, p. 220), progressing from relatively easy to increasingly difficult items. We recommend this format for several reasons. First, such a format enhances student confidence. If the students first encounter a series of items that they can easily answer, they are more confident when taking on the more difficult items that come later. In addition, they do not become frustrated and fatigued to the point that they miss some of the easier items that they would have answered correctly had they been placed at the beginning of the format. Hence, a simple-to-complex format is recommended in both formative and summative assessment.

Before issuing report cards, we suggest that you and your students categorize representative evidence of their formative and summative performances within their portfolios according to the cognitive hierarchy

(discussed in Chapter 7). A careful review of student artifacts should enhance the quality of your instruction by highlighting the students' strengths as well as their weaknesses.

The core of this book is a combination of thorough explanations and abundant examples to guide you through the steps of our model of instruction and assessment that proceeds from a Knowledge-level baseline through the echelons of higher-order thinking processes within the cognitive domain. The daily objectives are the essence of continual, formative assessment and progress from the Knowledge to the Evaluation levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956). Writing measurable daily instructional objectives for progressive pupil performance through each of the cognitive levels allows you to detect student and instructional strengths, as well as weaknesses, within each level. As conduits of measurable assessment, these objectives provide for the reinforcement of effective teaching strategies, while simultaneously enabling you to ameliorate student weaknesses by reviewing, redirecting, or adjusting current instructional strategies; creating new strategies; or implementing materials that are commensurate with your students' needs.

Ideally, this type of planning and assessment should be supported throughout a school district, beginning with the superintendent and continued by the curriculum director, building principals, teacher leaders, teachers, and paraprofessionals. Such an effort would optimize student learning per se and also maximize student performance on statewide assessments (more about this in Chapter 1).

At the beginning of each chapter, we furnish you with easy-to-follow diagrams that show where we are, where we have been, and where we are going. In addition, to provide you with firsthand involvement with our method, each chapter ends with a section called Professional Development Activities. These activities further your expertise in the design of your personal instruction and assessment practices. They could also be a part of virtually any inservice session.