

**A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing:  
A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives**

**A Book Study Guide**

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## **Why a Book Study?**

Much of what practicing teachers learn about teaching comes by means of the oral tradition. Teachers attend conferences and listen to speakers; teachers share stories about promising new ideas, "tried-and-true" practices, and unmitigated disasters. Teachers' reliance on the oral tradition is easy to understand: teachers are busy people with little time to read extensively in their fields. When they do read, they tend to choose relatively short summaries of research and best practice – the kind typically found in *Educational Leadership*, the *Kappan*, and the *Executive Educator*.

Although teachers' reliance on the oral tradition is understandable, it can also be problematic. The oral tradition can lead to a fairly superficial understanding of the material being presented. Furthermore, as stories are passed from one person to another, misunderstandings can emerge. Like the party game of "telephone" (where one person whispers something to another person who, in turn, whispers it to a third), what the "receiver" receives may not be what the "sender" intended the "receiver" to receive. In the game of "telephone" the result is a laughing matter; in the "game" of teaching, it is not!

Speaking of the original taxonomy of educational objectives, Ben Bloom referred to it as one of the "most frequently cited, least read" books in education. The majority of teachers I have met over the past three decades can recite the taxonomic mantra: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. When I question them about the difference between knowledge and comprehension, the relationship of analysis to synthesis, or the proper sequential placement of evaluation, many struggle to find defensible answers.

The purpose of book studies as teacher professional development tools is to promote a deeper understanding of the material being considered. In contrast to the emphasis on memorization associated with conference presentations, the emphasis in book studies is on shared meaning by means of critical analysis and dialogue.

## **What are the Format and Structure of Book Studies?**

The format of most book studies is identical. Members read a book (or sections of a book) and meet periodically to discuss what they have read. Most book studies have a facilitator, whose duty it is to convene the group and "keep things going" during the discussion. The general format of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT) book study is the same.

While the format is identical, the structure is not. Some book studies are unstructured, leaving the flow of the discussion to the whims of the members. Others are highly structured, both in terms of preparation for each session and the way in which the session will transpire. The RBT book study is highly structured book study.

There are a total of five two-hour sessions. Specific sections of the book are assigned to be read prior to each session. A set of five central questions are used to guide group members' reading of the assigned sections and their discussion during each corresponding session. Each session begins with an opening activity. Next, the central questions are discussed. Opportunity is then provided for members to raise and consider questions that came to mind as they did the reading. Finally, note cards are distributed and each member is asked to write down one (and only one) thing he or she learned during the session. These "learnings" are be shared at the beginning of the next session as a way of making a transition between the previous session and the new one.

### **How Large Should a Book Study Group Be?**

I have found that groups of 5 to 8 members work best. Groups of 10 or more tend to be unmanageable, whereas groups of two or three tend to dissolve into chats. N. C. Department of Public Instruction recommends group sizes no more than 6 (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/profdev/resources/bookclub/>).

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Book Club Members**

Each member is expected to read so they are prepared for the book club session and to participate actively in the session. The interpretations and opinions of all members are valued equally. Differences of interpretations and opinions are seen as opportunities for growth in understanding, not personal attacks. N. C. Department of Public Instruction (see above website) has developed a set of five principles that delineate the roles and responsibilities of book club members.

### **What Materials are Needed to Support the RBT Book Study?**

Each member will need a copy of the book. The title is *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. ISBN 0-8013-1903-X (soft cover) It can be purchased from Internet vendors.

In addition to the book, you will need note cards and pens for all members. The facilitator can provide them or ask the members to bring their own. It usually is advisable to provide drinks and snacks for the break. Generally, members take turns bringing drinks and snacks.

Finally, each member will need a copy of this booklet. The booklet contains an outline for each of the five sessions. Each outline follows the same format:

1. Advanced reading,
2. Opening activity, and
3. Central questions.

There is one page per session.

## **Session I: Objectives, the Revised Taxonomy, and Student Learning**

### Advanced Reading:

Forward, Chapters 1, 2, and 3, Appendix A

### Opening Activity:

Look at the following two objectives:

“The student will be able to analyze transactions into debit and credit parts.”

“The student will be able to create a product based on the principles and elements of design.”

Have each group member choose one (and only one) word in each objective.

Talk about the choices made and examine the choices in terms of the two-dimensions of the Taxonomy Table (re-read the paragraph that begins at the bottom of page 4 of this guide and ends on the top of page 5). How many chose verbs? How many chose nouns? How many chose neither?

### Central Questions:

1. Who was involved in preparing the RBT and how long did it take them to do so? [See pages xxviii and xxix in the text.]
2. How relevant are the four organizing questions (page 6 of the text) to your life and work?
3. What are the distinctions between content and knowledge and between behavior and cognitive processes? Why are these distinctions important? [See pages 12 – 14 in the text.]
4. How does one analyze an objective in terms of the Taxonomy Table? How is this question related to today’s Opening Activity? [See pages 30, 32 – 34 in the text.]
5. Why is it important to categorize objectives? [See pages 34 – 36 in the text.]

## **Session II: The Knowledge and Cognitive Process Dimensions**

### Advanced Reading:

Reading the following pages carefully: pages 38 - 44, pages 63 - 66 (top), and pages 88 (bottom) – 92. Skim through the rest of Chapters 4 and 5. For future reference, these two chapters are best considered as resources; that is, chapters to return to again and again as the need arises.

### Opening Activity:

Choose one of the following topics based on group interest: marketing, the automobile electrical system, language development. If none of these seem appropriate, have the group select their own topic.

Have group members generate as many objectives as possible (within a reasonable period of time) related to that topic. Make sure each objective has a verb and a noun.

### Central Questions:

1. What did you learn from the tale of four teachers? How is this related to the Opening Activity? [See pages 39 – 40 in the text.]
2. What are the critical differences between factual and conceptual knowledge? What are the critical differences between conceptual and metacognitive knowledge? [See pages 41 – 44 in the text.]
3. What did you learn from the tale of three learning outcomes? How is this related to question 1 (above)? [See pages 64 – 65 in the text.]
4. What are the critical differences between rote and meaningful learning and why are these differences important? [See pages 65 – 66 in the text.]
5. What is the importance of the distinction between contextualized and decontextualized cognitive process? How might this play out in your classroom? [See pages 88 – 89 in the text.]

## Session III: The Taxonomy in Use

### Advanced Reading:

Chapters 6 and 7

### Opening Activity:

Classify each of the following objectives into the appropriate cell of the Taxonomy Table. Use the letter-number combination (e.g., B4) to designate the chosen cell intended cell. Have each member explain his or her classification and work toward achieving consensus.

1. The student will be able to recognize the steps of the selling process.
2. The student will be able to demonstrate correct drawing procedures.
3. The student will be able to explain foodborne contaminants and food allergies.
4. The student will be able to critique alternative medical modalities.

### Central Questions:

1. What are some of the major problems one encounters when classifying objectives in terms of the Taxonomy Table and how can they be overcome? What is the "based-on" convention and why is it important? [See pages 105 – 109, 117 in the text.]
2. What is mean by alignment and how can you use the Taxonomy Table to estimate the degree of alignment in your schools and classrooms? [See pages 10, 102 – 104 in the text.]
3. Why are units the most meaningful way of organizing the curriculum in terms of facilitating student learning and in terms of curriculum analysis using the Taxonomy Table? [See pages 111 – 112 in text.]
4. How does the Taxonomy Table operate differently if you are analyzing your own or someone else's work? [See pages 95 – 97 in the text.]
5. What specific changes can you make in your classroom that are consistent with your understanding of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (e.g., instruction, assessment, alignment)?

**NOTE.** As a group, select three of the following six chapters: Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. Have each group members choose one of the selected chapters, making sure that each select chapter is read by at least two group members. You might end up with Chapter 8 (Bill, Francine), Chapter 10 (Will, Frank, Juanita), and Chapter 11 (Doris, Antwan).

## Session IV: Learning about the RBT from Teacher Vignettes

### Advanced Reading:

Each group member is responsible for one of the six vignettes included in the Chapters 8 through 13. (See note at bottom of Session III.)

### Opening Activity:

Use the template below to construct a graphic organizer that can be used to analyze the vignettes in terms of the four major row categories (i.e., objectives, instructional activities, assessment, and alignment). Have each "team" (duo or trio) complete the graphic organizer based on their vignette.

### Central Questions:

1. How do the vignettes studied compare in terms of the teachers' objectives?
2. How do the vignettes studied compare in terms of the instructional activities?
3. How do the vignettes studied compare in terms of the assessments?
4. How do the vignettes studied compare in terms of alignment?
5. What have you learned about the RBT that can be applied to your own classroom (e.g., planning, teaching, assessing)?

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	Chapter X	Chapter Y	Chapter Z
Objectives			
Instruction			
Assessment			
Alignment			

## **Session V: Being Aware of Long-Standing Problems**

### Advanced Reading:

Chapter 14

### Opening Activity:

The text discusses nine generalizations related to solving long-standing problems in American education. The generalizations are summarized on the next page. Have each member rank the generalizations in terms of their importance in improving the quality of education (from 1, highest rank, to 9, lowest rank). Combine the individual ranks into a composite or group rank.

### Central Questions:

1. Why are the three highest ranked generalizations ranked most highly?
2. Why are the three lowest ranked generalizations ranked the lowest?
3. Which of the generalizations would be the most difficult to implement? Why?
4. Which of the generalizations would likely yield the greatest improvement if implemented properly? Why?
5. What can you do in your schools and classrooms to implement the generalizations likely to yield the greatest improvement? What barriers exist to their implementation and how can these barriers be overcome?

## Nine Generalizations

Directions. Rank each of these generalizations from 1 (most important) to 9 (least important) in terms of their positive effect on classroom instruction and student learning.

- \_\_\_\_ 1. Because transfer and retention are important goals of instruction, emphasizing more complex cognitive processes is extremely important.
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Both knowledge and cognitive processes, in combination, are important in defining and improving student learning.
- \_\_\_\_ 3. Certain types of knowledge regularly accompany certain cognitive processes (e.g., Factual Knowledge goes with Remember).
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Failing to differentiate instructional activities from educational objectives can have a negative effect on student learning.
- \_\_\_\_ 5. Assessment serves two primary purposes - formative and summative - both of which are important and useful in facilitating student learning.
- \_\_\_\_ 6. Because external assessments influence classroom instruction in many ways, teachers must find ways to incorporate the positive aspects of external assessments in their classrooms.
- \_\_\_\_ 7. If assessments are not aligned with objectives, they do not provide clear evidence of intended student learning.
- \_\_\_\_ 8. If instructional activities are not aligned with assessment, then the assessment results may underestimate the effectiveness of instruction.
- \_\_\_\_ 9. If instructional activities are not aligned with objectives, then students may be actively engaged in the activities but are not likely to achieve in intended learning outcomes. This is a wonderful example of "busy, not productive."