

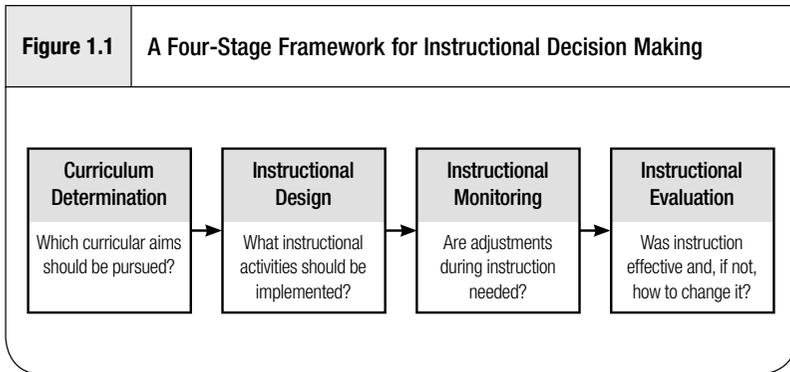
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Teaching Through an Assessment Lens



Given the diverse demands on today's teachers and the complex settings in which those demands must be satisfied, it's easy to lose sight of the fundamental nature of teaching. Teaching exists so that students will learn the things they ought to learn. It's just that simple.

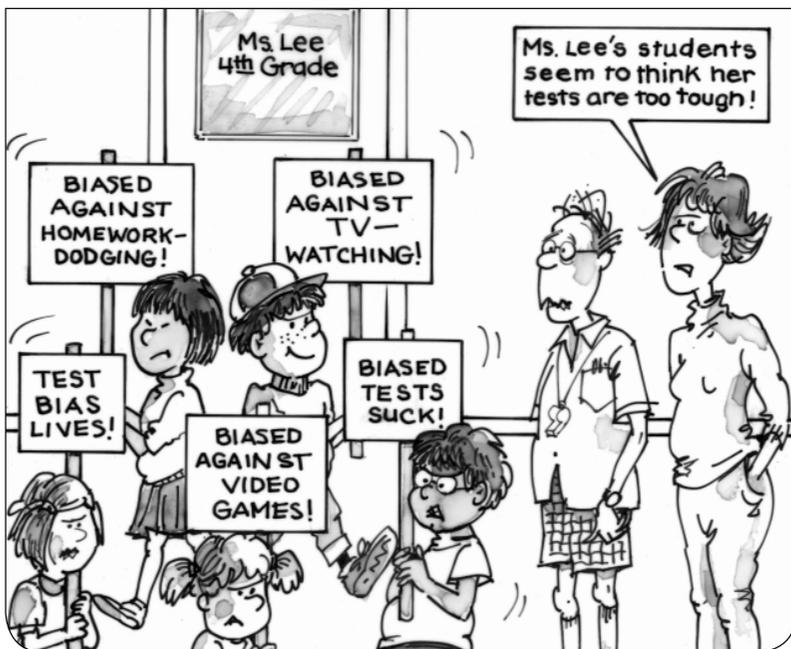
Oh, one could certainly analyze teaching from more sophisticated perspectives. As a teacher-in-training way back when, I studied education from sociological, philosophical, and psychological vantage points. You may have done the same. I read reports from educational sociologists on how society influences a nation's schools and discourse from educational philosophers on how schools affect a society's culture. I read educational psychologists' take on the differences between human learning and sub-human learning. (To this day, I can recall which food-pellet reinforcement schedules are most effective in maintaining a hungry rat's lever-pressing behavior. I keep waiting for an opportunity to use this knowledge.) From these authors, I gained interesting insights on the nuances of schooling. However, such readings did little to allay what, as a prospective teacher, was my all-consuming concern: *What would I actually do when confronted by a classroom of students?* I definitely don't intend to discount the instruction-related contributions of educational



Although the decisions a teacher makes certainly extend beyond the confines of this four-stage framework, what you see represented in this figure captures the bulk of the instructional choices a teacher will face—at least the really important decisions apt to have an impact on what and how well students learn. Together, these sets of decisions constitute a useful template teachers can routinely employ to consider their chief instructional choices.

Remember, this book about *instruction* is predicated on the conviction a teacher should consider the potential relevance of *assessment* in connection with each of the four clusters of instructional decisions just described. If you are a teacher, know that today—more than ever—students will benefit if you routinely think about the potential impact of assessment at each point in the fourfold framework presented here. The more you understand about the nature of assessment, and particularly about the potential influence of assessment on the instructional decisions you are about to make, the more defensible your resultant decisions will be. Happily, defensible instructional decisions pay off for students.

of certain subgroup members are present in a test's items. If a student who is a member of a negatively test-depicted subgroup becomes upset by such a depiction (for instance, by an insensitively worded test item), the student's performance on subsequent test items is often adversely affected. Similarly, students can experience *unfair penalties* when a test includes content that's likely to be familiar to students in some subgroups but not to students outside these subgroups. So, for instance, if a language arts achievement test contains test items incorporating cultural content that's apt to be better known to native-born students than to students who are recent immigrants, this would be a clear instance of unfair penalization.



When judging the presence of assessment bias in large-scale accountability tests, it is common to assemble a *bias-review panel* consisting of educators representing those subgroups who have historically been on

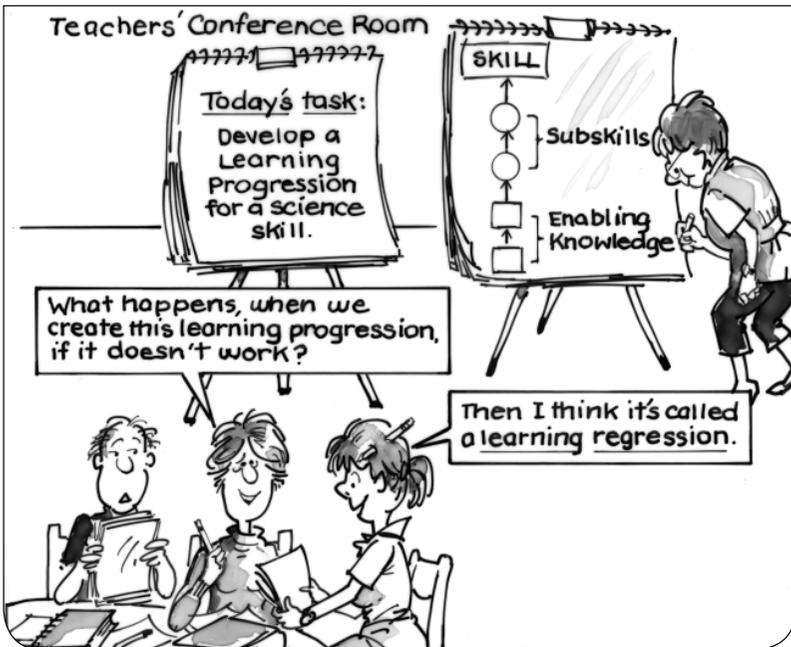
Figure 2.1 A Likert-Like Affective Inventory for Elementary Students

Directions: Please indicate whether you agree, disagree, or are uncertain about each of the statements below this box. Some of the statements are worded positively, and some are worded negatively. For each statement, show how you feel about that statement by placing an X in one of the three boxes for that statement. There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer honestly based on how *you feel*. Do not write your name or make comments on this paper. Only make X marks.

| | Agree | Disagree | Uncertain |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| I like to watch TV in the evening. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

When you have finished, a student will collect this sheet and place it and all other completed sheets in an envelope that will be taken to the office. Thanks for your help.

| | Agree | Disagree | Uncertain |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I like to watch TV in the evening. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Usually, I don't like to work with math problems. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I look forward to the times we study science in class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I really don't have a good time when we read things. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. If I have to speak in front of the class, I don't like it. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Doing scientific things in class bores me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I love it when we get to read stuff in class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I truly don't like it when we have to write things in class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Doing mathematics in class is something I like. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. I enjoy giving oral reports in class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Communicate Curricular Expectations

It's said that motorists can't get the most benefit from a road map unless they know their destination. Similarly, students find it difficult to successfully learn something if they don't know what that something is. It follows that, at the outset of an instructional sequence, teachers need to let students know just what they are supposed to learn and take steps to ensure students understand those expectations.

In the 1960s and 1970s, I taught an instructional methods course for prospective teachers as part of the UCLA teacher education program. In that course I tried to dish out only a very modest number of instructional guidelines to my students. One of my few guidelines I labeled *Revelation of Objectives*. The phrase had an almost-scriptural aura, and I always enjoyed explaining to my students why it was important for teachers not only to describe their instructional objectives to students but also to