



You can use Bloom's Taxonomy to improve your teaching and your PDAS scores.

Bloom in the Room

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Many teachers will be evaluated using the state's system, the Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS). Much of this appraisal is based on what is commonly referred to as Bloom's Taxonomy. More and more, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are being written to reflect this taxonomy. Teachers who know and understand this taxonomy will have a significant advantage when they are being evaluated.

WHAT IS A TAXONOMY, ANYWAY?

A taxonomy is a way to classify or separate things. You have a set structure to differentiate one thing from another. You could describe a taxonomy as a sort of tie rack. You need a

place to hang each tie. You decide which ties go with which suits, and you put them in groups that way. When you are arranging ties on a rack, you are putting them in some sort of order. You are classifying them. You are creating a taxonomy.

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

In 1948, a group of colleagues with the American Psychological Association began discussions that led to a taxonomy of educational goals. The committee was appointed to create taxonomies in three overlapping domains: cognitive, affective (emotional) and psychomotor. Benjamin Bloom was fortunate enough to be listed as the first author on the first publication, thereby forever linking the committee's work to his name in the public mind. Of the three taxonomies, the cognitive has become the only one that receives much focus. It contains six levels of "cognitive domains" that move from simple activities to complex ones.

The cognitive portion of their work was finished first, in 1956. In their research Bloom's group found that over 95% of the test questions students encountered require them to think only at the lowest possible level, the recall of information. Things have changed, and the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) are being written more and more to incorporate higher-order thinking into the classroom.

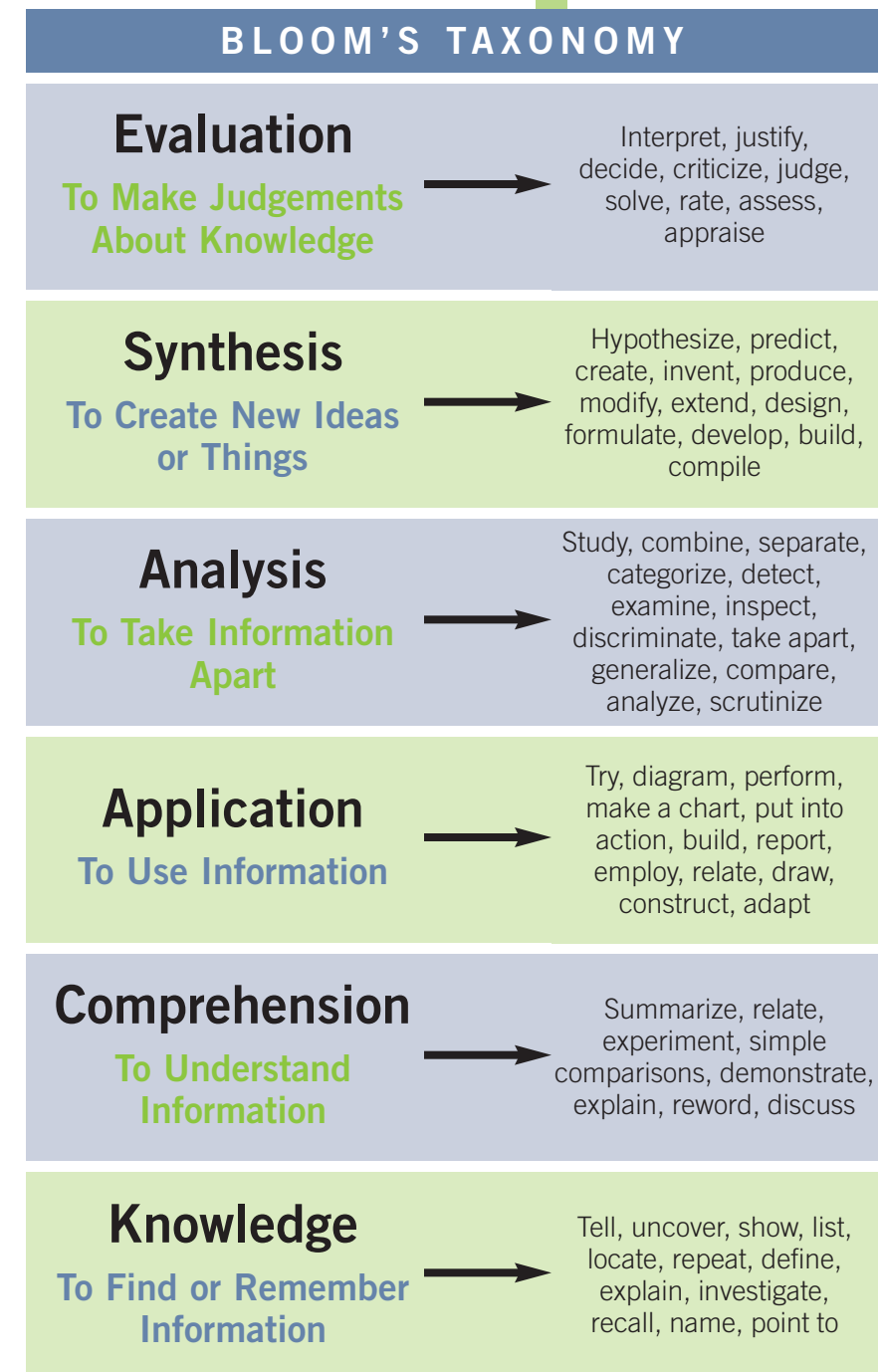
Kenneth E. Vogler recently offered a very short description of Bloom's Taxonomy's six levels. Note that the questions or assignment statements become progressively more demanding of a student's mental activity.

The first level—Knowledge—asks students to recall information. ("Name the three branches of government.")

The second level—Comprehension—asks students to put information in another form. ("Write the chemical equation for water.")

The third level—Application—asks students to apply known facts, principles or generalizations to solve a problem. ("Use the Euclidean algorithm to find the greatest common divisor of 42 and 100.")

The fourth level—Analysis—asks students to identify and comprehend elements of a process, communication or series of events.



(“Compare and contrast a capitalist economic system with a socialist economic system.”)

The fifth level—Synthesis—requires students to engage in original creative thinking. (“Write a script for a television commercial highlighting the dangers of global warming.”)

The sixth level—Evaluation—asks students to determine how closely a concept or idea is consistent with standards or values. (“After examining criticism of the U.S. immigration system and proposals for change, which proposed change do you think would be the most democratic? Defend your choice.”)

USING BLOOM IN THE ROOM

It's easy to fall into the trap of staying down in Bloom's lower levels with students. Memorizing and regurgitating information has its uses, and it is the

easiest way to teach. Limiting a teacher's efforts to these practices does not help students grow cognitively. On top of that, this taxonomy offers teachers a way to categorize test questions and to write cognitive objectives for lessons.

As PDAS evaluations become more focused on this evidence, you should find ways to ensure that you are teaching higher-order skills. Here are some key ways to do this:

Post the six domains somewhere in your room. Explain the chart (or graphic) to your students and let them know you are going to work to the top of that chart as much as possible.

Take a few moments during each class to have everyone check which taxonomy levels have been used in any class.

Write lesson plans that use the verbs on the Taxonomy Chart. For more

verbs and useful information, visit the Teaching and Learning web page at www.tsta.org.

Keep student work that shows higher-order thinking skills. You can use this as part of your PDAS portfolio.

By doing these things you demonstrate your knowledge to your students, your administrators and yourself. You are also validating your more creative teaching against those who try to overly restrict your instruction with what one teacher called “standardized drive.”

Bloom's Taxonomy is a good tool to help teachers plan their lessons. It is helpful for defining the kinds of thinking skills teachers expect from students. Perhaps most importantly, Bloom's Taxonomy helps establish a connection between a teacher's goals and the questions that get asked, both in classrooms and on tests.

130th Annual TSTA Convention



TSTA's annual convention will be in Houston on April 17-18, 2009. All convention events will take place at the InterContinental Houston, a chic hotel in the prestigious Uptown Houston area and just one block from the Galleria.

BECOME A DELEGATE

The TSTA House of Delegates (HoD) serves a vital role in the governance of TSTA and helps to shape the future of our organization. The HoD may establish goals for TSTA, amend its bylaws and act on recommendations from the TSTA officers, board or committees. TSTA statewide elections are held at the HoD annual meeting.

Please contact your local president for details on how delegates are elected in your local. If you do not have a local or your local does not hold delegate elections, please contact your regional president. Delegate

allocations are based on membership totals as of January 15. Local delegate election results must be reported to TSTA by March 15.

REGISTRATION

Registration for the convention begins at 7:00 am on Friday, April 17, and continues to Saturday, April 18. All TSTA members and guests are welcome to attend the HoD and convention, but only delegates with proper delegate badges are allowed in the designated delegate section and voting area. Non-delegates/alternates and guests are encouraged to register.

CONVENTION EVENTS

Open hearings will be held Friday morning on the proposed 2009-10 TSTA budget and any proposed bylaws amendments or NEA Resolutions. Additional topics may be added. Professional development workshops eligible for continuing

education credit will be offered Friday morning and afternoon.

The House of Delegates will begin Friday afternoon and continue throughout Saturday. Voting will take place Saturday morning. Additional information and convention updates will be posted on the TSTA website.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

The InterContinental Houston is holding a room block for TSTA convention attendees. Reserve your room directly with the hotel by March 25, 2009, to ensure your room at the group rate of \$139 plus tax (currently \$162.63). A discounted daily parking rate—self park \$8 or valet park \$14—with in and out privileges is available to TSTA hotel guests. Non-hotel guests will pay an hourly self-parking rate not to exceed \$16 per day or may valet park for \$16 per day or \$27 overnight.

Make your reservation by calling (800) 316-8645 or (713) 627-7600. Identify yourself as a participant of the “TSTA Convention” or provide our block code “CX6” to receive the special group rate. You may also register online. The TSTA website provides a link to the reservation page. Visit www.tsta.org and select the “HoD Information” link from the right column menu options. Please note: A first night room deposit secured with a major credit card or check is required for all reservations. Cancellations must be made 24 hours prior to your scheduled arrival to avoid a charge for the first night. Reservations may only be cancelled by calling the hotel directly and obtaining a cancellation number.

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