

Scenario Activity

Instructions

This activity has been developed to give you an opportunity to apply what you have learned about the appropriateness of various test-preparation activities, and should be conducted after the completion of Part 4 of the module. Although you can work through these scenarios individually, working in a small group would give you an opportunity to interact, and to exchange ideas and perceptions. There is no need to work through the scenarios sequentially or to complete them all at once—each scenario is independent of the others. Thus, if this professional development module is spread out over multiple days, the scenarios might be an effective way of reviewing previously learned concepts before returning to Parts 5 and 6.

The scenarios depict the following types of activities in a variety of contexts:

- **Using items from the ITBS/ITED** (Scenarios 1-3)
- **Teaching test-taking skills** (Scenarios 4-6)
- **Using practice tests** (Scenario 7)
- **Reviewing content/skill areas** (Scenarios 8-9)

After reading through the scenario for which you have decided to focus your attention, determine if the action might result in a violation of academic ethics, score meaning & use, and/or educational value. The specific questions related to each of these criteria are provided in the boxes below. For each criterion, identify or discuss what you believe to be the most salient positive and negative consequences—the Pros and Cons—associated with the use of the activity in the given context. As you think about the potential outcomes, in addition to considering “what” was done also consider the “how,” “why,” and “to whom.”

Academic ethics?

Could the action be construed as “cheating,” lead to loss of integrity, or violate policy or copyright?

Score meaning & use?

Could the action result in scores being higher than they should be or misrepresent what students know regarding the larger domain of skills?

Educational value gained/lost?

Does the action promote the learning and long-term retention of important knowledge and content skills that students are expected to learn, as defined by the district's standards/curriculum?

Does the educational value gained by the activity outweigh the lost educational opportunities?

Once you have reflected upon the potential consequences or outcomes associated with the test-preparation activity corresponding to a given scenario, you can compare your perceptions to those presented in the accompanying *Scenario Consensus Guide* before moving on to another scenario. Please note that the *Scenario Consensus Guide* does not identify all the potential positive and negative outcomes—only those deemed to be the most salient. If time is short and you cannot work through all of the scenarios, please try to find the time to read through the *Scenario Consensus Guide* for each scenario, as each one presents a somewhat unique set of issues.

Scenario Activity

Topic: Using Items from the ITBS/ITED

1. Mrs. Potter is very concerned that her 3rd graders will not understand what to do when they see the *ITBS* for the first time. She wants her students to feel confident and not anxious when they take the test so their scores show what they know rather than be a reflection of errors caused by nervousness, such as incorrectly filling out bubble sheets. She finds a copy of the *ITBS* that was administered a few years ago and takes a few of the questions from each section the students will be taking. For about 3 weeks, she uses them as warm-up activities.

Criteria	Pros	Cons
Academic Ethics:		
Score Meaning & Use:		
Educational Value:		

Scenario Activity

Topic: Using Items from the ITBS/ITED

2. While students are quietly taking their tests, Mr. Flanders examines the math section. He notices there are several questions on estimation—a skill his students have been struggling with all year. Thinking he's just stumbled upon one of those "teachable moments," he jots down a few of the problems and plans to use them in a short lesson next week when the test is already over.

Criteria	Pros	Cons
Academic Ethics:		
Score Meaning & Use:		
Educational Value:		

Scenario Activity

Topic: Using Items from the ITBS/ITED

3. The administration and staff at Roy G. Biv Elementary have decided they really need to focus on their non-proficient and special education students. Feeling that these students need more repetition and "real" examples of what to expect on the test, certain teachers have been designated to work with these students using portions of the tests administered last year. The teachers walk the students through how to figure out the right answers and then have students do more of the problems on their own.

Criteria	Pros	Cons
Academic Ethics:		
Score Meaning & Use:		
Educational Value:		

Scenario Activity

Topic: Teaching Test-Taking Skills

4. Mrs. Bucket is a firm believer that learning how to take tests benefits students not only on classroom and college entrance assessments but also in life after high school where tests are potentially involved. Using the curricular units planned for the month prior to the administration of the *ITED*, she has developed several lessons to review pacing and multiple-choice strategies with her 9th graders.

Criteria	Pros	Cons
Academic Ethics:		
Score Meaning & Use:		
Educational Value:		

Scenario Activity

Topic: Teaching Test-Taking Skills

5. Mr. Eliot believes in the appropriateness of teaching his 6th graders test-taking skills such as pacing and multiple-choice strategies. However, he wants to be sure the content used in the practices he designs for students is also beneficial. He looks to page 55 of the *Iowa Tests Interpretative Guide for Teachers and Counselors* and sees that the Social Studies test contains items on the "Earth's features"—a topic he covered earlier in the year. He decides to spend some time the week before the test teaching students specific test-taking strategies using passages, graphs, and diagrams about the earth's features as practice.

Criteria	Pros	Cons
Academic Ethics:		
Score Meaning & Use:		
Educational Value:		

Scenario Activity

Topic: Teaching Test-Taking Skills

6. Mr. Emerson knows that many of his students struggle with taking timed tests. They often get stuck on a question, spending so much time on it that they run out of time before they finish all of the questions. He also knows that unless the students qualify for extended time as an accommodation for special needs, it's important that students not have additional time when taking the *Iowa Tests*. So, instead, whenever he administers the *Iowa Tests* he gives students a two-minute warning. He notifies students that there are only 2 minutes remaining and tells them to "Make sure you put something down for every question—if it's left blank, it's counted as being wrong."

Criteria	Pros	Cons
Academic Ethics:		
Score Meaning & Use:		
Educational Value:		

Scenario Activity

Topic: Using Practice Tests

7. The math department at Tornado Alley High School spent a summer developing math practice tests in response to poor scores on the *ITEDs* over the last few years, which culminated in the school being placed on the SINA list. To identify specific areas of weakness, the staff reviewed previous test results and identified those for which their students scored quite a bit lower. In developing the practice tests, teachers did not have access to actual *ITED* tests but rather a list of general skill areas. The test questions developed by the teachers represent the types of content and skills covered in the *Concepts and Problem Solving* test, such as *Data Analysis/Probability/Statistics*. All math teachers are required to administer these practice tests once a month for the three months preceding the January administration of the *ITED*. They then use results from these practice tests to identify areas where students need additional assistance and provide remediation where necessary. The staff believes that these tests help students become more familiar with the format of the test questions as well as help reinforce previously learned content.

Criteria	Pros	Cons
Academic Ethics:		
Score Meaning & Use:		
Educational Value:		

Scenario Activity

Topic: Reviewing Content/Skill Areas

8. Mrs. Graham, a 5th grade math teacher, has always taught measurement skills at the end of the year after her students have been exposed to fractions. Because measurement is an area her students do poorly on in October when they take the ITBS, she has decided to move her measurement unit from the end of the year to the beginning and spend less time on fractions. She believes that if her students get just get a few more questions right, the scores will go up and her school will look better in the public's eye.

Criteria	Pros	Cons
Academic Ethics:		
Score Meaning & Use:		
Educational Value:		

Scenario Activity

Topic: Reviewing Content/Skill Areas

9. Mr. Tippy believes that it's most appropriate to continually review learned content throughout the year to help ensure retention rather than doing review in a "one shot deal." However, he knows that reviewing some of the content that he teaches is more important than others because it is on the test. For example, he knows students are more likely to encounter questions on interpreting political cartoons than specific questions regarding the disbandment of the Soviet Union. Therefore, for about a month before the test, he finds a political cartoon in the media and does a daily warm-up with students, walking them through the process of interpreting its meaning.

Criteria	Pros	Cons
Academic Ethics:		
Score Meaning & Use:		
Educational Value:		