

Closing

Hopefully this professional development program has:

- assisted you in developing a more complete understanding of the complexities associated with test preparation or reinforced previously held beliefs regarding these practices,
- provided you with the opportunity to think about the consequences associated with your own personal practices—or the practices of others,
- provided a common language to facilitate conversations at your school regarding these practices and ideas,
- assisted you in recognizing the need for district policy and procedures regarding these types of activities, and
- provided you with the support needed to resist pressure to use some of these types of practices in the future.

As you progressed through this module, at times you might have experienced a lack of consensus (if working with others) or possibly even disagreement with some of the recommendations or guidance being presented. Divergence in opinions is not all that surprising given that some of the distinctions between appropriate and inappropriate test-preparation activities are quite blurry—especially those related to the educational value gained and lost by using a particular activity. In these situations, the “appropriateness” is best evaluated by considering all related factors. Often what is at issue is not the “what,” but rather the “how,” “why,” and “to whom.”

Perhaps the most important idea that you can keep in mind in the future as you consider how best to prepare students for testing is that *the use of test preparation should not be guided by the desire to increase scores, but rather by the desire to ensure that student scores are an accurate reflection of what students know and are able to do in the areas covered by the test.* When the focus is on finding ways of improving student learning, increases in test scores are likely to follow.

Closing Activity:

In Part 2, a set of eight sample test-preparation practices that might result from a teacher’s “good intentions” was presented. As a closing activity, print the handout titled *Closing Activity* from the “Downloads” page. Using this handout, consider what the negative consequences associated with each action might be. That is, consider each action in terms of academic ethics, score meaning & use, and educational value. Using the third column of the table you can make note of which criteria are most likely to be violated by use of the action. Then, in the last column, describe a more appropriate action that could have been taken, if possible, in order to achieve the same goal. Once you’ve completed the closing activity, you can check your responses against those provided in the handout titled *Closing Activity Feedback*, which can also be obtained from the “Downloads” page.