

Achievement Targets

Based on material in *Student-Centered Classroom Assessment* by Rick Stiggins (1994)

Learning occurs simultaneously in a number of dimensions. For instructional purposes, six have been defined: the *intellectual*, the *emotional*, the *social*, the *physical*, the *aesthetic*, and the *spiritual*. For the most part in this session, achievement will refer to outcomes in the intellectual, or *cognitive*, dimension.

Knowing what we are asking students to learn is important because different achievement *targets* require the use of different assessment methods. In planning any assessment, we must begin by developing clear and agreed upon statements of what it means for students to know and to do successfully.

At the classroom level, there are four kinds of achievement outcomes, or *targets* to use Rick Stiggins' terminology, in a hierarchy. The foundations of achievement are *knowledge mastery*. Building upon knowledge mastery students develop *reasoning proficiency* and *skills*. And these are necessary for students to be *able to create products*. Targets are derived from relevant content and performance standards.

Knowledge Mastery

First in the hierarchy is mastering content knowledge. This level of knowledge contains the core facts, information, and relationships that students *memorize* and those knowledges that students *tap as needed* through references and research. Here, success is *mastery*, or “getting control of” foundational knowledge.

Reasoning Proficiency

Using their mastery of knowledge, students reason and solve problems. At this next level, students use what they know *within the context of the problem* to achieve a *desired solution*. Here students must be able to *recall* foundational knowledge, to *analyze* in terms of ingredients or component parts, to *compare* in terms of similarities or differences or both, to *infer* deductively or inductively, and to *conclude* by expressing and defending an opinion or point of view. These targets may also veer into the emotional and social dimensions. The latter, particularly, in cooperative learning and collaborative problem-solving situations.

Skills

There are things teachers want students to be able to do, to demonstrate certain kinds of skills. Success lies in *doing well*, *performing successfully*. The basics for performing skillfully are mastery of prerequisite procedural *knowledge* and having the *reasoning* power to use that knowledge appropriately in performance. These targets may also be in the physical dimension depending on the skills demanded.

Ability to Create Products

At this level students create certain tangible products that reveal, through some kind of medium, that they have 1) mastered foundational knowledge, 2) mastered requisite reasoning and problem-solving proficiencies, and 3) mastered specific production skills. Success lies in creating entities that possess certain key attributes which teachers have articulated or highlighted. These targets may also fall in the aesthetic dimensions.