

Teacher as Archaeologist

Assessing Background Knowledge

1. We used the analogy of an archeologist to explain the role of assessment in teaching. What metaphors would you use to describe it?
2. We described four determinants for differentiating between core and incidental knowledge: *representation* (Is it essential?), *transmission* (Can it be easily explained, or must it be taught?), *transferability* (Will it be used for future understanding?), and *endurance* (What will be remembered after the details are forgotten?). Use these four criteria to discuss examples of core and incidental background knowledge in your discipline.
3. What are the common misconceptions your students bring to your class? How do these misconceptions impede learning?
4. Describe your experiences with anticipation guides and opinionnaires. Why would it be helpful to include common misconceptions about a topic on such an instrument?
5. Why is it necessary to ask for a rationale or explanation from the student when administering an anticipation guide or opinionnaire?
6. How could you incorporate a cloze procedure into your classroom practice? What would you expect it to tell you about your students' background knowledge?
7. Which units of study do your students find the most interesting? Which are the least popular? Discuss how you might use an interest survey for the purposes of designing curriculum.