

ANALYZING A TEST ITEM - EXAMPLE

Battery Identification _____

Test Identification _____

Section Identification _____

Section Directions: Four answers are given for each exercises, but only one of these answers is right. You are to choose the answer that you think is better than the others.

Item: Which of these is a power reserved for the states in the United States Constitution?

- 1) *Printing money*
- 2) *Establishing schools*
- 3) *Signing treaties*
- 4) *Declaring war*

Step One

Considering the nature of the test and the section in which it is found, and the wording of the item, both stem and foils, what is the item really testing?

Although it should be possible for a student with a clear understanding of all other aspects of American life and history to reason through the consequences that would already have developed had 1, 3, or 4 been true, it is quite clear that this question is assessing student ability to recall information about provisions of the Constitution. Specifically, it assesses ability to recall information about the three categories of powers usually taught in American schools - reserved powers, delegated powers, and shared powers. Since the information is usually taught in exactly this form, it is not testing understanding of either the terms or the facts.

Step Two

Why is it important that the student possess this particular knowledge or be able to perform this specific operation?

The information is useful to students in school because it is a very common item on teacher made, State, and national standardized tests. If accompanied by understanding of the meaning of reserved powers it can help the person make intelligent decisions concerning such things as whom to hold responsible for or lobby about school conditions and the significance of various taxes paid. If accompanied by understanding of the reasoning behind the division and experience under the Constitution, the knowledge can help the person make intelligent decisions about maintaining or changing the Constitutional provisions.

Step Three

What discreet items of knowledge and information are needed?

Student Must Know**When, Where, and How Taught?**

- either that "Establishing Schools" is a reserved power" or that the other three are all delegated ones
- the meaning of "reserved powers" if they have not memorized the lists

Step Four

What specific skill-related operations are required?

Student Must Be Able To:**When, Where, and How Taught?**

- recall information already learned
- If not already learned, to:
- recall or infer meaning of reserved power
 - for each foil, infer the consequences that would, or would have resulted had it been reserved
 - recall information about conditions in the country past or present
 - identify similarities and differences between inferred consequences of each foil and recalled conditions
 - decide which case had the most similarity (or least difference)