

CTLT's Spring Semester 2006 Teaching Tip for February 22 ~ RUBRICS ~

As educators continue to delve into the teacher-guided, student-centered active learning classroom, we will continue to need tools to assist us in both the communication and assessment of our expectations or outcomes. Rubrics can serve as a means of communicating expectations of authentic tasks while doubling as a clear guide for both student and teacher during the actual creation and assessment of the final product.

What are rubrics?

Rubistar (<http://rubistar.4teachers.org>), a free, but priceless tool for educators to find, create or modify rubrics, defines rubrics as an instrument to:

“specify the level of performance expected for several levels of quality. These levels of quality may be written as descriptive ratings (e.g., Excellent, Good, Needs Improvement) or as numerical scores (e.g., 4, 3, 2, 1) which are then added up to form a total score associated with a grade (e.g., A, B, C, etc).

So why use a rubric? Rubrics can help students and teachers define "quality". For a teacher, it serves as a target for which the student should strive in order to obtain a good grade. The rubric lays out a teacher's expectations on what an exemplary project contains. For a student, rubrics offer a platform from which the student may begin his or her project. With a rubric as a guide, students receive clarity of the assignment and do not feel so overwhelmed by the massiveness of a given project.”

In short, rubrics:

- Are a time saver (once created – or use Rubistar)
- Reduce or eliminate guessing
- Aid in goal setting & achieving
- Aid in/simplifies evaluation/grading process
- Provide a structure or boundary without rigidity
- Allow students to organize their time and efforts

Another idea when implementing rubrics is to have the students help generate a rubric. This may sound strange, but including the student's perspective (with your guidance) broadens the scope of learning rather than narrowing it. Some benefits to students include increased:

- intrinsic motivation
- empowerment – allowing them to take (partial) control of their learning
- focus, allowing more self-directed and reflective opportunities

If you do choose to have students help create the rubric, also consider having them do a self-evaluation of themselves before submitting the project to you. This helps to reinforce self-evaluation and reflection as part of the learning process.

These links have some valuable information about including students in the process of rubric creation:

- http://web.utk.edu/~ssutton5/webquest/5rubrics/04_working/23_student.htm
- <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/teaching-methods/rubrics/4586.html>

Concerns

One common concern about the use of rubrics is that they are not an objective way to measure student learning. This, of course, is true, but consider that they should not be represented as an objective means for evaluation. There will always be some subjectivity in grading when it comes to creative and authentic tasks that don't have a clear "right or wrong" answer. But the alternative, to not use rubrics, perpetuates a lack of communication regarding expected learning outcomes and reliance on undefined subjectivity.

Steps in Rubric Development by Nancy Pickett & Bernie Dodge

(from: http://edweb.sdsu.edu/triton/july/Rubrics/Rubric_Guidelines.html)

1. Determine learning outcomes
2. Keep it short and simple (Include 4 - 15 items; use brief statements or phrases)
3. Each rubric item should focus on a different skill
4. Focus on how students develop and express their learning
5. Evaluate only measurable criteria
6. Ideally, the entire rubric should fit on one sheet of paper
7. Reevaluate the rubric (Did it work? Was it sufficiently detailed?)

Workshop on Rubrics

If you'd like to learn more about rubrics in person, the Center will be presenting a rubric workshop, "**Guiding Authentic Learning Experiences**", on April 18th from 5:30-7pm (pizza will be provided for participants).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON RUBRICS

BGSU's University Outcomes & Rubrics

Outcomes - <http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/assessment/Outcomes.htm>

Rubrics - <http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/assessment/Rubrics.htm>

Dept/Program Outcomes - <http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/assessment/MajorOutcomes.htm>

Articles / White Papers –

Relearning by Design, Inc. – A good PDF article about rubrics and their development/creation

http://www.relearning.org/resources/PDF/rubric_sampler.pdf

Rubric Use and Development – contains action or "instruction verbs" for different levels of thinking (Bloom's Taxonomy) and descriptors for weaker or stronger performance levels

http://www.mid.muohio.edu/ctl/docs/Rubric_Development.pdf

Using Rubrics to Promote Thinking and Learning

http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/PDFS/coho103/using_rubrics.pdf

Instant Feedback In The Classroom by Bruce Upbin

<http://kancrn.kckps.k12.ks.us/Harmon/breighm/pbrub.html>

A GREAT detailed tutorial for rubrics (includes examples & a "rubric for rubrics"):

<http://web.utk.edu/~ssutton5/webquest/5rubrics/rubrics.htm>