

DATE: March 9, 2010

English Roundtable Web Chat on: Using Rubrics to Support Teaching and Learning

ABSTRACT:

Evaluating students' assignments, providing feedback to their performances, explaining expectations of students' goals, are what teachers constantly do. We hope to interpret students' learning in a fair and effective way. We also want our students to learn to monitor their own learning and to reach higher level of achievements. Rubrics are a critical component of assessments used to evaluate students' learning and to assign grades, such as authentic assessment tasks.

Discussion points include:

- What are rubrics?
- What are some types and features of rubrics?
- In what ways can teachers and learners use rubrics and how may rubrics benefit learning and teaching?
- How can teachers design rubrics and what are some common problems of first-draft rubrics?

TRANSCRIPT

Wang Ping: A rubric also saves the teacher a lot of time and trouble and make the assessment and evaluation of tasks/performances consistent if used wisely.

Huong: and during the process, teacher and students can negotiate the rubrics if the rubric doesnot really fit

lucy: so the teacher has to have the criteria in advance?

Damon Anderson: That is exactly right Lucy.

Damon Anderson: Shall I make the chat box bigger and the ppt smaller?

Huong: I think that when teacher has an assignment in mind, they should compose the rubric as well

Tony : Please

Wendy Ashby: It is a very important part of lesson planning - to set your evaluation goals first and then decide how you will know if the students have performed adequately or not.

Huong: yes, Damon

Phanisara: I see a rubric to be more of the performance based assessment.

Damon Anderson: Nina, if you are using an alternative assessment, you should have a rubric for how to evaluate the students' work.

Wendy Ashby: Has anybody used rubrics for helping students through a process like writing an essay for example?

Wang Ping: Damon, please make the chat pod bigger. thanks!

Huong: I agree

Wendy Ashby: ditto :-)

anirut chumsawat 2: Yes Wendy, the teacher should set up the main objective of the lesson and assess exact objective of that lesson.

Huong: I have one rubric that I have made for my presentation class. Can I share it here?

Damon Anderson: Rubrics are good for any process or project work in a class, whether it is group based or individual.

Damon Anderson: Huong, unfortunately we cannot share your file in this chat at this moment. But you could email it to Ping and we could put it up with the transcript.

Wendy Ashby: i also think that rubrics can be a teaching tool. when my composition students could see how i was grading, it also helped them understand what was most important in a finished product and helped them learn that some things like organization were more important to focus on than smaller things like punctuation

Huong: rubrics are definitely good, but i find it so time-consuming to make

Huong: teachers really have to put in lots of consideration

Damon Anderson: Huong, there are many tools out there to help you design good rubrics. Ping has put links to a couple at the end of the ppt.

Huong: yes, Damon

Wendy Ashby: once you put in that time, they end up saving you a lot of time later though. i always worked hard to get rubrics set up because they paid off so well for me and my students in later semesters

Huong: oh really, thanks Ping and Damon

Damon Anderson: Actually, good teachers design their assessment criteria before they give the students an assignment. A rubric is more of a methodical way to articulate that to everyone concerned.

Huong: Wendy, if possible, could please share with us one sample of your rubrics after this discussion

Wang Ping: Huong, here's one of the links in case you don't have it yet: <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>

Wendy Ashby: Sure Huong - i'd be happy to do that offline :-)

Huong: thanks Wendy

Damon Anderson: If you look at the ppt (click on full screen to see it then click again on full screen to minimize it) you will see a couple of different types of rubrics that Ping has put up for you.

Huong: I see the link work, thanks Ping

anirut chumsawat 2: If the teachers assess the tasks using rubrics, it is great! but some teachers still have difficulties to design it. I think the website above is great to have it as a guideline in designing it.

Wang Ping: Huong, good to know that you are using rubrics already. It helps too when you share how you have felt about it. As far as I know, not many teachers from China are very familiar with it or use it regularly in their classroom.

Damon Anderson: Just make a simple table with your rating criteria and the points and state beside each criteria and under the score what the student must do to achieve that particular score for that criteria point.

lucy: I shall try later. Thanks

Damon Anderson: I have shared this in a couple of workshops with teachers in China. At first they thought it would be too much trouble to make the rubrics. After trying it, they loved it and stated that they were getting better work from their students. They said that the students loved having the rubrics to guide them.

Tony : I like to use rubrics formatively to assess and guide the students and summatively to evaluate their performance with consistency. I think the idea of consistency is a very important part of rubric understanding.

anirut chumsawat 2: Ping, do u have another website concerning rubrics for english teachers to adapt for their lessons?

Phanisara: I agree Ajarn Anirut, this will help the Thai teachers to start on how to design a rubric.

Huong: Ping, it's the same in VN, not common to use rubrics, I just do it in my class

Wang Ping: There are also resources out there to guide people through designing their own rubrics. One of the first things is to analyze the task/performance and come up with the dimensions/parameters to put into the rubrics.

Huong: I hope it will become a norm, then all teachers can discuss and share the workload of writing a comprehensive rubric

Wendy Ashby: I think rubrics are a natural product of thinking about the question "What should my students demonstrate at the end of this lesson/project?" and "How will I know if they got it or not?" I think that setting out to design THE RUBRIC is very intimidating and that is why teachers feel overwhelmed by it.

Damon Anderson: Excellent questions, Wendy.

Phanisara: Rubric helps teachers to be proactive in their teaching approach.

Damon Anderson: That is so true, Nina.

Wang Ping: here's another link: <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/assess.html>irut chumsawat 2:

Wang Ping: i'm sorry, anirut chumsawat, didn't get your name right.

Damon Anderson: I have seen rubrics not only help students, but I have seen teachers actually become better teachers because rubrics help them to articulate their goals better and help them to focus in class on what is important.

Wendy Ashby: I was just thinking that there is a strong link between the use of rubrics and preferred teaching methods in various countries. Rubrics become necessary as we move from closed ended to more open ended language teaching activities. Moving from right/wrong answers to more open ended ones creates a need to assign a number to something that is not pre-quantified. I think as more teachers begin to see the benefits of proficiency oriented language teaching, their understanding of a need for rubrics grows too.

anirut chumsawat 2: Yes, AnirutThank you Ping. I will show this website for training english teachers in Thailand.esp in Nakhon Si Thammarat, South of Thailand.

Wang Ping: Try again: <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/assess.html>

Damon Anderson: We will put the ppt on our web site so you can download it and use it.

Tony : How could we design a rubric that honors student improvement?

Phanisara: Very well put, Wendy.

Damon Anderson: Tony, that would be a holistic rubric, I believe, that assess achievement over a course or over time.

Phanisara: Good idea, Aj. Anirut. May be I can join you....

HUYNH THI NHI: Thank Damon

Wang Ping: Tony, what about a longitudinal rubric that measures progress over time toward mastery of educational objectives and enable us to assess developmental change. Any ideas?

Phanisara: so can a holistic rubric become a "letter" grade?

anirut chumsawat 2: Excellent Nina. Assessment using rubrics is so important for helping students' learning. Our teachers do not use much. you and I can help them learn more. Thank so much Nina.

Wang Ping: Anirut and Nina, let us know how it goes. Chinese teachers will benefit from the same kind of training.

Damon Anderson: Tony, to add to my answer, you might have something like the four skills as the points to measure and then assign a 5 point scale for each. For writing for example, you might have 1 (no improvement) 2 (shows minimal improvement, but only in mechanics) 3 (shows improvement in more than two areas) 4 (shows significant improvement in 3 or more areas) 5 (shows outstanding improvement in all areas of writing)

Phanisara: Maybe the longitudinal rubric that would need to be reevaluated along the way and make adjustments to the criteria.

Damon Anderson: You can always make adjustments, Nina, but be careful to make them before the fact and not after the fact.

Tony : Damon/WangPing: Great ideas! I have established initial reviews built into my rubric which has space for subsequent reviews when the improvement is not adequate to advance the student to the next level of competency.

Damon Anderson: Can you elaborate on that great point Tony?

Wang Ping: Tony, are you talking about an oral English class? or using reviews as part of the assessment?

Phanisara: Tony, do you refer to the "longitudinal" kind of rubric, right?

Tony : Damon: For example, a teacher could place pluses (+) in the rubric columns and show them to the students, hopefully maintaining the student's motivation toward continued improvement.

Wang Ping: I have a question for those of you who acutrally designed a rubric. how do you decide on mid-point, the point at which students pass or fail?

Wendy Ashby: Hi Tony - just reviewing the chat and I really like that idea. It is so important for students to be able to externalize an entire process and not just the end product. It really adds to the concept of student centered learning and student empowerment.

Phanisara: Can rubric be re-use year after year with different group of students? Or we should make adjustments along the way--at the start of the new semester?

Damon Anderson: Tony, that is great. Thanks.

Damon Anderson: Nina, yes a rubric can be used more than once. But the teacher should always make sure that it is still appropriate for the current group of students.

anirut chumsawat 2: Nina, i think it depends on the group of the students. We can adjust to suit them.

Wendy Ashby: Hmm - I don't always assign a failure at midpoint. Basically I start at the minimum to pass (the low point). Then I add the nuances or degrees that make the performance more than minimum on up until the descriptions represent an outstanding performance that goes above and beyond.

Huong: Ping: I often decide of the best level first, then lower the scale. As we use 10-scale in marking, mark 5 will be pass. But to encourage students, I only make the rubric from point 7 upward...

Damon Anderson: I agree with Wendy. The lowest point does not have to be failing. It can just be what is minimally required.

Phanisara: Thank you K. Damon and Aj. Anirut.

Wendy Ashby: Nina - I usually find that my first rubric shows me the flaws of the design and where it does not address aspects that keep coming up during the grading process. Usually after two or three times, I have a product that i can use with very little adjustment.

Wang Ping: Wendy and Huong, I can see both of you are encouraging as teachers. Good for your students.

Phanisara: Makes sense Wendy, thanks.

Phanisara: "failing" never sounds good.

Huong: Same for me Wendy, when I see my students make group presentation, for example, I may realize that one or two points in my rubric is not really appropriate

lucy: I can see that by using the rubrics teachers will pay a lot to be responsible for their students.

Huong: Then I can make negotiation to tailor the rubric a bit along the semester

Damon Anderson: You can even negotiate with the students to adjust the rubrics. If student have input into the rubric, they are more likely to understand it and work with it.

Wendy Ashby: I always find it helpful to not only include the descriptors on a rubric, but to also provide sample benchmarks. Then students can see what a 1 or 2 or 3 paper or presentation actually looks like. It helps them orient themselves and also works toward the kind of student improvement recording that Tony was addressing.

Damon Anderson: Wendy, sometimes here in China when you give samples, those are copied and all students use those in their work. how do you keep them from doing that?

Wang Ping: how detailed should the nuances be between each point? What if teachers find one student caught between two points? Do you assign half point?

Tony : Question for all: How important do you think it is to accommodate both visual and linguistic learning styles in the development of your rubric?

Wendy Ashby: Well, I do confess that I have not tried this in China yet? It has happened to me in the US as well - in which context I state very clearly that if I see the examples recycled in the work, it is an automatic F for plagiarism. I guess things can be copied from many different sources and that should not keep us from providing those benchmarks to the extent possible. Just out of curiosity, what would the non-American teachers do with students who copied the samples?

Damon Anderson: Ping, it depends on the criteria and what you are measuring. Sometimes yes, other times no.

Damon Anderson: We only have a couple of minutes left. time flies!!!! What topic would you like to discuss in our next web chat?

jane: my Thai university is giving F's for documentable plagiarism

Wang Ping: Thank you Damon. I was thinking to what an extend shall we ensure there's a continuum along the scale. I guess it doesn't have to be that strict.

Wendy Ashby: Ping - I often assign half points - especially on a rubric with multiple grading points and one that is linked to a percentage equals grade scale. If a student got two half points on a holistic assignment with several criteria, that makes a whole point and that could make a difference in the grade. However, if my overall impression of the performance does not seem to square with the grade, then I will withhold as well. I think I just outed myself in public regarding the subjectivity of grading, but I do think we need to admit that it is not a precise science.

Damon Anderson: But for many students, if the teacher gives them a sample, they don't always see how using that with minor changes is plagiarism.

Phanisara: Good for you jane.

Wendy Ashby: Tony - very important!

Phanisara: Time to go already..?

Wendy Ashby: Another topic to be addressed = perhaps in the next chat?

Wang Ping: Wendy, thanks! I would probably do the same thing.

Damon Anderson: I don't understand your topic suggestion, Wendy. Do you mean equality as in fairness?

Wendy Ashby: I mean what is plagiarism and how to address it in culturally sensitive but academically appropriate ways.

Damon Anderson: Plagiarism would be a good topic. Does everyone like that topic?

Tony : Damon: Maybe error correction and teacher feedback...

Damon Anderson: Tony, those are great topics too!

Wendy Ashby: both sound great

Wang Ping: Good! Thank you for the suggestion. Our next one will be on Tuesday April 13rd.

Tony: Thanks for a great hour!

Nguyen Thanh Tu: I like two topics

Damon Anderson: We have to pick just one topic, however.

lucy: Glad to be here

Wendy Ashby: shall we flip a coin? :-)

susu: sorry, it is too late to join you. This is a great topic, I like that

Damon Anderson: Susu, you can read the transcript later.

Huong: thank you very much for all information you share

Huong: thank you and 'see' you next time

Huong: :-)

Damon Anderson: Have a great class, Huong.

Wang Ping: Thank you Huong see you next time!

Damon Anderson: How about if we do Teacher Feedback in our next chat?

susu: Thank you, Damon. I have used rubrics sometimes to check students' projects. It worked well

Kim Hong: Can I know what school you are working for, Huong?

lucy: thank Ping for your information

Wang Ping: Lucy, thank you for joining us today. Hope to see you next time!

Wendy Ashby: I think teacher feedback is a broader and potentially more interesting topic

Huong: Hong, I am an English teacher in Foreign Trade Uni - Hanoi, Vietnam

anirut chumsawat 2: thank you so much. It is valuable activity to share with you all.

Kim Hong: oh, it's great

Wang Ping: Wendy, I like the plagiarism and cultural sensitivity one :)

Wendy Ashby: there are other chats to come :-)

Damon Anderson: I think that feedback is also very culturally sensitive.

Wendy Ashby: depends who's giving it - ha ha

HUYNH THI NHI: I agree with Damon

Wendy Ashby: Thanks Damon and Wang Ping - it's always interesting to log on. See you next time!!

Damon Anderson: Thank you all so much for joining us today. It was an excellent chat. We will see you the second Tuesday in April (April 13) at the same time.

susu: It seems that VN teachers tend to give direct feed back to sts and it does not work everytime

Mai khanh: I used rubrics for writing assessment.

Damon Anderson: We will decide on the topic and let you know soon. Check this chat room to see what the topic will be.

susu: plagiarism would be a good topic

Damon Anderson: Thank you, everyone. Have a good evening and see you April 13th.