MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT RUBRICS

Confusing Learning Outcomes with Tasks

Rubrics are not assignment directions. The biggest mistake teachers make…is that they focus on the task, the product, and not the learning outcome the task is supposed to get the students to demonstrate. The students really will think that what you ask them to do exemplifies what you want them to learn. (This) cheats students out of learning opportunities and out of opportunities to conceptualize what it is that they’re supposed to be learning. Task-based criteria do not yield the kind of information you and your students need to support future learning. Instead they yield information about what was done and they stop the action. The task, after all, is completed. The resulting information is more about work habits, following directions, and being a “good student” than it is about learning. The opportunity to foster and then gauge learning is missed.

*This is* ***not*** *a Rubric. It is a Task List.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Fantasy Board Game Project*  | Yes | No |
| *3 drafts of Planning Sheet for board game completed and glued in journal* |  |  |
| *Color Schema Brainstorm Sheet completed and glued into journal* |  |  |
| *Buddy Critique feedback recorded in journal*  |  |  |
| *Rough Draft Mock Up of game board* |  |  |
| *2 drafts of clay game pieces*  |  |  |
| *Final board game*  |  |  |

Confusing Rubrics with Requirements or Quantity

Rubrics are not about the requirement for the assignment, nor are they about counting things. A poor use of rubrics is to codify the directions for an assignment into a chart that lists the features of the task and the number or kind of required elements for each feature. It is seductive because it works, in the short run, to produce compliant students who complete their assignments for the purpose of getting the grade they want.

*Fantasy Board Game Project : A* ***Weak*** *Rubric based on Counting*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| *Ideas* | *The board game includes at least 6 magical spells.* | *The board game includes 4-5 magical spells.* | *The board game includes 2-3magical spells.* | *The board game includes 1 magical spell.* |
| *Visual Theme* | *The graphics show more than 6 visuals related to the concept of the fantasy.* | *The graphics show more than 3 visuals related to the concept of the fantasy.* | *The graphics show less than 3 visuals related to the concept of the fantasy.* | *The graphics show no visuals related to the concept of the fantasy.* |
| *Design Basics* | *The board game uses all of the principles of design in its layout.* | *The board game uses 4-5 principles of design in its layout.* | *The board game uses 2-3 of the principles of design in its layout.* | *The board game does not use any principles of design in its layout.* |

“Creativity” and “Originality” are not Learning Outcomes

*These are vague goals that don’t describe anything concrete. When you are tempted to use these words in a rubric, go back to Brookhart’s Assessing Creativity Rubric and identify specifically what actions are producing creative work. Be specific. Then write in those actions. You can also use the* ***Studio Habits*** *(Hetland) for specific descriptions of what learning habits produce creativity and originality in students.*

“Behavior” and “Attitude” are not Learning Outcomes

*Keep character evaluations out of your project rubrics. Create a different assessment tool for these categories. Behavior does influence the quality of art making and thinking, but it needs to be assessed separately throughout the year. If your administration asks to evaluate behavioral traits within an art project then go to Lois Hetland’s studio habits. “Engage and persist” and “Stretch and Explore” are about character, but are also deeply connected to making art. fyi, Usually when a student is disengaged, it has to do with the curriculum and instruction, so take a close look at your own practice before you get out the extrinsic punishment and rewards “bean jar” and “gold star” systems.*

A Good Model: A Learning Outcome Rubric Example:

*This is a rubric with Learning Outcomes for the “Planning” aspect of board game project.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Fantasy Board Game Project**Learning Outcomes* | *Beginning* | *Developing* | *Accomplished* | *Exemplary* |
| *Create diverse concepts and synthesize them into a coherent structure.* |  |  | *Planning Sheet Drafts show a progression from unrelated or loosely connected concepts for the board to a coherent theme.* |  |
| *Incorporate ideas inspired from another artist’s work.* |  |  | *Planning Sheet Drafts shows a reflection or questions on artist/artists.* |  |
| *Incorporate feedback from others into your own ideas for your work.* |  |  | *Draft/s incorporate a response to warm or cool feedback from your peers.*  |  |

*Unlike the author, Susan Brookhart, I only write the learning criteria down in the accomplished column. If a student goes above and beyond this I handwrite why in “exemplary.” If a student does not meet the criteria, I handwrite why in “beginning” or “developing.” This is because I found that I could never anticipate exactly how students would not meet or how they would exceed my expectations. They ALWAYS surprised me. Guessing what they might do wrong was a waste of my time. So how can students know what they shouldn’t do? I found that analyzing “weak models” ahead of time alongside “strong models” with students, observing and conferring with students carefully as they worked, and maintaining conversation about criteria through daily instruction, provided enough description for students to know what not to do. However, if you would like examples on how to write more descriptions in your rubrics, get Susan Brookhart’s book (in heading).*