

Pam Stephens

It's a rare circumstance when art teachers have abundant time to devote to thoughtful assessment processes; yet, without quality assessment, art programs and the students enrolled in them suffer. One way to address the issue of assessment is through the use of rubrics.

What Is a rubric?

In the simplest of terms, a rubric is a scoring guide. Rubrics can be analytic or holistic. Analytic rubrics delineate and measure parts of a finished product, while holistic rubrics look at the work as a whole. Most art teachers choose to use analytic rubrics in their classrooms.

The Importance of Rubrics

There are many valid reasons for incorporating rubrics in art programs. Here are three:

- An art teacher is far more likely to ask students to create an artwork than to give a true-false quiz about technique. Demonstrating knowledge and skills by doing provides opportunities for each student to produce a unique response. Rubrics provide a road map of sorts to assess with fairness and ease.
- When specified criteria and parameters for achievement are clearly spelled out beforehand, students know exactly what constitutes excellence.
- Students develop ownership of their learning when they are included in the assessment process. Rubrics assist students with setting realistic goals, assessing work in progress, and reflecting on outcomes.

Designing an Analytic Rubric

Analytic rubric construction is a matrix of columns and rows. Most word processing programs can be readily used to design a matrix template.

The best rubrics foster awareness, provide a climate of fairness and flexibility, and encourage students to be responsible for their learning.

1. To begin, determine the number of columns and rows that you will need (see model at schoolartsonline.com). The number of rows will depend on how many objectives or characteristics you wish to address.
2. The left-hand column is for the stated objectives; one per row.
3. The right-hand column is used to calculate scores.
4. The middle columns are used for designating levels of performance and for descriptors of each performance level.
5. Choose a ratings scale for the level of performance and use these ratings as headings for the middle columns of descriptors.

Using three values for the ratings scale is often the best approach. A frequently used three-value scale is Below Expectations, Meets Expectations, and Exceeds Expectations. Using a scale with only two values (while technically being a rubric) is little more than a checklist that determines if a student did or did not complete a task. When using more than three values, the slight differences from value to value are sometimes too subtle to be necessary.

6. Under each heading, clearly articulate what criteria are required to

earn that particular rating. If a certain objective is more important than others, weight the score for that objective to reflect the importance. To weight the score, multiply the score for that objective by two or more.

Online Rubric Generators

Perhaps one of the most robust online rubric generators is Rubistar (rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php). As registered users, teachers can create, save, and edit rubrics online.

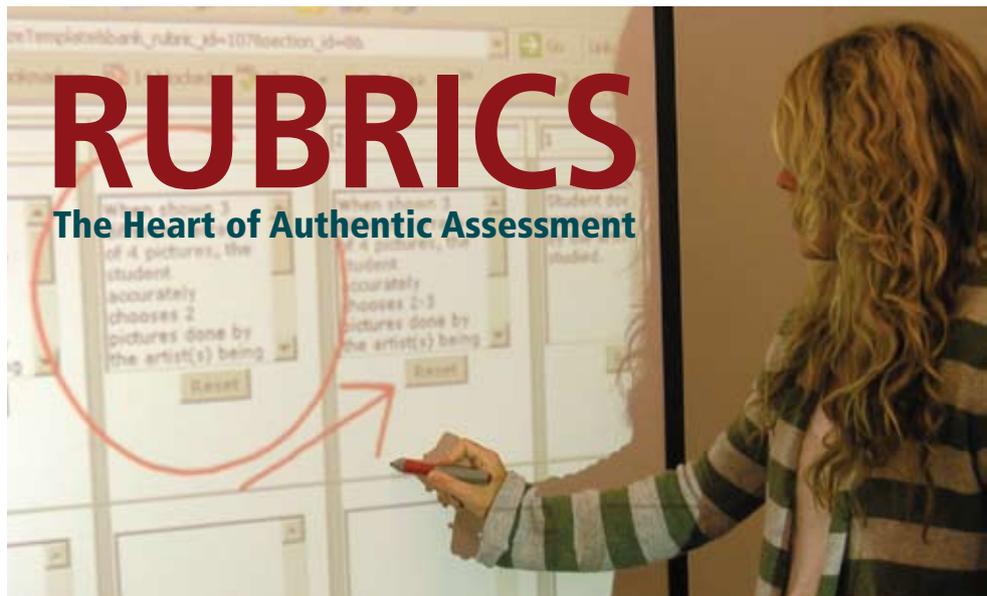
The Best Rubrics

No matter what type of assessment rubric you choose, the best rubrics foster awareness, provide a climate of fairness and flexibility, and encourage students to be responsible for their personal learning. 

WEB LINKS

An online search of the phrase "holistic rubric" will provide multiple examples to use as models. Likewise, a search of "analytic rubric" will return multiple examples and online rubric generators.

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Chelsea, a student in a teacher prep program, learns to use an online rubric generator.