

Plenary Session – Mullinix
Friday, July 10, 2009

Dr. Mullinix introduced the session plan and outlined how those activities would involve the participants.

Definition of Rubrics

Components of the definition were offered by the audience

- Criteria
- Assignment aspects
- Multi-dimensional
- Level of performance
- Learner/instructor partnership

A definition from Dr. Mullinix and several definitions from others were offered so that similarities could be noted.

Rubric of Rubrics Puzzle and Discussion

The puzzle pieces containing the matrix pieces of a “rubric for rubrics” was presented and co-constructed in groups at table around the room. Following this activity, the actual form of the rubric as used by Dr. Mullinix was consulted and differences from the construction of the rubric by each team were noted and discussed in the group at large.

Items discussed relating the rubric were as follows:

- Order of criteria on a rubric
 - Most important to least important is a common way
 - Simple to complex is another common way
- Order of levels on a rubric
 - Put low to high or high to low?
 - High next to the criteria on the left is a great way to motivate and inspire students. It also aligned with the way we create rubrics
 - Low next the criteria on the left may be better for rubrics used over long periods of time such that students can track their growth.
 - Low to high may reduce overscoring tendencies by raters
- Wording of descriptors for criteria at each level
 - Clarity here is difficult when criteria for the rubric are closely related to each other
- Number of levels to include in a rubric
 - Even number of choices forces raters away from using the middle when it's hard to decide
 - Odd numbers often result in overuse of the middle choice
 - 7 or more categories usually results in too much information to process
- Purposes for using rubrics
 - Instructor check on alignment of course goals/outcomes and assignment details
 - Students take ownership of the work and clearly understand expectations

- Students are given a vision of what can be achieved that is not effort-based but performance based (unless effort is an inherent criteria for achievement, in which case it would appear on the rubric)
- Scoring with a rubric that has discrete categories to look at in-between performances
 - A rubric with four levels does not mean a student must get either a 3 or 4, for example. They may get a 3.8 because they display elements of both levels
 - Too much gradation among levels may be difficult when attempting to use the rubric among multiple raters.

Rubric Types

A brief introduction to different types of rubrics was offered and links to examples presented.

Why Use Rubrics

Reasons to use rubrics were offered by the audience and followed with a list from the speaker that was present in the conference binder materials.

Audience offerings:

- Transparency
- Measure
- Fairness (students don't argue about their grades)
- Formative growth
- Elevates conversation about assignments
- Focuses conversation on performance and objective criteria which underlie it