

Foreword

Do you find it difficult covering all the required material for each subject? Do you struggle with trying to grade assignments quickly, objectively, and accurately? These are challenges we, as teachers, face daily. We are expected to expand our curriculum year after year, as well as provide a deeper analysis of students' work. As these tasks become increasingly arduous, we must seek out more efficient and effective methods to accomplish these duties. The demands on educators grow while the time to get the job done remains the same. Teachers want to assess their students accurately and communicate this to them in a positive and productive manner. The rubric program that Laura and Ellen Flynn have developed in their classrooms offers teachers assistance in these areas.

During the years Laura and Ellen were developing this system with their fifth-grade students, they shared their ideas with me. I saw writing assignments and projects from their students that were of a higher quality and deeper thinking level than my students were producing. I quickly put the rubrics to use in my own fifth-grade class. The components this system provided that stood out immediately to me were student accountability, parent communication, public criteria of my expectations, quick and objective grading, and a detailed report and analysis of student work. As I continued the use of this system, I found my students were also producing higher-quality and more thoughtful work as well.

I also found that one assignment could provide assessment for more than one subject. For instance, we could work on language arts and social studies through the same assignment as my students wrote a paper on a Native American group. Through the rubrics they would produce projects and present them to the class as I assessed their speaking and listening skills along with the science, social studies, or reading subject they were covering. I could grade more than one skill right then and provide immediate feedback to my students. This quick, outlined assessment was more effective and my students improved more quickly. The rubrics helped provide further instruction for them because they break down the tasks into smaller chunks that are less daunting. It was interesting that science and social studies concepts were being incorporated into their creative writing as well. Another distinguishing factor of this system is that it fit into my teaching style and situation without much alteration. I adapted their ideas easily and quickly to the needs of my students.

X TEACHING WRITING WITH RUBRICS

A personal goal I have as an educator is to help students become more involved in their own education and to be able to assess their own assignments. This rubric system lays the groundwork for students to be able to take more responsibility for their own work. This helps them to grow socially as well as academically.

Laura and Ellen Flynn have very organized programs and environments. Their students remain on task and develop into independent learners. They involve parents effectively. I have seen their interaction with students and parents. Their program is student centered, they know what students need, and the parents show great appreciation for their work. This book is a reflection of their knowledge and experience. Using their ideas for organization and grading lightened my load as a teacher. It also helped me become a better teacher. I am grateful for the time and concern they gave to me. I highly recommend this program!

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