

Contents

New to This Edition	v
About the Author	vii
Introduction	1
1. Target the Standards	13
2. Find the Big Ideas	23
3. Organise Teacher Checklists	35
4. Create Performance Tasks	57
5. Develop Student Checklists	87
6. Design Teaching Rubrics	111
7. Final Thoughts	137
Resources	
A. Rhyming Rodeo: Foundation Rhyming Unit	139
B. Wanted! A New Restaurant: Year Two Money Unit	147
C. Year Three Is Off Its Rocker: Unit on Homophones and Homographs	155
D. Man Overboard! Year Four Social Studies Unit	161
E. Spring Festival FUNds: Year Five Maths Unit on Decimals	171
F. Happy Graduation Day, Class of 2020! Year Six Unit on Direct Proportion	181
G. What Do Lizards Drink? Year Eight Science Unit	191
H. Eating Internationally! A Food and Culture Unit: Years 9–12	201
References	209

New to This Edition

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State, national and international standards have emerged as the driving force in education behind the development of curriculum, the differentiation of instruction, and the creation of valid formative and summative assessments. The language of the standards (LOTS) that includes enduring concepts, important people, key events and critical skills needs to be embedded in all aspects of teaching and learning in order to improve student achievement and prepare students for success in the 21st century. In addition to 20 new examples threaded throughout the book from the areas of English, reading, mathematics, science, history, foreign language, food and family courses, drama and technology, there are more secondary examples geared to middle and senior years students. The all-new Resource Section at the end of the book contains original Performance Task Units (standards, big ideas, essential questions, task scenario, group and individual checklists, and rubrics) ranging from a Foundation Unit on Rhyming Words to a Middle Years Unit on the Nature of Matter.

The research in the new edition has been updated to focus on the ongoing use of formative assessments that provide specific feedback to students related to their educational goals on a minute-to-minute, hour-to-hour and day-to-day basis. The feedback helps teachers decide in real time how to differentiate their instruction to meet the diverse needs of their students. Revised throughout with current research from Popham, Guskey, Marzano, Stiggins, DuFour, Wiliam and others, this new edition will help F–12 teachers

- Learn how the LOTS varies for each system, thereby requiring the creation of customised assessments correlated to the standards;
- Work in a year-level or vertical team to develop *common assessments* that target the power standards and provide consistent and reliable evaluation of student work throughout a school, area or system;
- Develop more complex performance tasks and performance task units that require students to develop 21st-century skills such as working collaboratively and independently to solve problems, conducting research and investigations, collecting and analysing data, and drawing conclusions;

- Assess students in their effective use of technology, multiple forms of communication (oral, written and digital), and cognitive and affective skills required for success in school and life;
- Examine student work using rigorous and relevant checklists and rubrics that provide specific feedback targeted to individual learning goals;
- Foster the self-assessment process so students learn how to monitor and improve their own performances based upon rigorous criteria for quality.

Standards drive instruction in the 21st century, and this third edition of *From Standards to Rubrics in Six Steps: Tools for Assessing Student Learning*, provides the process and sample F–12 products to guide teachers towards a standards-based teaching approach that motivates students to learn and improves their academic achievement.

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Introduction

Authenticity is the curriculum goal in which we help students acquire real-world skills and knowledge by developing their abilities to read, write, solve problems, and apply concepts in a manner that prepares them for their lives beyond school.

– Strong, Silver and Perini (2001, pp. 96–97)

DEFINITION ■

Authentic learning focuses on what is real. The word *authentic* comes from the Greek word *autarkos*, meaning self-originating. Strong, Silver and Perini (2001) describe how the word was transformed by Rousseau and later by Heidegger and Sartre into the emblem for the fullness of being. Authenticity to the philosophers meant a life lived without falsehoods, built upon a genuine and ever-expanding knowledge of the world and oneself. Strong, Silver and Perini believe that “by placing a premium on authenticity in education, someone was obviously attempting to think differently about education, to consider fully the question of how school and life are interrelated” (p. 94). Relevance becomes an essential motivator for students of all ages. Students search for ways to connect their schoolwork to their own lives in order to find value in education beyond marks, grades, credits and standardised test scores.

RATIONALE ■

When students try to solve real-life problems, they see the relevance of schoolwork and are more likely to transfer the content and skills they learn in class by applying them to real problems or challenges. When students write letters to city council members supporting a ban on smoking in public places, they have not only a purpose for writing but also a purpose for using letter-writing skills. When students organise an orientation program to welcome new students to their school, they integrate problem-solving skills, writing skills, technology skills and interpersonal skills in order to complete an authentic project. They understand why one has to utilise a variety of interrelated skills from different subject areas to accomplish the task of welcoming new students to their school.

If schoolwork is authentic and relevant, students engage in their learning and become active participants in the class.

■ RESEARCH

Authentic learning with its rich open-ended projects, performances, portfolios and problem-solving tasks necessitates the need to develop authentic assessments to measure progress toward meeting the goals. Traditional multiple-choice tests that include only restricted and extended response items are limited when it comes to assessing open-ended, subjective or creative work. Assessment, moreover, differs from evaluation. Evaluation is viewed as the summative measure of how much content a student has retained. It is most often used for grouping students and for assigning final marks. Assessment, on the other hand, requires the ongoing gathering of information that provides valuable insight to the teacher about how to guide and re-adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Costa and Kallick (2004a) believe assessment should be neither summative nor punitive. They believe instead that assessment is a mechanism for providing ongoing feedback to the learner and to the organisation as a necessary part of the spiralling processes of continuous renewal: self-managing, self-monitoring and self-modifying. They believe students need to take ownership of their learning. When teachers provide students with tools such as study questions, graphic organisers, checklists and rubrics, the students become empowered to take the lead in self-assessing and self-modifying their work. As Costa and Kallick state:

We must constantly remind ourselves that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to have students learn to become self-evaluative. If students graduate from our schools still dependent upon others to tell them when they are adequate, good or excellent, then we've missed the whole point of what self-directed learning is about. (p. 117)

Jerald (2001) did an analysis of high-flying schools where students succeeded despite socioeconomic differences. His analysis showed that schools that were successful despite disadvantages had seven characteristics in common. The majority of the characteristics deal with standards, assessment and appropriate professional development. One characteristic is the importance of using relevant standards to not only design curriculum and instruction but also assess student work. Another key characteristic is the importance of using assessments to help guide instruction. Stiggins (2002) discusses how assessment, over the past five decades, has evolved into a new belief system. The public's perception of assessment focuses on school improvement that includes higher achievement standards, rigorous assessments and the expectation of accountability on the part of educators for student achievement, as reflected in test scores. Stiggins says that the public relies on "high-stakes assessments of learning to inform our decisions about accountability. These tests tell us how much students have learned, whether standards are being met, and whether educators have done the job they were hired to do" (p. 759).

Target the Standards

Research repeatedly stresses the importance of collaboration within school environments and supports strong links between a sense of cooperative community and positive effect on schooling.

– Conzemius and O’Neill (2001, p. 67)

DEFINITION ■

Targeting the standards is the process whereby teams of teachers target their relevant standards and work either individually or as a team to design syllabus, implement differentiated instructional strategies and develop assessments to meet those standards. Each country has developed its own standards and benchmarks from which they create their high-stakes standardised tests that determine whether or not students have met or exceeded the standards and can move to the next year or graduate. The movement towards the Common Core Standards by 48 states in the USA, for instance, indicates “genuine political will to move away from disparate standards across the country. The bottom line? [P–12] public education is as close as it has ever been to saying every high school graduate must be college ready” (Phillips & Wong, 2010, p. 37). Similarly, having a national curriculum in Australia will allow states to share what works but allow flexibility to decide how best to teach the standards. It will also ensure that the standards are coherent by having minimal repetition and having the big ideas that thread the content together. Moreover, Phillips and Wong talk about the importance of making sure the standards are “aligned to assessments, and use formative assessments to determine proficiency. Higher does not mean piling on content. Rather, it means being able to apply learning, to transfer learning from one context to another, and to measure up to international standards” (p. 39). The high-quality assessments correlated to the Australian Curriculum will become a critical resource for teachers’ capacities to prepare students for university-level work. Whether teachers focus on state standards, the National Curriculum standards or international standards, the important concept is that

Teachers then make a vocabulary list of key terms that students will need to know in order to fully understand the standard. The vocabulary list includes nouns and verbs in the standard, key people or events, and definitions of thinking skills needed to understand the big ideas. This list could be taken from a standards glossary or it could be developed from the definitions in the textbooks. It will also be important, however, to list several words as synonyms on the checklist to make sure that students will recognise words from their textbook and from the standards. For example, teachers should list “main character and protagonist”; “lead, motivator and hook”; “circle graph and pie graph”; and “thesis statement”, “main idea” and “focus statement” just to make sure students know that the terms mean basically the same thing.

■ RESEARCH

Guskey (2001) describes how teachers differentiate the types of criteria they use into three categories: product, process and progress. The product criteria relate to students’ specific achievement or levels of performance. They describe what students know and are able to do at that particular point in time. Guskey also discusses how teachers using product criteria base students’ marks on final products such as projects, performances, reports or portfolios as culminating demonstrations of learning. He also states that advocates of standards favour product criteria because they show objectively whether or not a student meets the standards, regardless of process or effort. They provide a truer picture of competency and eliminate problems with mark inflation that sometimes accompany marking for process or progress. Basically, the mark is based solely on the final product and whether or not that product meets the criteria for quality work. Using product criteria to assess student work is closely aligned to the traditional assessment method used in schools today.

Process criteria relate not to the final results, but to how the students arrived at their final product. Guskey (2001) states that educators who believe that product criteria do not provide a complete picture of student learning generally favour process criteria because they consider “student effort, class behaviour, or work habits [as well as] daily work, regular classroom quizzes, homework, class participation, punctuality of assignments, or attendance in determining students’ grades” (pp. 21–22). The process criteria are important to teachers who want to penalise high-ability students who receive high marks with little effort as well as acknowledge the hard work of less talented students who must work diligently even to achieve low marks. If teachers consider only product criteria, however, some low-ability students who exert effort will be penalised and perhaps become disinterested in working. Moreover, they could perceive that they are being treated unfairly and quit trying altogether.

Progress criteria relate to how much students actually gain from their learning experiences. Other terms teachers use include *learning gain*, *value-*

Before presenting an oral presentation arguing for or against the inclusion of soft drink and snack machines in the school canteen, the teacher reviews the components of an effective oral presentation. In this case, the teacher needs to check the standard to ensure that she covers the criteria listed. The time frame for the whole-class instruction varies depending upon how much new information and skills are presented. If most of the skills have been presented previously, then the review will be much quicker.

Group Work

In order to allow some choice, teachers often let students select the group they would like to join. Sometimes each group does the same activity (see Figure 4.8); other times, each group does a separate activity (jigsaw) that still contributes to the overall umbrella performance task. For example, if students are developing a state brochure, instead of each group researching every aspect, each could specialise in a specific area. The groups could each focus on a separate topic such as sport, cultural events, industries, historical sites or recreational activities.

In some cases, all the groups are doing the same thing to ensure all students meet the standards and to help coordinate classroom organisation. Although the groups may all address the same topic, they can still decide how they plan to research the information or how they plan to present it to the class.

Individual Work

Teachers know the pros and cons of cooperative group work. The research overwhelmingly supports the benefits of working in teams and learning from each other – but there are several disadvantages. In today's world of accountability, standards and high-stakes testing, teachers need to know that each student meets the standard. Teachers who assume that all students understand the material often discover otherwise when they mark the students' tests. Sometimes, one or two students do all the work and other students contribute little or nothing to the project. Therefore each student must demonstrate individually their ability to meet the key standard listed at the top of the performance task form. The students may also meet other standards addressed in their group work, but the teacher must have concrete evidence that each student either mastered the standard or is making progress towards meeting the standard (see Figure 4.9). Today's emphasis is on accountability. The teacher needs to make sure no child is left behind.

Methods of Assessment

In the balanced assessment model, different types of assignments require different types of assessments. Traditional quizzes and teacher-made tests capture a student's knowledge of content; portfolios capture a student's progress and thought; performances and projects showcase a student's ability to apply content and knowledge. It is important to select the most appropriate assessment tool to measure what the student knows and is capable of doing (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.11 reviews the components of a performance task unit, and Figure 4.12 provides a template to help organise the task.

Not all performance tasks look alike. Some tasks resemble loosely defined problems that allow students the freedom to search for appropriate solutions. Other tasks provide a framework and supportive scaffolding for students in need of more guidance. Although some students excel when working independently, other students need more support and guidance. Moreover, in today's differentiated classroom, teachers vary the group and individual projects to meet the needs of their regular education students as well as to provide modifications and accommodations for students with special needs.

Two examples of performance tasks show how teachers introduce important concepts. Figure 4.13 addresses a year six maths standard about solid figures by asking students to help Coca-Cola redesign its famous coke can. Figure 4.14 taps into a popular television show and asks the year three maths experts to help complete an Extreme Makeover for their school. Both tasks focus on standards but inject a fun factor to make maths come alive in the classroom. Figures 4.15 and 4.16 present an application and reflection on performance tasks.

Creating a performance task unit is one method to design a curriculum unit. Of course, teachers will probably not develop a performance task unit plan for all their units because it does take more time to plan and to teach. Many teachers try one unit to gauge its effectiveness. It is much more fun when teams of teachers work together to create a unit. Many teachers reserve their judgments until they see their students' reactions. One principal noted the decrease in discipline-related problems when the class was engaged in a unit. Another teacher noticed how involved her special-education students were. The bottom line is that students are motivated to learn, and this, in turn, results in improved academic achievement.

6

Design Teaching Rubrics

We must constantly remind ourselves that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to have students learn to become self-evaluative. When students graduate from our schools, we want them to have methods of self-evaluation and to know how to turn to external critique for self-improvement. We want them to know how to give and receive constructive feedback and how to revise their work based upon such feedback.

– Costa and Kallick (2004a, p. 3)

DEFINITION ■

The word *rubric* comes from the Latin word for *red*. Catholic liturgy and law books used red print to delineate important ideas that deserve attention. The word *rubric* in the field of education refers to a scoring guide designed to provide constructive feedback to students by helping them think more clearly about the characteristics of quality work. For example, a teacher could use a rubric to assess a student's research essay by giving separate marks for the criteria of quality of research, organisation, paragraph structure and mechanics. Each category could be rated as a 1 for Novice, a 2 for In Progress, a 3 for Meets Standards and a 4 for Exceeds Standards. Rubrics have been defined as guidelines used to describe and judge the quality of work delineated in the standards. Cooper and Gargan (2009) say "the term, apparently, can refer to almost anything: rule, guide, criterion, or description that is used to assess the progress of students in their academic subjects, as well as the grading system used for assessing each criterion" (p. 54).

A rubric is designed to show how important elements of a task would look in a progression from less well developed to exceptional along a continuum (Tomlinson, 2003). A rubric usually has a set of categories along with the criteria for assessment "and the gradients for presenting and evaluating learning" (Cooper & Gargan, 2009, p. 54). Solomon (1998) defines a rubric as "an assessment tool that verbally describes and scales levels of student achievement on performance tasks" and adds that "it can also be associated with more conventional alpha numeric and numeric scores or grades" (p. 120). Figure 6.1 shows an Anatomy of an Analytical Rubric that includes the topic or focus of