

## Defining Quality in Student Achievement: The Role of Rubrics

***The rubric sets the essential characteristics and criteria of an intended performance or product and also provides for evaluation data.<sup>1</sup>***

Rubrics define levels of quality in student achievement. They do so by describing the observable evidence of learning in student work. For three years teachers in the Arts Quality Teaching Networks (QTNs) have been developing rubrics for the large processes—create, perform and respond—in each of the arts areas: dance, literary art, media art, music, theater and visual art. Each revision and refinement has been based on actual student work from arts classrooms around the state. (Minnesota adopted and refined the large processes—create, perform and respond—from the 1997 National Assessment of Educational Progress [NEAP] in the Arts.)

The most recent drafts of the guideline rubrics (December 2007) describe four levels of student achievement: emerging, novice, proficient and exemplary and encompass all the grade level groups—primary, intermediate, middle and high school—for each of the arts areas. Student work that is incomplete is given a zero, indicating that it is not possible to evaluate because it is not finished.

Rubrics should list and describe the dimensions of the required learning. They should include only three to five dimensions. More than five requirements for learning in a assessment or project/performance become difficult to manage for both student and teacher. You will see rubrics that have a host of dimensions; however, it makes it difficult for the student to focus on the learning and accomplish quality work if there are so many requirements. Minnesota arts guideline rubrics are aligned with the work of Rick Stiggins and the Assessment Training Institute which identifies four types of learning—knowledge, reasoning, skills, and product/performance. At each of the four levels, those dimensions are defined using one or more descriptors that establish the differences in the levels of quality in student achievement. For example, in the rubric for ***creating and performing*** in the dimension of ***reasoning*** one difference between novice and exemplary at the high school level is that at the exemplary level the student's rationale for revision is "based on detailed, thorough analysis of feedback in comparison to artistic intent" while at the novice level the student's rationale for revision is "based on personal likes and dislikes."

The arts guideline rubrics are designed to accommodate holistic scoring of a collection of student work that meets the requirements of all the standard benchmarks, but they may also be adapted for analytic assessment at the classroom level. For example, if an individual assessment does not require students to demonstrate all dimensions (knowledge, reasoning, skill and product/performance) of the rubric, scores may be based on one or more particular dimensions and specific descriptors may be adapted and refined to align with the specific assessment selected by the teacher or mandated by the school or district.

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<sup>1</sup> (Mauer, R. 1996. Designing Alternative Assessments for Interdisciplinary Curriculum in Middle and Secondary Schools, p. 95.)

Arts educators in the QTNs began development of the guideline rubrics in the 2003-04 school year. Teachers in the Albert Lea and Elk River school districts were instrumental in completing and refining this draft of the guideline rubrics.

The goals for developing these rubrics include working to more clearly define:

- What we as Minnesota arts educators value in arts education
- What it looks like when students are doing authentic work in the arts
- What kind of evidence is required to meet the Minnesota Academic Standards in the Arts

Minnesota's work with the guideline rubrics has received national recognition. The original high school level music rubric was published as a model in ***Scoring rubrics in the classroom: Using performance criteria for assessing and improving student performance***, Judith Arter and Jay McTighe, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2001.

