

**The Insight**

Providing a rubric is a great starting point, though teaching the student to use the rubric is the main point.

**Implications**

To realize significant performance gains, students need help using the rubric criteria to problem solve and make decisions that lead to writing that is more effective.

*Coaching students to use tools to their fullest for a class project, teaches the life skill of using resources to the highest potential – a valuable skill for any career.*

**Rubrics – Do They Make A Difference?**

Do you ever find yourself scratching your head while grading papers wondering how a student could have missed your expectations to such a degree? Do you provide rubrics for your assignments, only to find that students ignore them when writing the related paper? You are not alone.

In a study of college-level writing students, Amy Covill (2012) explored the impact of short rubrics, long rubrics, and open-ended rubrics on student writing. She learned that students performed somewhat better, though not significantly, with a long rubric, as students considered the detailed rubric to be more meaningful. However, she also found, that while use of a rubric shapes writing practice, the gain was not significant. To realize significant performance gains, students need help using the rubric criteria to problem solve and make decisions that lead to writing that is more effective. Her analysis across conditions demonstrated that students believe using the rubric for self-assessment of their rough draft and final draft helped them make necessary corrections. Students reported the expectation to self-assess helped them to set better goals for their paper.

Covill (2012) recommends providing students with a long (comprehensive) rubric to assist with enhanced proficiency. Requiring self-assessment through use of a rubric, gives students the ability to gain confidence that they are meeting assignment expectations.

Jackson and Larkin (2002) provide the following acronym to teach students rubric use:

**R**ead the rubric and the material to be graded  
**U**se the rubric to give (yourself) an initial score  
**B**ring a buddy to help you rate again  
**R**eview the material together  
**I**dentify and award the scores together  
**C**heck the scores again

Providing a rubric is a great starting point, though teaching the student to use the rubric is the main point. Some students naturally migrate to the rubric, while others require a more structured approach to rubric use. Personally, I believe requiring students to submit self-scores for rough drafts and final papers to be an effective approach. While it may create more paper to review, the final project may very well be a better product. Coaching students to use tools to their fullest for a class project, teaches the life skill of using resources to the highest potential – a valuable skill for any career.

**Sources:**

Covill, Amy E., College Students Use of a Writing Rubric: Effect on Quality of Writing, Self-Efficacy, and Writing Practices, The Journal of Writing Assessment, Vol 5, No. 1, 2012. Retrieved January 30, 2017

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