



Supporting Effort by Pairing Rubrics with Checklists

Cynthia Kube

In my position as a gifted resource teacher, I often see students struggle with the planning required for a challenging task. Too often, they have only a vague idea of what is required and are easily overwhelmed by the effort involved. To demonstrate an understanding of content with an authentic performance task, students need clear direction on the criteria for success and support in managing the work required for the task. By combining rubrics with checklists, teachers can set up students to meet or exceed target criteria.

It is crucial for teachers to carefully construct a task rubric and explicitly review it with their students, clearly delineating performance level criteria. This gives students the focus they need and invites them to consciously plan for success. After this process, it is equally important to provide students with a checklist that supports the rubric. A checklist provides the necessary scaffolding for students to plan and track their progress toward meeting the performance task's criteria and their own learning goals.

As Kay Burke explains in her book *Balanced Assessment: From Formative to Summative* (2010), checklists can be used as thinking tools to provide students with a self-monitoring strategy. The checklists help students organize work into manageable pieces and provide a record of their effort. When I heard Burke speak at a conference several years ago, a light bulb went off; checklists were the missing link that my students needed to develop successful work habits. By using checklists, students feel empowered and in control of their work. This tool is also a tangible reminder of the effort needed to be successful.

Checklists not only serve as a self-assessment for students, but can also be used as a formative assessment by teachers, as well as a tool for feedback. During a recent performance task with a 9th grade English class, the classroom teacher and I were able to check in with collaborative groups to monitor progress. The students' checklists revealed what work was done and what remained, which helped facilitate our discussions. The checklists gave us a quick view into how students were taking ownership of their work. Here is a snapshot of part of the checklist; rubric criteria items are grouped into categories and students note what they've accomplished and what work remains.

	Not Yet (date)	Yes (date)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For a diary or journal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dates Detailed entries 		
Written Expression (all stylistic elements may not be present)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of irony? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of figurative language? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foreshadowing? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symbolism? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edited for spelling 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edited for grammar 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edited for punctuation 		
Presentation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have we checked our work for quality? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we have everything we need for our presentation to the class? 		

Thinking tools such as rubrics and checklists have an important place in the sequence of teaching and learning. By equipping learners with challenging and meaningful performance tasks supported by carefully constructed

rubrics and checklists, teachers can guide their students toward independent learning and an understanding of the effort required for success.

Reference

Burke, K. (2010). *Balanced Assessment: From Formative to Summative*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree

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