

Grading Leadership

Evaluating student progress in an activities-based leadership course where not all students are doing the same work presents challenges for leadership class teachers. Deciding how learning will be assessed and grades will be assigned is a difficult task, and is one that leadership teachers continue to struggle with until they develop a system that works for them.

Although some parts of a leadership class can be standardized—keeping a notebook of class materials, weekly evaluation sheets, quarterly reports, tests, and so forth—one element that must be included is an individualized approach that includes assignments that ask students to draw on and demonstrate what they are learning. It is important to describe clearly how the leadership experience will be measured and what will be measured. A variety of methods and tools may be used to evaluate leadership, including:

- **Observation**—A teacher's observation of skills learned during projects could be noted in a rubric or a checklist.

- **Logs/Journals**—Students complete a set of informal, sequenced writing assignments about their leadership experiences. These could be evaluated on the quality of writing, length of entries, and/or content in relation to course material.

- **Progress ratings**—Students are rated on a scale of 1 to 5 on their progress on a variety of skills and attitudes specific to their project or subject. Items could include such things as "Student has learned to work cooperatively with others," "Student has learned to use

time effectively," "Student communicates effectively," "Student has gained confidence in his/her ability."

- **Completion of required elements**—Grades could be assigned on a pass/fail basis according to completion of a predetermined list of elements such as attendance at events, keeping a log of service, completing a journal, giving a presentation on what they learned, etc.

- **Portfolio**—Students complete a portfolio of their experience, detailing what they learned and how they developed as a result of their experience.

- **Guided self evaluation**—Students respond in writing or orally to questions such as "What do you know about leadership now that you did not know before your work in this class?"

or "What do you know now about yourself, your abilities, your community, and your future as a result of this class?"

Using Rubrics

Developing a rubric for individual assessment is one way to link outcomes to objectives. A rubric is a set of criteria specifying the characteristics, knowledge, and/or competencies that indicate a student's particular level of achievement. Generally rubrics specify the level of performance expected for several levels of quality. These levels of quality may be written as different ratings (e.g., Excellent, Good, Needs Improvement) or as numerical scores (e.g., 4, 3, 2, 1) which are then added up to form a total score that then is associated with a grade (e.g.,

A, B, C, etc).

Rubrics should include:

1. Dimensions of key behaviors
2. Examples of the behaviors
3. Scales (i.e., checklists, numerical, or qualitative)
4. Standards of excellence for specified performance levels

For example, if one of your objectives is for students to interact with community partners, your rubric would define various levels of achievement of this objective. The levels could include "Exemplary," "Strong," "Emerging," and "Struggling," with corresponding definitions such as:

Exemplary: Student has become a key player in helping his or her partner organization advance its mission.

Strong: Student offers opinions to community resource people and shares his or her talents to help solve problems at the partner organization.

Emerging: Student converses with community resource people when performing service and occasionally offers opinions.

Struggling: Student does not interact with community partners. Most students' achievement will be a combination of struggling, emerging, strong, and exemplary. The rubric helps both educators and students define the measures of a successful service-learning experience and what each student should strive for.

Why Use Rubrics?

Rubrics can improve student performance, as well as monitor it, by making teachers' expectations clear and by showing students how to meet these expectations. Rubrics also are useful in helping students become more thoughtful judges of the quality of their own and others' work.



Alternative Assessment Definitions

The term “assessment” is derived from a Latin word meaning “to sit beside, assist in the office of a judge.”

Authentic Assessment:

Process that engages students in applying knowledge and skills in the same way they are used in the “real world” outside school; performance based; requires students to demonstrate significant, worthwhile knowledge and understanding through a product, performance, or exhibition.

Conventional, or Traditional, Assessment: “Paper and pencil” testing (multiple-choice, true/false, matching, short answer) that typically must be completed within a specific amount of time.

Naturalistic Assessment:

Process of observing and assisting performance and behavior as students go about their daily classroom work; sometimes called “kidwatching.”

Performance Assessment:

Process that provides students opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and to thoughtfully apply knowledge, skills, and habits of mind in a variety of structured and unstructured situations; often occurs over time and results in a tangible product or observable performance.

Process Assessment: Assessing a student’s skills in progressing through a series of actions or operations; used to assess skills like critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, goal setting, cooperation, relating to others, leadership, and management.

Product/Project Assessment: Process in which students create and are assessed on the basis of product or project results.

Source: “Alternative Assessment,”
The Adviser newsletter from FCCLA,
Spring 1998.

Grading Resources



Free and easy to use resources for teachers including preformatted rubrics in a variety of areas such as notebooks, oral presentations, and class participation, as well as a general rubric generator that allows you to make your own customized rubric.

www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/



RubiStar is a free tool to help teachers create completely customizable rubrics.

<http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>



Project Based Learning: Age-appropriate, customizable project checklists to support Project Based Learning and evaluation for written reports, multimedia projects, oral presentations, and science projects.

<http://pblchecklist.4teachers.org/index.shtml>



Kathy Schrock’s Guide for Educators—Assessment Rubrics: This is a helpful listing of links to rubric generators and articles about using rubrics for assessment.

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/assess.html>



Although this site features Performance Assessment Links in Science, it has useful background info about rubrics and some informative articles.

<http://pals.sri.com/guide/scoringdetail.html>



Creating Rubrics: Tools You Can Use—Learn how rubrics can guide your students and support your assessments.

http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr248.shtml