Running Head: Rubrics ARE NOT MAGIC
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Rubrics do not equal Remediation, nor Response to Intervention: And Rubrics are not Magic!
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Abstract:
This paper discusses the realm of rubrics and attempts to examine the positive as well as the negative aspects of rubrics. Some suggestions are made for the amelioration of rubrics and the post assessment discussion of rubrics as it relates to grade appeal.

Keywords: Rubrics, evaluation, assessment, grade assignment, remediation

Back in November of last year- I posted an article about rubrics- The link can be found below:

In addition, I am reproducing the verbiage that I posted below- so that one can read and get the gist- without having to navigate around the system endlessly:

“Well, it is about time, now that the elections are over- and perhaps we can get back to the real work of educating the students of this country. So, this is the beginning of a series of my ranks about everything that is wrong, at least from my perspective about education. Certainly, there are a lot of things that are right and a lot of teachers that are doing a dynamite job with students. But a closer examination and discussion of certain things is in order.

To wit- Rubrics are all well and good. They provide a global overall specific idea as to what constitutes an

A, a B, a C, a D or what constitutes an F- and why.

Some rubrics are well done- and a lot of time is invested in them. However, they only go so far.

Rubrics tell students that they need help spelling or need to use Spell check or a Dictionary. They do not provide the remediation or intervention.

Rubrics tell students that they need to work on grammar, syntax, spelling, sentence structure,
dangling participles and verbs and gerunds and prepositions and adverbs. They do not provide editing or feedback or assistance in writing.

Rubrics tell students, directly or indirectly, that their writing is poor. They do not tell students where to do to ameliorate their writing skills.

Rubrics tell pupils, perhaps indirectly that they need to spend more time organizing their thoughts.

Rubrics do not teach time management and organization skills.

Rubrics tell students that they may need to use commas, periods, question marks, exclamation points, and various other subtle nuances such as paragraphing. Rubrics do not tell students where to put a comma, and when a comma is needed, and why we often use a comma in various long run on sentences, and the importance of the comma.

Rubrics need to be linked to some type of intervention. Perhaps someone will provide this link or alignment. I am sure that someone will apply a rubric to my line of thinking- and if they do- please be sure to tell me where to do to remediate my thinking if it is illogical, irrational, unreasonable, unrealistic or inappropriate or even worse- if it is politically incorrect.”

There have been a number of responses to my original posting, so I am attempting to clarify and
perhaps develop some logical, rational, reasonable discussion about rubrics and their use (and perhaps sometimes misuse.

Indeed, in one post of my responses to feedback, I elaborated thusly:

“I guess one of the MAIN points I was trying to make was that a rubric- does not necessarily lead to an intervention. A rubric- does not automatically mean that a child will learn to use the dictionary or Spell

Check, for example to check their spelling- the rubric- will tell the student he or she has a problem with spelling or perhaps typographical errors- but it does not encourage the student to USE the dictionary or learn to word process if their handwriting is poor. Further, the rubric tells the student that their writing is poor- but does not tell them how to improve—many principals and educational leaders have jumped on this RUBRIC bandwagon- ( and it is a good tool for assessment and for evaluation) but the rubric only goes so far. It does not help English Language Learners, who are perhaps being penalized by the rubric thru no fault of their own- the RUBRIC is neutral- and the rubric does not understand that this student is from Mexico or Korea or Finland or wherever. Perhaps I need to make more clear that a good rubric

MIGHT lead to an intervention or perhaps assist in a Response to Intervention program or simply to some suggestions to improve from a “D” to a “B” or whatever on that rubric. A rubric is not magic- and does not help the student to improve their critical thinking skills or higher order thinking skills. In any event, thank you for your comments as perhaps I needed to be more clear and exact and specific and precise in my assertions!

There are of course different types of rubrics. According to Gargiulo and Metcalf (2013) “Rubrics are student or teacher-created scoring systems that are used as evaluation tools of a performance based product. Analytic rubrics are used to assign points for responses on an assessment or work sample based on specific predetermined criteria. Those points are then added to determine and overall score indicating a level of performance Holistic rubrics are used to determine the quality of a student’s response and rely more on the product or performance rather than the actual process. “(p. 238 Durwin and Reese-Weber (2018) have provided a sample rubric for an essay. Utilizing a 4 point scale (with no vocabulary attached to each number) they provide various “dimensions” in order to grade an essay. The Dimensions they provided in their text are: Position Statement, Introduction, Support for position, Organization, Conclusion and Grammar and Spelling. (p.525).Their model is clear, concise and compact. Some individuals prefer a more extensive elaborate in depth rubric. There is not much evidence regarding the utility of either approach. Some teachers may want to “keep it simple” for the lower grades and go into much more depth for the higher grades.

SO, how can teachers use rubrics more effectively?

First, the rubric must be tied to the subject matter. This is blatantly and patently obvious- to some.

However, there are some what I call rubric addicts – who believe that just by posting a rubric- that some magic will occur. They think that students will drift almost by magnetism to the rubric and clearly understand what the instructor wants. It may be better to give the student a model or template or sample of excellent work, rather than a rubric.

Second, rubrics can be global or general or very specific. I am not sure if there is an age or grade for which rubrics are MOST appropriate. This writer does not know if there is any research on at what age a rubric assists students MOST in improving their writing or thinking.

Third, rubrics can be constructed on a 3 point Likert scale, a 5 point Likert scale or a 7 point Likert scale—depending on the subject matter being taught, and the grade level of the student.

Fourth, rubrics will not help a student who is simply an argumentative, oppositional defiant individual.

There are some students who are going to want a better grade and they will argue, debate discuss and continue to frustrate instructors who may not have indicated specifically precisely how many commas are appropriate and how many are not.

Fifth, there are students who never check the rubric as it is somewhat embedded in some Web CT or
Blackboard course. Students may have to clearly indicate that they have received the rubric and reviewed it and understand it's conceptualization.

Sixth, people can have opinions about rubrics. One can even develop a rubric as to the accuracy and validity and reliability of another person’s rubric. There is nothing wrong with suggesting that someone else’s rubric is faulty or that another rubric has not addressed a certain issue or concern.

Seventh, if we are indeed serious about rubrics—perhaps more training is needed for teachers who rely on rubrics for whatever issue. More in-services are needed for teachers, and more training in their use at the undergraduate level in teacher training institutions.

Eighth, there needs to be some empirical research on the helpfulness of a rubric. If it is not going to be used- why go to the trouble of developing it? Surely, for some, the development of a rubric is simply an intellectual exercise. In other instances, it is mandated by some building principal. In any event, it does not immediately improve the student’s grammar, spelling, writing, sentence structure, punctuation, and it does not necessarily improve their clarity of thought, or cognition. Indeed, we need some research evidence and data that students actually look at rubrics, understand them, pay attention to them, and do something differently on the next submission to improve their grade or evaluation.

Ninth, a competent, concerned professional might use a rubric and link each rubric with a resource on the internet which could help with specific areas such as APA (American Psychological Association) format or writing style or MLA or Chicago or whatever.

Tenth, a rubric- could be used for comparative purposes in terms of formative assessment or evaluation.

If one student out of 20- or 30 does less well than the others, there is some substantial evidence, using this rubric that the student IS in fact behind his or her peers.

Eleventh, the question “Is the rubric fair?” to all must be considered. In many colleges, there are foreign students who may be learning English or in other instances, English may not be their first language, thus they are grappling with grammar, syntax, verbs, sentence structure, dangling participles and so on. IF a rubric has many facets addressing these elements rather than the quality of critical thinking, those students may be at a disadvantage. Teachers have to look at the “big scheme of things” so to speak in order to be “fair”.

Twelfth, there is always a debate about “quality “vs “quantity” in a rubric. Some of this speaks to the issue of teachers (and others) not always being well trained in rubric writing, or rubric construction.

While the quantity of certain things is easy to count and measure, the quality of one’s work is subjective.

In fact, one of the main issues with rubrics has always been the issue of attempting to quantify the construct of quality, which is subjective. In some programs, and in some online classes, there is an attempt to measure the interaction between student to student as well as instructor to student. In an exceptionally large class, this is quite difficult if not near impossible.

Thirteenth, the language of the rubric is important to review and grasp. Some rubrics are written in a 4 point type of Likert scale- with a) Exceeding Expectations b) Meeting Expectations c) Developing Expectations and d) Does not meet Expectations. There may be instances where the rubric is not applicable to certain domains or subjects or students, and this too needs to be acknowledged or recognized.

Lastly, a rubric- to be valid and reliable and usable, should have some balance within each area and between each area. More than one domain may be assessed, and that is fine- but there should be some balance and consideration as the relative importance and weight of each domain or area.

Summary and Conclusions.

Certainly rubric have a place in education- but they do no automatically lead to improvement, they do not automatically lead to a referral nor remediation, they do not automatically lead to any kind of intervention- and perhaps they should. Subjectivity should be noted as well as objectivity where relevant and appropriate.
References:
