What’s a Rubric?

Ok, so we hear the word “rubric” every time we talk about assessment – and every time we read something about assessment. So what is it, and what does it do?

A rubric is an articulated plan for the evaluation of a specific learning objectives – put more simply, a rubric provides a set of performance levels by which we can evaluate achievement of any given topic.

Why use a rubric? It’s a win-win situation. A well designed rubric can make your life easier – as well as clarifying your expectations in regard to student performance on any given student learning objective.

How about an example?

Stated learning objective: “The student will produce a portfolio containing work (authentic artifacts) that demonstrates overall mastery of the use of widgets (the subject area).” To measure the students’ ability to meet this learning objective, clear expectations of “mastery” must be articulated. Here is a possible way to design a rubric for this learning objective:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Widgits</th>
<th>Exceptional</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear command of the use of widgits as a key element in all artifacts included in the portfolio. Multiple uses of widgits as an integral feature of work. Demonstrated application of excellent technique.</td>
<td>Acceptable utilization of widgits predominates the artifacts included in the portfolio. Use of widgits to create overall design is present. Technique is appropriate for level of included work.</td>
<td>Widgits are not a key feature of the portfolio. Simplistic, one-dimensional work is primary method of expression. Lack of technique exhibited in selected artifacts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The idea then, is to articulate clearly expectations – this is how you and your students will know when they can do what they have been taught to do.

Curious? Intrigued? Ready to try your hand? Check out this site for those who have already designed some workable rubrics in many subject areas….

“The Rubric Builder”