

# Building Better Rubrics (BBR)

## Module 2: Not all Rubrics are Created Equal!

**An AAC Professional Learning Module  
to accompany the AAC Publication**

# BBR Professional Learning Modules at a Glance

▪ Support student learning ▪ Enhance classroom assessment practices ▪ Evaluate student performance ▪ Provide specific feedback

*Better*  
**Building Rubrics**

Describe levels of quality

Sherry Bennett, Anne Mulgrew

An AAC Publication

Provide specific feedback

▪ Support consistency of scoring ▪ Provide a springboard for conversation ▪ Articulate and clarify criteria ▪

**What kind of brick is a rubric?**

**Module 1: Purpose & Design**

**The What, When, Why and How of Rubrics**

**Recognizing Quality Rubrics**

**Module 2: Not all Rubrics are Created Equal!**

**Module 3: Shortcuts for Successful Rubrics**

**Tools for Novices and Pros**

**Module 4: Supporting Student Learning**

**Lingering Thoughts**

# BBR Professional Learning Modules at a Glance

Describe levels of quality	▪ Support student learning ▪ Enhance classroom assessment practices ▪ Evaluate student performance ▪ <b>Better Building Rubrics</b> Sherry Bennett, Anne Mulgrew An AAC Publication ▪ Support consistency of scoring ▪ Provide a springboard for conversation ▪ Articulate and clarify criteria ▪	Provide specific feedback
<b>What kind of brick is a rubric?</b>		
<b>The What, When, Why and How of Rubrics</b>		
<b>Recognizing Quality Rubrics</b>		
<b>Tools for Novices and Pros</b>		
<b>Lingering Thoughts</b>		

pp. 6-11



**Module 2: Not all Rubrics are Created Equal!**

# In Review...

BBR pp. 3; 6

## If rubrics are to fulfill their two key purposes:

1. help *students* become more thoughtful judges of their own work
2. help *teachers* make consistent judgments about the quality of student performance

## ...then the language must be:

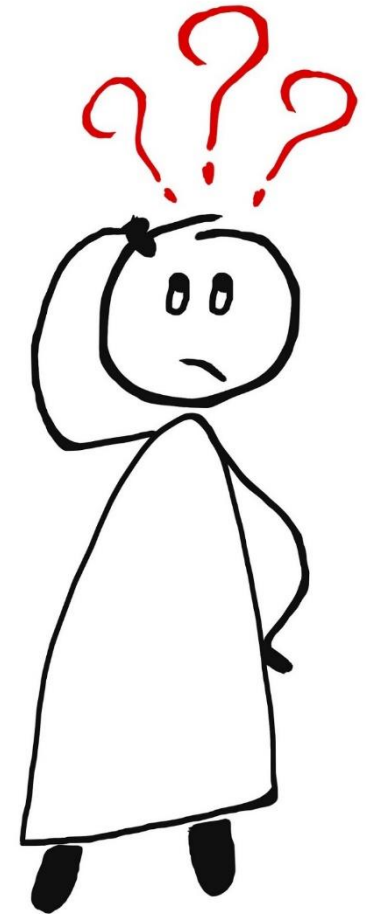
- specific
- descriptive
- unambiguous



**And that's where it gets interesting!**

# So Many Opinions...

- AAC readily acknowledges that our thinking may not be the norm with what is generally available 'out there'. In fact, you might even heartily disagree with the suggestions provided in this module!
- However, we offer our best thinking for you to ponder.
- We encourage you to keep an open mind, and see if the AAC rubric methodology just might help make a difference for students – especially for those who struggle.



# Discussion Guide: Common Rubric Flaws

BBR pp. 6-9

Using the discussion guide (pdf), engage in conversation with an elbow partner about the AAC 'preferred way' of rubric design. The slides which follow can support a follow-up discussion.

## Discussion Guide: Common Rubric Flaws

Review the material for each flaw as described in *Building Better Rubrics*. While you still may have questions about the AAC recommendation, consider the possibility that it is designed to support student learning. Use the discussion question to guide your conversation with an elbow partner.

### Common Flaw #1 (p. 6)

Identifying criteria as topics or categories rather than actions that students can take

#### Question for Discussion

How can using action verbs as criteria support improved student learning and performance?

### Common Flaw #2 (p. 6)

Including elements that are not part of the curricular outcomes such as neatness or punctuality

#### Question for Discussion

How can we motivate students to take pride in their work when non-curricular factors are ungraded?

# Common Flaw #1

BBR p. 6

**Identifying criteria as topics or categories rather than actions that students can take**

INSTEAD OF	PREFERRED EXAMPLE
plan	develop a plan
content	explain impact of event
organization	organize information



**How can using action verbs as criteria support improved student learning and performance?**

# Common Flaw #2

BBR p. 6

**Including elements that are not part of the curricular outcomes such as neatness and punctuality**

INSTEAD OF	PREFERRED EXAMPLE
neatness	no preferred example
name in upper RH corner	no preferred example



**How can we motivate students to take pride in their work when non-curricular factors are ungraded?**

# Common Flaw #3

BBR p. 7

## Defining quantitative rather than qualitative factors

INSTEAD OF	PREFERRED EXAMPLE
includes 3 facts	includes factual information to enhance argument
2 or fewer spelling errors	spelling errors do not impede meaning



**How can we be sure the qualitative descriptors have meaning for students?**

# Common Flaw #4

BBR p. 8

## Using absolutes in a quasi-quantitative context

INSTEAD OF	PREFERRED EXAMPLE
all	consistently
most	frequently
some	occasionally
none	seldom if ever



**How do we gather credible evidence of student performance over time?**

# Common Flaw #5

BBR p. 8

**Using descriptors that do not delineate discrete levels of quality**

<b>INSTEAD OF</b>	<b>PREFERRED EXAMPLE</b>
using the same descriptor in more than one level	unique descriptor created for each level
leaving out one word at each level	unique descriptor created for each level



**What challenges are associated with each of the flawed examples?**

# Common Flaw #6

BBR p. 9

**Using descriptors across the row that do not describe the same characteristic**

INSTEAD OF	PREFERRED EXAMPLE
describing multiple characteristics	describing a single characteristic (detail)
precise (focus) substantial (detail) partially correct (accuracy) superficial (detail)	in-depth substantial cursory incomplete



**How do we know which characteristic to choose for any given criterion?**

# Let's Switch Gears

- Now that we've looked at the common flaws in detail, let's switch gears and use a more positive framework to identify what we are actually looking for in a rubric.

## Recognizing Quality Rubrics

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### Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics

The following questions can be used to reflect on your own rubric, or to provide feedback to a colleague.

To what extent does the assessment task on which the rubric is based:	Reflection/Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• address significant <b>learner outcomes</b>?</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• establish <b>clear criteria</b> for assessing student learning <b>related to specified learner outcomes</b>?</li></ul>	
To what extent does the rubric:	Reflection/Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describe student work in terms of <b>qualities</b> rather than quantities?</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• use <b>parallel language</b> at each level, i.e. address the same quality (attribute) at differing performance levels in a given row?</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lend itself to <b>conversations and sharing exemplars</b> to clarify quality for students?</li></ul>	

# Reference Page

BBR p. 10

- Refer to the handout (pdf), *Reference Page: Matching Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics with Common Rubric Flaws*.
- This handout can help keep those common flaws in mind as you review and design rubrics.

## REFERENCE PAGE: Matching Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics with Common Rubric Flaws

The Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics in *Building Better Rubrics* (p. 10) provides a succinct way to focus on what an effective rubric should contain, whereas the discussion about common flaws highlighted common errors in rubric design. Use the following reference page when reviewing and designing rubrics to ensure your rubrics are as effective as possible.

### Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics

(from *Building Better Rubrics* p. 10)

#### To what extent does the assessment task on which the rubric is based:

- address significant learner outcomes?
- establish clear criteria for assessing student learning related to specified learner outcomes?

### Link to Common Flaws

(from *Building Better Rubrics* pp. 6 – 9)

#### Which Common Flaws are associated with each criterion for effective rubrics?

**Common Flaw #2:** Including elements that are not part of the curricular outcomes such as neatness or punctuality

**Common Flaw #1:** Identifying criteria as topics or categories rather than actions that students can take

# A Rubric Exemplar

BBR p. 11

- Use the *Reference Page* as a guide for reviewing the rubric on page 11 of Building Better Rubrics.
- Shaded boxes on p. 11 refer to specific qualities evident within the rubric.

What makes this sample an exemplary rubric? 11

Level Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Adequate	Limited
<b>Provide information</b> (5.2.1.5, 5.2.2 through 5.2.9)	Provides <b>significant</b> information about the selected group.	Provides <b>meaningful</b> information about the selected group.	Provides <b>predictable</b> information about the selected group.	Provides <b>superficial</b> information about the selected group.
<b>Draw and support conclusions</b> (5.2.1.1, 5.S.7.3)	Draws conclusions about the identity of the group and provides <b>pertinent</b> supporting evidence.	Draws conclusions about the identity of the group and provides <b>relevant</b> supporting evidence.	Draws conclusions about the identity of the group and provides <b>appropriate</b> supporting evidence.	Draws conclusions about the identity of the group and provides <b>unrelated</b> evidence.
<b>Communicate information</b> (5.S.8.1, 5.S.8.7)	Communicates information in a <b>compelling</b> manner to <b>engage</b> the audience.	Communicates information in an <b>effective</b> manner to <b>interest</b> the audience.	Communicates information in a <b>straight-forward</b> manner that <b>generally holds</b> the attention of the audience.	Communicates information in an <b>ineffective</b> manner that <b>does little to sustain</b> attention of the audience.

- criteria linked to learner outcomes
- criteria stated as action verbs

- descriptions of quality at varying levels
- distinct, yet parallel descriptors at each level

# Try Your Hand!

- With some experience behind you, take a look at a sample rubric that needs some work!
- Work with the handout (pdf), *Try Your Hand: Identifying Areas for Improvement*, and use the *Reference Page* to assist.
- The next two slides walk through the first row as an example.

## Try Your Hand: Identifying Areas for Improvement

The criteria from the table, Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics in *Building Better Rubrics* (p. 10) has been reproduced to the right of the rubric. Use this table to identify areas where the rubric meets the criteria (✓), where the rubric needs improvement (X), and where you are not sure (?). You may wish to use the Reference page, Matching Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics with Common Rubric Flaws to help with your review. Talk with a partner about your findings. You may have differences of opinion!

### Paragraph Rubric for Grade 5 English Language Arts

Level Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Adequate	Limited
<b>Topic Sentence</b>	topic sentence relates to the topic	topic sentence relates to the topic	topic sentence introduces new information	no topic sentence

### Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics (see BBR p. 10)

Address significant learner outcomes	Establish criteria related to outcomes	Describe work in terms of qualities	Use parallel language	Lends itself to conversation

# Here's the Legend

- The legend is provided in the introduction to the *Try Your Hand* document.

✓	The rubric meets this criterion for an effective rubric.
?	The rubric partially meets this criterion for an effective rubric, or I'm not sure.
X	The rubric does not meet this criterion for an effective rubric.
N/A	Not applicable. The last criterion will be addressed in Module 4, so the final column can be left blank for now.

# Let's Talk about the First Row

Paragraph Rubric for Grade 5 English Language Arts

Level Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Adequate	Limited
Topic Sentence	topic sentence relates to the topic	topic sentence relates to the topic	topic sentence introduces new information	no topic sentence

Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics (see BBR p. 10)

Address significant learner outcomes	Establish criteria related to outcomes	Describe work in terms of qualities	Use parallel language	Lends itself to conversation
✓	?	?	X	N/A

## Here's the AAC thinking.

- **Significant learner outcomes** – topic sentences are in the ELA Program of Studies, and learning to write effective ones is a skill that students need to acquire
- **Establish criteria related to learner outcomes** – could be strengthened if the criterion started with an action verb: Create topic sentence
- **Describe work in terms of qualities** – this is partially true, with the exception of the Limited descriptor
- **Uses parallel language** – descriptor is repeated in two levels, and the other two are very different

# Try Your Hand!

- Use the Reference Page to assist as you look at the remaining rows in the rubric.
- Talk with an elbow-partner about your ratings.

## Try Your Hand: Identifying Areas for Improvement

The criteria from the table, Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics in *Building Better Rubrics* (p. 10) has been reproduced to the right of the rubric. Use this table to identify areas where the rubric meets the criteria (✓), where the rubric needs improvement (X), and where you are not sure (?). You may wish to use the Reference page, Matching Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics with Common Rubric Flaws to help with your review. Talk with a partner about your findings. You may have differences of opinion!

### Paragraph Rubric for Grade 5 English Language Arts

Level Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Adequate	Limited
Topic Sentence	topic sentence relates to the topic	topic sentence relates to the topic	topic sentence introduces new information	no topic sentence

### Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics (see BBR p. 10)

Address significant learner outcomes	Establish criteria related to outcomes	Describe work in terms of qualities	Use parallel language	Lends itself to conversation

# Next Steps Prior to Module 3

- **Take a closer look at the rubrics you encounter, whether from published resources, online collections, or those you have previously created.**
  - Check for any common flaws that are present, and see how closely they follow the Criteria for Designing Effective Rubrics (BBR p. 10).
  - How could they be improved?
  - How might these changes help support students?