The Forest, the Tree, and the Leaves

Thinking about Standards, Performance, Rubrics, and Grades
SCASS Arts Training Series

Presented by the

- Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
- State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS), a project of CCSSO;
- SCASS Arts Education Assessment Consortium (SCASS Arts)
The Forest, the Tree, and the Leaves

A sincere thank you to our colleagues at the SCASS Health Education Assessment Project (HEAP) for generously providing *The Forest, the Tree, and the Leaves* for adaptation.
Training Objectives

- Explore the purpose of grades.
- Examine what teachers have been doing with grades.
- Describe new ways to think about and provide feedback to students.
The Forest

State Accountability System
The Tree

- Arts education standards
- An arts-literate person
Arts literacy is the capacity of an individual to obtain, interpret, and understand basic skills and knowledge in the arts and the competence to use such information in ways which are life-enhancing.
Arts Education Standards

By the time students have completed secondary school, they should know and be able to:

• communicate at a basic level in the four arts disciplines (dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts).
• communicate proficiently in at least one art form, including the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency.
• develop and present basic analyses of works of art.
• have an informed acquaintance with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and historical periods.
• relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across the arts disciplines.
The Leaves

Instructional Activities
Standards-based arts Instruction is skills-and performance-based.
What Is a Performance-based Task?

- Performance-based tasks are assessment tasks.
- They require students to perform or construct a product that demonstrates their knowledge and skills.
Performance-based Tasks

• Can be short answers, extended responses, or performance tasks

• Align with developing student portfolios
Examples of Projects

- Dance composition
- Musical performance
- Theatrical improvisation
- Critique of a painting for classmates
- What else?
How Do You “Grade” Performance Tasks?

Use Rubrics!
What Is a Rubric?

A set of criteria for directing student performance and for scoring performance-based tasks
Tree Rubrics (Holistic)

• Provide overall judgment, based on the whole, about the performance.

• Holistic rubrics score content and skills.

• Help teachers assess the level of knowledge and skills students acquire.

• Indicate level of learning (four-point scale).
Leaves Rubrics (Analytic)

- Can be personalized to a specific prompt or product
- Provide detailed criteria at every score point
Advantages of Rubrics

- Help students know what to expect
- Provide detailed feedback
- Help students see improvement over time
- Offer guidance for continuous improvement
- Align teaching and learning to standards
Disadvantages of Rubrics

• Time-consuming to score
• Don’t translate to letter grades or norm-referenced grades
Norm-referenced Grading

- Assigns grades based on a bell curve.
- Set of scores is forced into a normal distribution, partitioned into groups, and assigned grades.
Criterion-referenced Grading

- Links to a defined set of goals
- Targets a specific level of learning
Small Group Discussion

- What can grades be based on?
- What purposes do grades serve?
Purposes of Grades

• Administrative
• Instructional planning
• Guidance
• Feedback about student achievement
• Motivation
Thinking about Grading and Reporting

- Formal training in grading and reporting
- District reporting policies
- Alignment between performance-based assessment in the classroom and district’s systems
Dilemmas

• Scoring criteria may not match district’s purpose or format for reporting.

• Without alignment, teachers are on their own to work out dilemmas.
Considerations

• Base grades on standards, criteria, and levels of achievement.

• Individualize feedback and help students monitor their progress so *no child is left behind*.

• Move from subjective grading to criteria-referenced scoring.
Researchers Agree

- Grading and reporting are not essential to learning.
- No single method of grading and reporting serves all purposes well.
- Grading and reporting will always involve some degree of subjectivity.
- Grades have value as rewards, no value as punishment.
- Grading and reporting should be done in reference to learning criteria, never “on the curve.”
Learning Criteria

• **Product** criteria
• **Process** criteria
• **Progress** criteria
Product Criteria

Communicates summative evaluation
Product Criteria
Communicates summative evaluation

Process Criteria
Reflects process of learning
Product Criteria
Communicates summative evaluation

Process Criteria
Reflects process of learning

Progress Criteria
Indicates learning gained over the scoring period
Dilemma

• If we intertwine product, process, and progress criteria into one grade, it is difficult to interpret the grade’s meaning.

• Therefore, most researchers recommend using product criteria only.

• BUT, using product criteria can dampen the motivation of students with less ability who work hard.
Grading Outside of Academics: Non-academic Factors

- Effort: participation, work completion
- Behavior: conduct, teamwork
- Attendance: absenteeism, tardiness
Pros for Grading
Non-academic Factors

• Supports youth development

• Fosters development of personal responsibility and self-management

• Separate marks for non-achievement factors and assessment of skills and knowledge
Key Questions

• What do the grades you give to students mean?

• What can you do to develop a grading system that will communicate what you want to communicate?
References

• *Transforming Classroom Grading*, Robert J. Marzano, 2000

• *Communicating Student Learning*, ASCD Yearbook, 1996
We’re Here to Help

State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS)
Arts Education Assessment Consortium
Council of Chief State School Officers
www.ccsso.org
Project Manager: Frank Philip