The Influence of Rubrics on High School Students’ Creative Writing Skills

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Abstract

Sixteen high school students enrolled in an elective creative writing class of a small high school located in rural Northwest Ohio participated in this study. The class included students of varied grade levels and writing ability. Four task-specific rubrics were implemented with the creative writing class. The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of rubrics to assess high school students’ creative writing improved writing skills. The results of data analysis indicated that the use of rubrics improved students’ writing skills substantially in three key criteria areas of creative writing: organization, word choice/usage, and creative style/originality.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of rubrics in a high school creative writing class improved students’ writing skills. The research questions were:

1) How did the review of literature define rubrics? 2) What were the advantages and disadvantages of using rubrics? 3) How were effective rubrics designed? 4) How did students’ writing skills change when rubrics were used?

Justification

The researcher was interested in creative writing and chose to study it as an action research project. Since the researcher did not currently have a writing class, an in-service high school creative writing teacher agreed to collaborate in the study. The researcher and cooperating teacher formed a research team. The team sought a teaching and learning tool that would help students understand writing assignment goals, clarify learner expectations, and encourage the creative writing process. The change was needed to assist students in improving their writing skills on creative writing essays.

The research team was similarly dissatisfied with the subjective assessment method used in the school’s creative writing course. Students were not retaining information provided during pre-writing lessons, showed little creativity, and expressed confusion over the grades they received. They composed essays with minor attention paid to guidelines provided by the cooperating teacher and showed minimal improvement
from one essay assignment to the next. Many of the same errors were repeated on following essays. The research team saw a need to improve students’ writing skills by reducing the subjective nature of the creative writing process and its assessment. Additionally, the information and insights gained from this study would contribute to a better understanding of the use of rubrics in high school creative writing classes.

Definition of Terms

1. Analytic rubric: multiple rubrics corresponded to each independent level of performance being scored with points given for various required features.

2. Authentic assessment: non-traditional assessment of a student’s learning in a real life context such as problem solving or higher-order thinking skills.


4. Constructivism: a theory of learning which states that knowledge is created or constructed by a student’s active efforts to make meaning through interactions with other people and the environment.

5. Cooperating teacher: an experienced high school creative writing teacher who participated in the study.

6. Creative writing essay: a composition written by a student which showed knowledge of fundamental composition skills, application of learned writing skills, originality, and creativity.

7. Criteria: general descriptions or guidelines of what must occur at each performance level of a rubric.
8. Descriptor: very specific language that described in detail what was required at each performance level of a rubric.

9. General rubric: a rubric developed to assess quality of similar performance tasks within a general area of learning.

10. High school creative writing class: students of mixed academic and writing ability in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 who were enrolled in an elective English course to develop creative writing skills.

11. Holistic rubric: a rubric that had only one general descriptor for each performance level as a whole and was based on an overall impression of the performance task.

12. Indicator: a concrete sign, trait of performance, or behavior that signified a criterion being met.

13. Individual education plan (IEP): an annual plan developed to specify the educational goals, objectives, and services necessary to meet the special needs of an identified student.

14. Objective evaluation: evaluation of student work that could be measured by correct or incorrect answers given to facts, i.e. traditional assessments such as multiple choice, matching, and true-false.

15. Peers: students of similar age, academic ability, and/or background.

16. Performance assessment: a method of assessment that required students to demonstrate an understanding of the material by performing a task, constructing a personal response, or creating a product.

17. Performance assessment task: a student-generated performance, response, or
product that required problem solving or critical thinking skills.

18. Performance level: descriptive words or numerical values given for an established level of quality or degree of proficiency.

19. Portfolio: a collection of a student’s writings and reflections that provided a comprehensive overview of the student’s writing skills and growth.

20. Rubric: an authentic assessment tool that used a set of scoring guidelines or criteria for evaluating student work that was complex and subjective.


22. Student writing skills: a range of composition skills fundamental to quality creative writing, i.e. organization, word choice and usage, sentence formation, mechanics, and creative style/originality.

23. Subjective evaluation: evaluation of student work that took student/teacher feelings, thoughts, and biases into account during assessment of student work.


25. Traditional assessment: process of gathering evidence and documenting a student’s learning and growth through conventional methods, e.g. multiple choice, matching, and true-false.

Limitations and Appropriate Use of Results

The limitations of the research were the size of the sample, type of sample, the attendance rates of the sample, the limited class time available, and the minimal
experience of the research team in designing and using rubrics. The study was conducted in an elective creative writing class of a small high school located in Northwest Ohio. One class of 16 students participated in the study. No other classes of creative writing were offered during the school year, limiting the sample size. The type of sample also impacted the study. Several students in the sample group had extensive experience in creative writing from previous composition courses, while other students had no prior experience. The class included freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior students. Many of the older students had taken courses with the cooperating teacher in earlier semesters and felt they already knew what the teacher expected in an excellent quality essay.

The attendance rates of the sample group may also produce a limitation of the study due to high absenteeism and missed assignments. Approximately 25% of the students tend to be absent on a daily basis and do not participate in class. Therefore, the results of this study may not be applicable to other high school creative writing classes.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of rubrics to assess high school students' creative writing improved their writing skills. The research questions answered through a review of the literature were: 1) How did the review of literature define rubrics? 2) What were the advantages and disadvantages of using rubrics? 3) How were effective rubrics designed? The research question answered through the action study was: 4) How did students' writing skills change when rubrics were used?

The review of literature indicated that traditional evaluation of students' writing was a difficult and subjective process for many high school writing teachers. Students were confused about teacher assignments and expectations. Feedback given to students often revealed what they failed to do, rather than what they did well (Townsend, Fu, & Lamme, 1997). Assessment affected students' writing from the early stages of a writing assignment. Traditional methods of assessing writing focused on specific skills, perhaps known only to the teacher. It was necessary to examine the methods used in order to find a more effective assessment method. Students' compositions needed to be measured in a way that both the teacher and student felt accurately evaluated the various components of an essay (Zinn, 1998).

A shift from traditional assessment to more authentic assessment in high school writing courses was noted in the review of literature. This change broadened the type of knowledge displayed and considered the social context of students' writing (Seifert, 1999). Authentic assessment was considered synonymous with alternative assessment.
and performance-based assessment. Their similarity was that they required students to generate rather than choose a personal response. Authentic assessment ideally tested the process as well as the product, with greater emphasis on becoming a better writer. The results of a good assessment informed the teacher and students about what had been mastered (Runyan, 1994).

Student participation in the assessment process was also a critical factor in authentic assessment of students' writing. Their participation reduced much of the anxiety and uncertainty created during the initial writing phase, rough draft, revisions, and final grade. Students could work with peers and the teacher-coach through a series of stages to improve writing. They became active participants in their own learning and were open to suggestions from the teacher. The final evaluation reflected students' revisions and steps toward quality writing (O'Keefe, 1995).

The review of literature suggested that rubrics were effective authentic assessment tools increasingly used to evaluate students' writing. Armour (2001) stated that rubrics were especially suited to creative writing assessment because of its complex and subjective nature. The assessment criteria of rubrics for creative writing could be tailored to specific writing skills necessary for quality writing, while nurturing the creative writing process and originality. Rubrics promoted students' ownership of their work and provided a sense of empowerment to students attempting creative writing assignments. Armour found that a connection formed between the teacher, the assignment, and the student when rubrics established writing guidelines and expectations early in the writing process.
Research Question #1: How did the review of literature define rubrics?

In the review of literature, Mabry (1999) defined rubrics as authentic assessment tools that used a set of scoring guidelines or criteria for evaluating student work that was complex and subjective. Rubrics established criteria to measure performance assessment tasks and determined what to look for in a range of quality. The different levels of quality were distinguished from one another through guidelines established by the teacher or state standards. Rubrics provided an objective and consistent way to assess subjective tasks. The use of rubrics as a performance assessment grew out of the concept that effective assessment began with careful thinking about what a student should know and how that knowledge should be measured (Mabry, 1999).

A typical rubric contains a scale of possible points to be assigned in scoring student work on a continuum of quality. High numbers are usually assigned to the best performances. Scales use 4, 5, or 6 as the top score, down to 1 or 0 for the lowest scores in performance assessment. Descriptors with very specific language describe in detail what is required at each performance level of a rubric. Indicators signify when a criterion is met through a trait of performance or behavior. The teacher determines to what degree the student performance met expectations, based on the rubric criteria and performance levels. A score is then given for that performance level (Jochum, Curran, & Reetz, 1998).

Rubrics are often designed as a matrix in which performance levels and broad criteria form horizontal and vertical axes. Each cell in the matrix gives specific descriptors for the criteria to the left. Another classification of rubrics is based on the
type of performance being scored, either holistic or analytic. If holistic, a rubric has only one general descriptor for each performance level as a whole. The analytic rubric has multiple rubrics corresponding to each independent level of performance being scored, with points given for various required elements (Barell, 1998). Rubrics are also termed general, genre specific, or task specific. General rubrics judge a very broad performance, while genre specific apply to a more specific type of performance within the broad performance category. Task specific rubrics are unique to a single task. No one type of rubric is best suited for all performance tasks possible, but the appropriate rubric matched to the task requires students to demonstrate an understanding of the material by performing or generating their own response (Goral, 2001).

Summary

Rubrics were defined as authentic assessment tools that use a set of scoring guidelines or criteria for evaluating student work that is complex and subjective. They contain a scale of possible points on a continuum of quality. The most commonly used rubric structures are termed matrix, holistic, or analytic, depending on the purpose and intended use of the rubric. A separate classification describes rubrics as general, genre specific, or task specific.

Research Question #2: What were the advantages and disadvantages of using rubrics?

The initial interest in rubrics came largely from the field of language arts, where there was a need for an assessment tool that made writing grades more objective and defensible (Arter & McTighe, 2001). Teacher dissatisfaction with scoring was most
apparent when assessing student performances that included creativity, originality, or attitudes. The grade given was often hard to defend to students, parents, and administrators. Wenzlaff, Fager, and Coleman (1999) noted that assessment of student performance without rubrics was difficult because scoring criteria were unclear and highly subjective. Students sometimes learned what a teacher’s scoring criteria were after they submitted the first essay. Rubrics eliminated the guesswork involved when students composed their essays. The criteria as to what constituted a quality essay were clearly identified on a rubric before students began to write (Wenzlaff et al., 1999).

Rubrics originated as an authentic assessment tool designed to simulate real life activity where students were engaged in solving real life problems. As a formative type of assessment, rubrics became an ongoing part of the teaching and learning process. Students were involved in the assessment process through both peer and self-assessment. As students became more familiar with rubrics, they assisted in designing the rubrics. This involvement empowered the students and as a result, their learning became more focused and self-directed. Rubrics helped connect teaching, learning, and assessment by informing students of their progress (Skillings & Ferrell, 2000).

Arter and McTighe (2001) identified three fundamental advantages for teachers and students from the use of rubrics in evaluating student performance. First, there was mutual agreement on the important qualities of student products and performances, allowing evaluation with consistent performance criteria. Second, excellent quality criteria provided clear instructional targets for teachers and learning targets for students. The result was increased teacher and student confidence. The third advantage was
student involvement in peer and self-assessment that enabled students to improve their own performance and achievement (Arter & McTighe, 2001).

Classroom teachers who constructed and implemented rubrics on a regular basis noted the major advantages of using rubrics in assessment (Lin, n.d.). The use of rubrics:

1) allowed assessment to be more objective and consistent;
2) focused the teacher to clarify his/her criteria in specific terms;
3) clearly showed the student how his work would be evaluated and what was expected;
4) promoted student awareness of the criteria to use in assessing peer performance;
5) provided useful feedback regarding the effectiveness of the instruction;
6) provided benchmarks against which to measure and document progress;
7) encouraged ownership of student work;
8) accommodated different learning styles;
9) helped students make the connection between real, authentic tasks and their evaluation;
10) engaged students in self-reflected learning

The literature did not reveal many disadvantages of using rubrics for authentic assessment. The general consensus of opinion favored the use of rubrics for evaluating performance tasks. However, several disadvantages were noted. While well-designed rubrics were helpful to students in assessing their performance, rubrics were sometimes ineffective in determining the quality of responses due to poor rubric design (Wenzlaff et al., 1999). Writing teachers needed to better understand the purpose and appropriate use of rubrics before creating their own. Many teachers lack training in establishing
performance criteria and rubric design, which diminishes the rubric’s effectiveness in the classroom. An inadequate understanding of rubric construction and implementation hindered assessment of assignment goals (Schafer, 2001).

In a review of the literature, Wolf and Davinroy (1998) indicated that writing teachers routinely used good quality rubrics for evaluation, but they continually revised the rubrics depending upon the essay topic, assignment length, or student abilities (Wenzlaff et al., 1999). Constant changes in the rubric erode some sense of continuity that assessment requires. Changing criteria also resulted in formulaic writing and a loss of expressive language as writing assignments progressed. Students began writing specifically to the rubric when they did not feel confident in the consistency of rubrics used with several writing assignments (Wolf & Davinroy, 1998).

Finally, the time required to generate effective rubrics for each performance assessment task was considerable. Some teachers found rubric construction too time-consuming for evaluating student work. Quality rubrics required a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and an in-depth understanding of what criteria were needed in constructing the rubric. It took more time to develop the rubric than some writing teachers felt they could devote to one assessment (Schafer, 2001).

Summary

Rubrics were developed as an authentic assessment tool designed to simulate real life activity. Students felt empowered when rubrics were used and connected with the assessment process; teachers found grades for performance tasks were more defensible and less subjective. Many advantages resulted from the use of rubrics, such as student
empowerment and focus, clear learning targets, and the elimination of student guesswork of teacher expectations. The disadvantages of using rubrics included inadequate evaluation due to poor rubric design, lack of teacher training in rubric design and implementation, continuous revision of rubrics, and time constraints on rubric construction.

Research Question #3: How were effective rubrics designed?

Given the importance of constructing rubrics that accurately identified the key criteria of proficiency, Claggett (1996) found there were many important decisions to be made in rubric design. The first decision was to determine what criteria would be used in assessing performance. The criteria that should be used were sufficiently generic to relate to general goals, but specific enough to provide useful inferences on the task. The performance task was divided into distinct subtasks that showed evidence of student skills or application of knowledge. General and task-specific rubrics required different designs. A general rubric assessed a broad area of student learning, while a task-specific rubric would be applied to one particular performance assessment task. Initial rubric design decisions would be revised as the process evolved and the rubric was tested on sample performance tasks (Claggett, 1996).

The next step for a classroom teacher was selection of the rubric structure. One rubric could be used for the complete task or separate rubrics could be utilized for each criterion. A holistic format provided qualitative and descriptive guidelines, which combined all the important features of a performance task and judgment of quality into a single rubric. An analytic format employed quantitative guidelines, multiple rubric
structures, and points assigned to various criteria performance levels (Wenzlaff et al., 1999). The resulting performance data provided the evaluation, feedback, and planning for further instruction. Hewitt (2001) found that the purpose of the assessment influenced whether a holistic or analytic format was chosen. Holistic rubrics were quicker and easier to write, but analytic rubrics gave better feedback and more accurate results. Student abilities, state standards, and student interests were also important considerations when constructing rubrics.

The third step in rubric design was the selection of descriptors. They needed to be rich enough to enable students to verify their score, accurately self-assess, and self-correct. The use of bulleted descriptors made the description less ambiguous, and students knew what to look for in recognizing each level of performance. The descriptors relied on heavily descriptive language to make the discrimination, rather than comparatives. The quality expected at each performance level was established by the teacher or state standards (Armour, 2001).

The levels of performance and points scale were designed after the selection of descriptors. Rubrics typically featured four to six points. The best scores received the highest numbers, e.g. a six on a six-point rubric; the least successful scores on the rubric received a one. Language for each point on the scale used words like excellent, good, fair, and poor to set the tone, describing what the points looked like. Too many levels of quality caused both teacher and student confusion, and indicators of performance overlapped. Rubrics were built from the top down, which established a realistic target and anchor for scoring (Mabry, 1999).
Revision of the rubric was the last step of rubric design. It was suggested that teachers try out the rubric on some actual samples of student work (Jochum et al., 1998). Modifications necessary for effective use of the rubric were completed after the trial run on a sample. Colleagues were also asked to score several performance tasks using the rubric to reach consensus about what scores to assign a piece of student work. Portions of the rubric were edited or expanded based on feedback from students and fellow teachers (Townsend et al., 1997).

Summary

The literature indicated that the first step of rubric construction required accurate identification of key criteria of proficiency. The criteria to be used in performance assessment were general, but specific enough to show evidence of student skill. Decisions about general, task-specific, holistic, or analytic rubrics were next. The purpose of the assessment influenced the decision of which format to choose. Descriptor selection was the third step, allowing students to self-assess and self-correct. The quality expected at each performance level was clearly established. Next, the levels of performance and points scale were designed. Four to six points were the norm, with six being the highest score and one being the lowest. Rubrics were built from the top down to establish a target of excellence. Revision of the rubric was the last step of rubric design, completed after student and colleague review of the rubric’s effectiveness.

Research Question #4: How did students’ writing skills change when rubrics were used?
Traditionally, teachers assigned a writing topic, and students wrote their essays with little help from the teacher during the composition process. Writing was routinely assigned with little attention paid to students' needs, abilities, or input. The review of literature indicated that in recent years, writing teachers were moving toward a more constructivist approach to writing and authentic assessment of student assignments. Murphy (1997) stated that teachers were beginning to view writing as an ongoing process involving portfolios and student self-assessment. In order to develop proficient writing skills, students needed encouragement, practice, and the opportunity to share with others what they had written. Evaluation of student work using rubrics allowed authentic assessment to become part of the writing process from beginning to end. Prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing were guided by the teacher, and after implementation of authentic assessment, by rubrics (Hill & Ruptic, 1994).

The review of literature defined assessment as the process of gathering evidence and documenting a student's learning and growth. Assessment using rubrics was trustworthy and authentic when it occurred as a regular part of classroom learning and instruction. This also helped teachers plan further instruction in order to meet the needs of every student. Student involvement and reflection were essential to authentic assessment and the teaching-learning process (Hill & Ruptic, 1994).

Stix (1996) found that students who were involved in designing rubrics were more clear about what skills they needed to master on assignments and how they were progressing. They also developed greater confidence in their abilities and achieved a deeper level of understanding that allowed them to solve problems. They took responsibility for their own learning and actively worked toward improvement. When
designed with students and shared before an assignment, rubrics became a powerful motivational tool.

The use of rubrics helped teachers evaluate both a student’s finished essay and works-in-progress. Student evaluation was also helpful in reflecting on what had been accomplished. Rubrics helped define what the goals were at the beginning of the writing process and how the final product met those goals and criteria. The teacher provided additional specific suggestions to guide and improve students’ writing skills. When portfolios were used, student learning and growth were measured with the use of rubrics (Claggett, Reid, & Vinz, 1996).

Bartscher, Lawler, Ramirez, and Schinault (2001) described a program for students in fourth, seventh, and eighth grades who showed low achievement in writing. Probable cause for lack of writing skills had been attributed to lack of feedback from the teacher to the student and students’ attitudes toward writing. The solution strategy involved cooperative learning with group writing and peer review, journalizing, and creative writing. The journal served as an indicator of writing skills improvement after assessment with a rubric. Creative writing activities were used to increase interest and motivate students to write. Results were measured by data compiled from writing rubrics. Most students showed improvement in writing skills when pre-writing rubrics and post-writing rubrics were used.

The literature indicated that rubrics were frequently the assessment tool teachers used to identify key elements of proficiency, particularly for writing development. Rubrics assisted both the teacher and the student in determining the necessary elements of each level of performance (Skillings & Ferrell, 2000). They proved especially helpful
in improving students’ writing skills when expressive or creative writing essays were assigned. This type of writing was an original expression of ideas, observations, or feelings. The use of rubrics for assessment allowed students to use their writing as a method of developing fluency, discovering and clarifying their thoughts, and encouraging self-reflection. Specific qualities of their writing were evaluated with rubrics as part of a larger assessment process to determine writing skill improvement (Claggett, 1996).

Summary

Writing teachers traditionally gave assignments with little guidance before or during the writing process. A current trend toward authentic assessment and portfolios changed that process. Rubrics as an assessment tool encouraged student involvement in the teaching-learning process. Students involved in rubric design developed even greater understanding and mastery of their own learning. Rubrics defined what the goals were at the beginning of the writing process, helping to improve students’ writing skills. Portfolio assessment using rubrics often traced the improvement of writing skills. Accordingly, a study by Bartscher (2001) showed that pre-writing rubrics and post-writing rubrics helped lower-achieving students improve their writing skills. As part of a larger assessment process to determine writing skill improvement, rubrics were frequently the assessment tool preferred by writing teachers to identify key elements of writing proficiency.
Conclusion

The review of literature answered the following research questions: 1) How did the review of literature define rubrics? 2) What were the advantages and disadvantages of using rubrics? 3) How were effective rubrics designed? 4) How did students’ writing skills change when rubrics were used?

The literature defined rubrics as authentic assessment tools that used a set of scoring guidelines or criteria for evaluating student work that was complex and subjective. The purpose and intended use of a rubric determined what format was most appropriate. Students felt empowered when rubrics were used and connected more deeply to the teaching-learning process. It was found through a review of the literature that the advantages of using rubrics far outnumbered the disadvantages.

Rubric design requires important decisions and steps to create an effective rubric for authentic assessment. A key component of constructing rubrics is accurate identification of key criteria of proficiency. Modifications are usually necessary after a trial run of the rubric on sample writings. Effective rubrics improve students’ writing skills by determining what the goals and criteria are at the beginning of the writing process, providing useful feedback, and enabling consistent and authentic assessment.
Chapter III: Methods and Procedures

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of rubrics in a high school creative writing class improved students’ writing skills. The research questions were: 1) How did the review of literature define rubrics? 2) What were the advantages and disadvantages of using rubrics? 3) How were effective rubrics designed? 4) How did students’ writing skills change when rubrics were used? Question 4 was the focus of the action research study.

The researcher collaborated with the cooperating classroom teacher to determine if the use of rubrics improved students’ writing skills over a three-month period. The researcher designed the rubrics and implemented their use in the classroom to conduct the study.

Participants

The participants in this study were 16 high school students enrolled in creative writing. Ten were female and six were male. The grade levels of the students were: one freshman, two sophomores, ten juniors, and three seniors. The participants were enrolled in an elective creative writing class in a small high school located in rural Northwest Ohio. The class included students of mixed academic and writing ability. Six students were advanced writers, eight had only completed required composition courses, and two students were learning disabled, with Individual Education Plans on file at the school.
Twenty-five percent of the participants had previously taken an English course with the cooperating teacher.

**Instruments and Protocols**

There were three data collection techniques used in this study. The techniques were developed and implemented by the researcher to determine if students' writing skills improved. The first technique was the Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills. Students were asked to answer five questions, both before and after the implementation of rubrics, that showed knowledge of key criteria of an excellent quality creative writing essay. The second data collection technique was interviews with the cooperating teacher. The researcher conducted the interviews during the pre-rubric and post-rubric phase of the study to gather anecdotal evidence of change in students' writing skills. A third technique was archival data consisting of pre-rubric scores on students' essays. These were compared to scores students received on essays submitted after the use of rubrics. The students' data were recorded on a spreadsheet to determine if improvement in writing skills had occurred.

**Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills**

The Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills was developed by the researcher to determine if students knew the five key criteria of an excellent creative writing essay. The criteria were selected after a review of the literature to determine the types of criteria used in writing rubrics. The five that were chosen reflected these criteria and were appropriate to the classroom context. Five questions were asked with one question
pertaining to each criterion. The questions were presented in multiple-choice format, with four answer choices for each question, to assess students’ knowledge of the criteria. Two examples of the questions were:

“The organization of an excellent creative writing essay includes which of the following?”

a. Introduction, body, and conclusion  
b. Introduction, body, conclusion, details, and knowledge of audience  
c. Introduction, body, conclusion, and details  
d. None of the above

“Sentence formation in an excellent creative writing essay includes which of the following?”

a. Simple sentence structures  
b. Varied sentence structures  
c. Subject/verb agreement  
d. b and c

See Appendix A, p. 46, for a copy of the Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the cooperating teacher before and after the implementation of the rubrics. During the first interview, which was prior to the use of rubrics, the researcher inquired about the five creative writing skills that had been selected for study. The five writing skills were: organization, word choice/usage, sentence formation, mechanics, and creative style/originality. Fifteen questions were
asked as a foundation for the interview. There was one question specifically designed to
address each of the five key criteria appropriate for writing quality creative writing
essays. The teacher was also asked about the number of students who were experiencing
difficulty in each area. This allowed the researcher to gather data through anecdotal
evidence and observations from the cooperating teacher regarding the students’ writing
skills. After the rubrics were implemented, the researcher repeated the interview, using
the identical fifteen questions pertaining to the five key criteria. The interviews were
tape-recorded and transcribed for reference. Two examples of the interview questions
were:

“Do the students in this class use organization and focus in creative writing essays?
   a. What errors in organization and focus do they make?
   b. How often do they make these errors?
   c. How many students are experiencing difficulty in this area?

“Do the students in this class use varied sentence structures and transitions in creative
writing essays?”
   a. What errors in sentence formation do they make?
   b. How often do they make these errors?
   c. How many students are experiencing difficulty in this area?

See Appendix B, p. 47, for a copy of the interview questions.

Archival Data

The archival data consisted of student scores on four essay assignments obtained
during the pre-rubric phase of the study. Archival data were supplied by the cooperating
teacher for each student. Students’ scores from four essays written and assessed during the post-rubric phase of the study were compared to the archival data to determine if improvement occurred.

See Appendix C, p. 48, for the pre-rubric and post-rubric essay scores.

**Procedures**

**Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills**

The Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills, found in Appendix A, p. 46, was developed and implemented by the researcher to determine if students understood the key criteria of an excellent quality creative writing essay prior to the introduction of the rubrics. Each student received a copy of the questionnaire and a pencil to mark answers. The questionnaire was explained to the students and placed in a folder at the back of the classroom. This procedure was repeated during the post-rubric phase of the study with each student completing the identical questionnaire. **Three participants** who were absent on this date completed the questionnaire the following day.

**Interviews**

An interview was conducted with the cooperating teacher prior to the implementation of rubrics in the creative writing class. The researcher tape-recorded and transcribed the interview for reference. The interview took place before class during the first week of the study. **Fifteen questions**, found in Appendix B, p. 47, were used as a
foundation for the interview. One question was asked to specifically address each of the
five key criteria of writing excellent quality creative writing essays: organization, word
choice/usage, sentence formation, mechanics, and creative style/originality. The
researcher also inquired about the number of students who were experiencing difficulty in
each of the five areas. The interview elicited the cooperating teacher’s anecdotal
evidence and observations of students’ writing skills prior to the implementation of
rubrics. The interview was repeated at the end of the study. The cooperating teacher was
again asked for anecdotal evidence, overall impressions, and the number of students who
were experiencing difficulty with each of the five criteria. The researcher also requested
specific examples of improvement in students’ writing skills that the cooperating teacher
had observed.

Archival Data

Upon request of the researcher, archival data were supplied by the cooperating
teacher. Each student had written four essays that were graded by the cooperating teacher
without the assistance of rubrics. The researcher recorded the scores from each of the
essays for each student on a spreadsheet. An average of the four pre-rubric essay scores
was computed and recorded on the same spreadsheet line.

Four essay scores for each student were obtained after the implementation of the
rubrics with scores and averages being recorded on the same spreadsheet using the
identical procedure. To maintain consistency in assessment, the cooperating teacher
evaluated the essays that the students submitted during this time. Students’ names were
eliminated from the spreadsheet and replaced with a letter to provide anonymity.
Timeline

In mid-January, at the beginning of the school’s second semester, the researcher was introduced to the class by the cooperating teacher. The concept and use of rubrics were presented by the researcher, followed by discussion and answers to students’ questions. Consent was obtained from all participants age 18 or older and parents of participants under age 18 (see Appendices E and F, pp. 51-52, for a copy of the consent forms.) Over the next six weeks, from mid-January through the end of February, students composed and revised four essays. The cooperating teacher instructed the creative writing class, supervised writing, and evaluated students’ essays using subjective assessment methods. The researcher monitored the writing process and ensured essays were submitted by students during this pre-rubric phase of the study.

During the first week of March, the researcher distributed and collected the pre-rubric Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills. The pre-rubric interview with the cooperating teacher was also conducted. Archival data consisting of students’ scores from pre-rubric essay assignments were supplied by the cooperating teacher and recorded on a spreadsheet during the week.

From early March through mid-April, the researcher developed four essay writing prompts and a corresponding task-specific rubric for each of the four essay assignments (see Appendix D, pp. 49-50, for a copy of the rubric.) Students composed their rubric-assisted creative writing essays during this six-week period with the researcher providing guidance and instruction as the writing process progressed. The research team
collaborated on reviewing and monitoring the submitted essays to note any improvement in students’ writing skills.

In mid-April, the Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills and interview with the cooperating teacher were repeated. This was done after the assessment of all student essays. Scores that each student received on the final four essays were recorded and averaged on the spreadsheet containing the archival data.

Data Analysis

Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills

The Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills contained five multiple-choice questions (see Appendix A, p. 46, for a copy of the questionnaire.) Each participant completed the identical questionnaire before the implementation of rubrics and after their use. The completed questionnaires were evaluated by the researcher for accuracy of the responses. The total number of correct responses was determined for each of the five questions. The results of a comparison between pre-rubric and post-rubric total correct responses were compiled, compared, and graphed.

Interviews

The interview with the cooperating teacher consisted of fifteen questions with one question specifically addressing each of the five key criteria of excellent quality creative writing (see Appendix B, p. 47, for a copy of the questions.) The cooperating teacher provided anecdotal evidence and observations of the number of students in the class who were experiencing difficulty in each of the five key criteria areas. The interview was
tape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher for reference. Interview responses were then summarized and tallied to determine the number of students who were experiencing difficulty in each of the five key criteria areas addressed in the interview. The results of this data analysis were compiled, compared, and graphed.

A post-rubric interview was conducted with the cooperating teacher after assessment of the final four essays submitted by the students. The cooperating teacher’s post-rubric responses were similarly summarized and graphed.

Archival Data

Archival data were supplied by the cooperating teacher for each student and recorded on a spreadsheet. The data consisted of scores that students received on four essay assignments during the pre-rubric phase of the study. Four essay scores obtained after the implementation of rubrics were recorded for each student at the end of the study. An average score was computed for each participant from the first four essays; a second average was computed for the final four essays. The two averages were recorded on the same spreadsheet to make a comparison between the pre-rubric and post-rubric averages. The students’ scores and averages were marked as a percentage of points received out of a possible 100 points. An analysis of the change in percentage points between the two averages for each student was made. Chapter Four explains and displays the results from these analyses.
Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of rubrics in a high school creative writing class improved students’ writing skills. The research questions were: 1) How did the review of literature define rubrics? 2) What were the advantages and disadvantages of using rubrics? 3) How were effective rubrics designed? 4) How did students’ writing skills change when rubrics were used?

There were three data collection techniques in this study. The techniques were developed and implemented by the researcher to determine if students’ writing skills improved. The first technique was the Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills (see Appendix A, p. 46, for a copy of the questionnaire.) The 16 participants were asked to answer five multiple-choice questions that showed knowledge of key criteria of an excellent quality creative writing essay, both before and after implementation of the rubrics.

The second data collection technique was interviews with the cooperating teacher. The researcher conducted the interviews with the cooperating teacher during the pre-rubric and post-rubric phase of the study to gather anecdotal evidence to determine if improvement in students’ writing skills occurred. One question in the interview specifically addressed each of the five key criteria appropriate for an excellent creative writing essay and the number of students who were experiencing difficulty in that area.
See Appendix B, p.47, for a copy of the interview questions.

A third technique was archival data consisting of students’ pre-rubric scores on four essays. These were compared to scores students received on four essays submitted after the use of rubrics. The students’ scores on the pre-rubric and post-rubric essays were recorded and averaged on a spreadsheet. A comparison was made to determine if improvement in writing skills had occurred, as indicated by an increase in average scores. The researcher gathered all data over a three-month period in order to determine if the use of rubrics in a high school creative writing class improved students’ writing skills.

**Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills**

The Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills was administered before and after rubrics had been used to help students compose four essays. This technique was used to determine if students’ understanding of writing skills changed after the implementation of rubrics. The total number of correct responses per question, for each of the five questions, was determined for both the pre- and post-rubric questionnaire. The researcher designed the instrument so that an increase in the total number of correct responses per question, for each of the five questions, indicated that writing skills improved in that particular area.

The results revealed an increase in the total number of correct responses per question for three of the five questions. An increase in total correct answers occurred after the use of rubrics on questions concerning organization, which increased from 7 to 12 correct answers; word choice and usage, which increased from 8 to 14 correct answers; and creative style/originality, which increased from 6 to 15 correct answers.
The results also showed that the total number of correct answers per question did not change when students were asked questions about sentence formation and mechanics. See Figure 1 for a display of these results.

![Figure 1. Comparison of total number of correct responses per question for all students](image)

An increase in the total number of correct responses per key criteria question on the Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills indicated that students' writing skills improved in those areas.
Interviews

The second data collection technique was interviews with the cooperating teacher (see Appendix B, p. 47, for a copy of the interview questions.) During the first interview, which was prior to the use of rubrics, the researcher inquired about the five creative writing skills that had been selected for study. Fifteen questions were asked as a foundation for the interview. There was one question specifically designed to address each of the five key criteria appropriate for excellent quality creative writing essays. The cooperating teacher was also asked to provide anecdotal evidence and observations about the number of students who were experiencing difficulty with each criterion. The interview responses were then summarized and tallied according to the number of students who were experiencing difficulty in each of the five key criteria areas.

A post-rubric interview was conducted with the cooperating teacher at the end of the study, with the identical questions being asked. The tallied pre-and post-rubric teacher responses were compared to determine if any change had occurred in the number of students who were experiencing difficulty with each criterion. A decrease in the number of students who were having difficulty with a particular criterion indicated an improvement in writing skills in that area.

The results revealed a decrease in the number of students who were experiencing difficulty in three of the five criteria areas. Fewer students were having trouble composing their essays in the areas of organization, which decreased from 10 students to 6; word choice and usage, which decreased from 10 students to 5; and creative style/originality, which decreased from 9 students to 1. The results also indicated that
there was no change in the number of students who were experiencing difficulty after the use of rubrics in sentence formation and mechanics. See Figure 2 for a display of these results.

Figure 2. Comparison of total number of students who were experiencing difficulty per criteria

The decreases in total number of students who were experiencing difficulty in three of the five key criteria areas indicated that students' writing skills improved in those areas. This data is consistent with the Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills data in that the students' writing skills improved in the areas of organization, word choice/usage, and creative style/originality.
Archival Data

Archival data were supplied by the cooperating teacher for each student and recorded on a spreadsheet. The data consisted of students’ scores on four essay assignments that were completed during the pre-rubric phase of the study. Four essay scores obtained after the implementation of rubrics were recorded for each student at the end of the study. An average score was computed for each participant from the first four essays; a second average was computed for the final four essays. The two averages were recorded on a computer-generated spreadsheet to make a comparison of the pre-and post-rubric averages. The students’ scores and averages were marked as percentage of points received out of a possible 100 points. As shown in Figure 3, an analysis was made to compare the two averages for each student. A change in percentage points indicated whether or not a student’s average score increased, stayed the same, or decreased after the use of rubrics.

![Graph](image)

**Figure 3.** Comparison of pre-rubric and post-rubric essay average scores for each student
The results, shown in Figure 3, revealed that 12 students increased their average scores with the use of rubrics, one student’s average score stayed the same, and three students’ average scores decreased. This indicated that 75% of the students improved their writing skills, 6% saw no change, and 19% of the students experienced a decline in their writing skills. See Figure 4 for a display of these results.

Figure 4. Percentages of students and change in writing skills

Overall, the comparison of pre-rubric and post-rubric essay average scores indicated that writing skills improved.
Summary

An analysis of the data indicated that the use of rubrics in a high school creative writing class improved students' writing skills. The students' responses to the Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills after the implementation of rubrics showed an increase in the total number of correct answers in the criteria areas concerning organization, word choice and usage, and creative style/originality. The questionnaire results also revealed that there was no change in the total number of correct responses pertaining to sentence formation and mechanics. An interview with the cooperating teacher that was conducted after the use of rubrics indicated that fewer students were experiencing difficulty in three key criteria areas. Improvement occurred in the areas of organization, word choice and usage, and creative style/originality, while an unchanged number of students continued to have difficulty with sentence formation and mechanics. The archival data comparison with post-rubric data for four graded essays showed that average scores increased for 75% of the students, stayed the same for 6%, and decreased for 19% of the students. Overall, 75% of the students improved their writing skills and 25% saw no improvement.
Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of rubrics in a high school creative writing class improved students’ writing skills. The research questions were:

1) How did the review of literature define rubrics? 2) What were the advantages and disadvantages of using rubrics? 3) How were effective rubrics designed? 4) How did students’ writing skills change when rubrics were used?

The researcher developed and implemented four task-specific rubrics to determine if their use improved the writing skills of high school creative writing students. The study examined the impact of rubrics on students’ writing skills by reducing the subjective nature of the creative writing process and its assessment. This authentic assessment method was also studied to determine if rubrics helped students to better understand writing assignment goals, to clarify teacher expectations, and to provide a tool for feedback for future essays. Through the use of rubrics, students were encouraged to self-assess their creative writing essays.

Discussion

The results of the study showed improvement in students’ writing skills, with all three data collection techniques indicating substantial improvement. The Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills identified five key criteria appropriate for an excellent quality creative writing essay: organization, word choice/usage, sentence formation, mechanics, and creative style/originality. The criteria, found on all four task-specific rubrics, guided students’ writing, provided feedback for revising, and fostered students’
confidence in the consistency of assessment. The results indicated that the students attained a clearer understanding of some criteria of an excellent quality creative writing essay, but not all criteria. According to the interviews, the majority of the cooperating teacher's revising and proofreading marks were for sentence formation and mechanics, which required students to make extensive revisions using the task-specific rubrics. After the use of rubrics, no increase was seen in the number of students who correctly answered questions pertaining to sentence formation and mechanics on the Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills. These problem areas were noted as necessary on students' rubrics for them to use as a guide on future essays, but no noticeable improvement occurred in these two areas on students' subsequent essays over the six-week period. An increase in the total number of correct responses per question in the areas of organization, word choice and usage, and creative style/originality showed that more students understood how to apply these criteria to their writing. Also, essays that were submitted after the implementation of rubrics exhibited increased skill in organization, contained many more descriptive verbs and fresh adjectives, and showed a tremendous increase in originality and creativity.

The interview with the cooperating teacher conducted before the use of rubrics indicated that many students were having particular difficulty with sentence formation and mechanics in their creative writing essays. The cooperating teacher repeatedly observed confusion and a lack of understanding of these two criteria by eight and twelve students respectively. Many pre-rubric essays submitted by students for evaluation contained as many as 10-15 errors on a two-page essay, with extensive errors involving: sentence fragments, run-on sentences, subject/verb agreement, spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
During the six weeks when rubrics were used, students composed and revised four essays with no noticeable improvement in sentence formation or mechanics. This suggested that the rubrics were effective in improving students’ writing skills with organization, word choice/usage, and creative style/originality, but not with sentence formation or mechanics.

In the post-rubric interview, the cooperating teacher provided anecdotal evidence of significant growth in the use of sensory words, effective verbs, and stylistic language. The greatest improvement in writing skills observed when rubrics were implemented was in the area of creative style and originality. The cooperating teacher indicated that students appeared delighted to have creativity included as a criterion on the rubric. They felt they could take risks with originality and creativity in their writing because their unique approach was validated by the rubric as an important part of the creative writing process. The cooperating teacher also noted improvement in stylistic expression such as using words that show rather than tell.

The archival data, consisting of pre-rubric essay scores, were compared to post-rubric essay scores to determine any change in students’ scores after rubrics were implemented. Seventy-five percent of the students saw an increase in average scores. Most students appeared confident and prepared as they began each writing assignment with the assistance of a rubric. They knew what the teacher expected in an excellent quality creative writing essay and viewed the rubric as a helpful guide.

Average scores did not increase for all students when rubrics were implemented. There was no change in average score for one student; the quality of essays before and after rubrics remained unchanged. Three students experienced a decrease in average
scores after using rubrics to compose the creative writing essays. They often exhibited frustration in class over the large number of standards, criteria, and required components found on the rubric. These students approached each new writing assignment with hesitation and grew apprehensive about the rubric as an effective assessment method. This suggested that the students were uncomfortable with having to master all the criteria in order to get a good grade. The essays submitted by these students did not match the overall higher quality of their pre-rubric essays.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of rubrics in a high school creative writing class improved students’ writing skills. The participants in this study were 16 high school students enrolled in an elective creative writing class of a small high school located in rural Northwest Ohio. The class included students of varied grade levels and writing ability. The researcher designed four task-specific rubrics and implemented their use in a cooperating teacher’s classroom. Students composed four essays without rubrics during a pre-rubric phase of the study. Later, four essays were composed with the assistance of rubrics. The students submitted a total of eight essays during the three-month study period for assessment and monitoring. Three data collection techniques were used in the study, consisting of the Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills, interviews with the cooperating teacher, and a comparison of archival pre-rubric scores and post-rubric scores. The results of data analysis indicated that the use of rubrics improved students’ writing skills substantially in three key criteria areas of creative writing: organization, word choice/usage, and creative style/originality. The data
revealed that 75% of the students experienced a subsequent increase in average essay scores when rubrics were used due to improved writing skills. The data also showed that 6% of the students saw no change in average essay scores; 19% experienced a decrease in average scores, indicating no improvement in writing skills.

Recommendations

The researcher would recommend for any future study that the use of rubrics be implemented at the beginning of a new creative writing class before any essays have been written. This would allow students to understand teacher expectations and develop quality writing standards using rubrics from the outset, rather than being required to adjust after essays were previously evaluated with subjective assessment methods. The researcher would also allow more class time for writing, revising, and providing feedback to students in order to increase effectiveness of the rubrics. More time would prevent some students from rushing and hastily finishing essays to meet required deadlines.

Additionally, the researcher would suggest that further research on the use of rubrics in creative writing classes develop and implement a genre-specific rubric rather than task-specific. This would encourage students to refer back to the rubric more often during the writing process and maintain the consistency necessary for students to feel confident about assessment. Finally, the researcher would recommend that future research into the use of rubrics examine the causes of significant increases in creativity and originality indicated by the use of rubrics in a creative writing.
Conclusion

Overall, 75% of the students improved their writing skills when rubrics were used for composing and assessing creative writing essays. Substantial improvement was seen in the areas of organization, word choice and usage, and creative style/originality. No change was noted in the areas of sentence formation and mechanics.
References


Appendix A

Student Questionnaire of Writing Skills

1. The organization of an excellent creative writing essay includes which of the following?
   a. Introduction, body, and conclusion
   b. Introduction, body, conclusion, details, and knowledge of audience
   c. Introduction, body, conclusion, and details
   d. None of the above

2. Word choice/usage in an excellent creative writing essay includes which of the following?
   a. Words chosen for stylistic effect
   b. Quality verbs
   c. a and b
   d. Common vocabulary

3. Sentence formation in an excellent creative writing essay includes which of the following?
   a. Simple sentence structures
   b. Varied sentence structures
   c. Subject/verb agreement
   d. b and c

4. The mechanics of an excellent creative writing essay include which of the following?
   a. Minor run-on sentences
   b. Conventional theme and language
   c. Correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation
   d. None of the above

5. The creative style/originality of an excellent creative writing essay includes which of the following?
   a. Insight, unique voice
   b. Cliches
   c. Predictable writing style
   d. All of the above
Appendix B

Interview with Cooperating Teacher

1. Do the students in this class use organization and focus in creative writing essays?
   a. What errors in organization and focus do they make?
   b. How often do they make these errors?
   c. How many students are experiencing difficulty in this area?

2. Do the students in this class choose quality nouns and verbs for stylistic effect in creative writing essays?
   a. Do they choose common vocabulary words?
   b. How often do they choose common words?
   c. How many students are experiencing difficulty in this area?

3. Do the students in this class use varied sentence structures and transitions in creative writing essays?
   a. What errors in sentence formation do they make?
   b. How often do they make these errors?
   c. How many students are experiencing difficulty in this area?

4. Do the students in this class make errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar in creative writing essays?
   a. What errors in mechanics do they make?
   b. How many errors per essay do they make?
   c. How many students are experiencing difficulty in this area?

5. Do the students in this class use insight and original expression in creative writing essays?
   a. What types of original expression have the students used?
   b. How often do they attempt to be creative in an essay?
   c. How many students are experiencing difficulty in this area?
Appendix C

Essay Scores Spreadsheet

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<th>Task 3</th>
<th>Task 4</th>
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## Appendix D

### Creative Writing Rubric

*(Page 1 of 2)*

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<td>Clear purpose</td>
<td>Shows purpose</td>
<td>Presents an intro, body, and conclusion</td>
<td>No clear sense of purpose</td>
<td>No flow or focus</td>
<td>Blank page or missed assignment</td>
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<td>Knows audience</td>
<td>Introduces theme</td>
<td>Little development of theme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clear focus</td>
<td>Good details</td>
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<td>Strong conclusion</td>
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<td>Words are vague</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Communicates ideas clearly</td>
<td>Communicates ideas</td>
<td>Communicates ideas</td>
<td>Ideas difficult to discern</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent flow</td>
<td>Minor errors in subject/verb agreement</td>
<td>Minor run-ons</td>
<td>Extensive run-ons</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent use of transitions</td>
<td>Interesting sentences</td>
<td>Errors in subject/verb agreement</td>
<td>No transitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No errors in subject/verb agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Errors in subject/verb agreement</td>
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<td>throughout</td>
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## Appendix D

### Creative Writing Rubric

*(Page 2 of 2)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Levels Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>Few if any errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and capitalization</td>
<td>Minor errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and capitalization</td>
<td>Substantial errors in mechanics affect readability of paper</td>
<td>Extensive errors in mechanics</td>
<td>Blank page or missed assignment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exceptional neatness</td>
<td>Neat</td>
<td>Little attention to neatness</td>
<td>No sustained readability</td>
<td>Sloppy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative Style and Originality</td>
<td>Innovative writing style</td>
<td>Writing has moments of dramatic interest</td>
<td>Writing shows little creative style</td>
<td>Rambling</td>
<td>Blank page or missed assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Takes risks</td>
<td>Original Attempt to use distinctive tone</td>
<td>Minor points of original expression</td>
<td>No insight</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shows insight</td>
<td>Reader is engaged</td>
<td>Uses cliches or tired expressions</td>
<td>Conventional treatment of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tackles complex theme</td>
<td>Uses tension or surprise</td>
<td>No distinctive tone or language</td>
<td>off task</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Unique voice</td>
<td>Loses voice occasionally</td>
<td>Predictable writing style</td>
<td>No sense of creativity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Original expression of ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td>Literal language</td>
<td>Monotonous language</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unusual angle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reader not engaged</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Distinctive tone</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pulls reader in Figurative language</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses tension or surprise</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Appendix E

Consent of Participants Age 18 and older

January 24, 2003

To: Students (age 18 and older) enrolled in Creative Writing

During the second semester of the academic school year 2002-03, I will be working on my Master’s project at Defiance College. The purpose of the project is to determine if the use of rubrics in writing classes improves students' writing skills. Rubrics are descriptive guidelines that teachers and students use to establish assignment goals, nurture the writing process, and evaluate writing assignments. No time will be taken away from classroom instruction and learning for purposes of the project. If you would like to participate, please sign and return the form below by January 29, 2003, to Mrs. Korhn.

Sincerely,

Roberta A. Burke

I would like to participate in the creative writing project.

__________________________________________  _______________________
Signature of Student                        Date
Appendix F

Consent of Parents of Participants under Age 18

January 24, 2003

To: Parents of Students enrolled in Creative Writing

During the second semester of the academic school year 2002-03, I will be working on my Master’s project at Defiance College. The purpose of the project is to determine if the use of rubrics in writing classes improves students’ writing skills. Rubrics are descriptive guidelines that teachers and students use to establish assignment goals, nurture the writing process, and evaluate writing assignments. No time will be taken away from classroom instruction and learning for purposes of the project. If you do not wish for your child to participate, please return the form below by January 29, 2003, to Mrs. Korhn.

Sincerely,

Roberta A. Burke

I do not wish for my child ________________________________

to participate in the creative writing project.

_________________________________________________________________________________

Parent’s Signature
November 3, 2002

Mr. O. Mouser, Principal
Defiance Senior High School
1755 Palmer Dr.
Defiance, OH 43512

Dear Mr. Mouser:

During the second semester of the academic school year 2002-03, I will be working on my Master’s project at Defiance College. The purpose of the project is to determine if the use of rubrics in a high school creative writing class improves students’ writing skills. Mrs. Chris Korhn has agreed to be the cooperating teacher for this project. No time will be taken away from classroom instruction and learning for purposes of the project. I ask for your permission to work on this project at Defiance Senior High School during the second semester. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Roberta A. Burke

Roberta A. Burke

[Signature]

OMUM

Signature of School Principal

11/4/02

Date