The Implementation of Rubrics to Increase
Writing Scores with Secondary Students

Elaine M. Gerken

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Dr. Jo Ann Burkhardt, Advisor
Coordinator, Master of Arts in Education
Program Chair, Division of Education
Abstract

Ten secondary language arts students enrolled in a rural Midwest school participated in this study. The purpose of the study was to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement in the area of writing. Students completed three specific writing assignments using a grading rubric. The researcher evaluated the writing assignments based on the rubric and recorded grades to determine if writing scores improved. Results indicated that half of the students improved academic achievement in the area of writing when using rubrics, while the other half maintained their same scores from the beginning of the study to the end.
Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my husband, Jerod, for his love and support as I worked to complete this project and my degree. I would also like to thank my cooperating teacher, Mrs. Arlena Fleming, for her encouragement, knowledge, humor, and friendship. Finally, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Jo Ann Burkhardt, for her patience and unwavering guidance throughout my journey at Defiance College.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction

As a secondary language arts student teacher, it was the researcher's ambition to implement rubrics into instruction in order to help students learn evaluation criteria before beginning an assignment. The researcher wanted to discover the benefits of rubrics and incorporate them into the secondary classroom.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement in the area of writing. The research questions were:

1. How did the professional literature reviewed define rubrics?

2. What were the benefits, according to the professional literature reviewed, of using rubrics?

3. According to the professional literature reviewed, how were rubrics created and implemented?

4. Did using rubrics with secondary language arts students improve academic achievement in the area of writing?

Justification

The researcher, a student teacher in a rural Midwestern state, wanted to help secondary language arts students to improve their writing skills. The researcher wanted to focus on writing outcomes because she often noticed secondary students struggling to organize writing effectively and to know what was expected of their writing. Through the
use of rubrics, the researcher aimed to help students write and revise their work to meet assessment criteria.

According to the Academic Content Standards, secondary students should be able to formulate ideas, apply pre-writing tasks, and use revision strategies to improve writing. The researcher wanted to find a way for students to reach these standards and to understand grading criteria. The researcher hoped to find that rubrics would assist students in the process and would help others in the profession as well.

**Definition of Terms**

- **rubrics**- scoring guides used for both instructional and evaluative purposes
- **improved academic achievement**- increased scores on assignments
- **academic content standards**- set of state standards that must be met by each student for their grade level
- **secondary language arts students**- any student that is in grades 7-12

**Limitations and Appropriate Use of Results**

There were several limitations that may have affected the results of the project. The researcher implemented the study with students in one subject area and one grade level, therefore limiting the sample size. The research was conducted within a short amount of time; results may have varied depending on the length of the study. Also, the setting for the research was a rural Midwestern state with limited diversity. Because of the small sample size, time constraints, and limited diversity, the results of this study may not be generalized to other school populations.
Chapter II: Review of Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement in the area of writing. The research questions were:

5. How did the professional literature reviewed define rubrics?
6. What were the benefits, according to the professional literature reviewed, of using rubrics?
7. According to the professional literature reviewed, how were rubrics created and implemented?
8. Did using rubrics with secondary language arts students improve academic achievement in the area of writing?

How did the Professional Literature Reviewed Define Rubrics?

In order to answer the first research question, a review of professional literature was conducted. According to Popham (1997), a rubric was defined as a scoring guide and was used to evaluate student work, such as essays. The author also discussed the historical roots of rubrics and stated that, while the original meaning of the word dated back to the 15th century, the word rubric took on new meaning just two decades ago as a way to assess student work. Furthermore, Anson and Dannels (2002) stated that the purpose of rubrics was to assist the instructor in clarifying expectations as well as to provide both teachers and students with a way to rate student assignments.

It became apparent, through the literature reviewed, that rubrics were used for both instructional and evaluative purposes. Andrade (2000) explained that there were
different ways to use rubrics. She indicated that rubrics were not just used for scoring, but to give students guidance and feedback about works in progress. In this way, she claimed, rubrics were used for both instruction and assessment. Students could use rubrics to plan, set goals, and outline their work (Andrade & Saddler 2004). The authors suggested that using rubrics as instructional tools allowed students to see the criteria for excellent work before they undertook a specific task. Andrade and Boulay (2003) asserted that it was important that rubrics were written in an understandable way and that the instructor defined quality work in concrete terms.

According to Popham (1997), a rubric had three main features. First, he stated that rubrics had evaluative criteria, such as mechanics, which were used to distinguish responses. Next, he explained that rubrics had quality definitions, or descriptions of how responses would be judged. For example, according to the author, if mechanics were the evaluative criteria, the rubric provided a separate description for each qualitative level, such as no errors, some errors, or many errors. Finally, Popham (1997) discussed the last feature, holistic and analytic scoring strategies. He indicated that holistic scoring involved considering all of the evaluative criteria in making an overall judgment about an assignment, while analytic scoring required the instructor to give scores for each criterion separately.

While it was difficult to formulate one common definition of rubrics, most were focused on two essential elements: a statement of criteria and a scoring scheme based on gradations of quality for each criterion (Peat 2006). According to Anson and Dannels (2002), rubrics were used by both teachers and students. They indicated that the main purpose of using rubrics was to provide feedback as well as instructional guidance during
an assignment. Rubrics had three basic elements (Popham 1997). The author stated that these elements included evaluative criteria, quality definitions, and scoring schemes. According to Andrade (2000), rubrics were used for both instructional and evaluative purposes, though these lines were often blurred.

What were the Benefits, According to the Professional Literature Reviewed, of Using Rubrics?

In order to answer question two, a review of professional literature was conducted. The literature reviewed indicated that there were four main benefits of using rubrics. These benefits included increased objectivity, the use of rubrics as instructional tools, peer and self-assessment, and saved time (Andrade & Saddler, 2004; Goodrich, 1997; Moskal, 2000). Each of these benefits was examined in order to answer the second research question.

The first benefit discussed was increased objectivity in evaluating and grading student assignments. Moskal (2000) stated that “by developing a pre-defined scheme for the evaluation process, the subjectivity involved in evaluating an essay becomes more objective”(1). The author stated that a rubric with a specific scoring guide would help in objectively rating performance. In addition, Goodrich (1997) pointed out that by using rubrics, students could no longer claim that a grade was unfair. She said that teachers could use rubrics to justify grades and to prove that students knew what was expected of an assignment. Furthermore, according to Andrade (2000), rubrics were concise and easy to understand, characteristics which lent themselves to objectivity in grading. She asserted that students often don’t know what teachers are looking for in grading; a rubric made grading less scary and made the standards more clear.
The second benefit discussed in the literature of using a rubric was its use as not only an evaluative tool, but as an instructional one as well (Moskal, 2000). According to Andrade and Saddler (2004), a rubric was not just a scoring guide. The authors suggested that rubrics assisted students in setting goals for work and indicated what high-quality work looked like, such that students could get a sense of what they were expected to do. Moreover, using rubrics for instructional purposes supported the development of skills (Andrade, 2000). The author suggested that the mere distribution and explanation of a rubric helped to improve student writing and understanding.

The third benefit of using a rubric was that it increased peer and self-assessment (Goodrich, 1997). The author explained that “when rubrics are used to guide self and peer-assessment, students become increasingly able to spot and solve problems in their own and one another’s work” (15). In addition, Goodrich stated that when students engaged in rubric-based self and peer-assessment, they felt responsible for their work and felt more confident in knowing when a writing assignment was complete. Also, according to Andrade (2000), students absorbed more of the content when they used a rubric to assess their own work. She stated that students who used rubrics learned more than students who did not. Another part of self-assessment was revision (Andrade & Saddler, 2004). Andrade and Saddler discussed using rubrics to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in order to improve. For example, according to the authors, if a category on a rubric was sentence structure, and students were encouraged to begin sentences in different ways, a student could assess his or her sentences based on the rubric and revise the sentences to meet the standards specified.
The fourth benefit suggested by the literature was that rubrics saved teachers valuable time (Goodrich, 1997). Goodrich asserted that by the time a piece of work was evaluated by the author, then assessed by a peer, there was little left for the teacher to do in terms of revision. In addition, she stated that teachers also saved time because if they did need to make corrections or comments, they were able to easily circle an item on the rubric instead of spending great amounts of time writing.

After a review of the professional literature, four major benefits of using rubrics were identified. The benefits discussed were increased objectivity, the use of rubrics as instructional tools, peer and self-assessment, and saved time (Andrade & Saddler, 2004; Goodrich, 1997; Moskal, 2000).

According to the Professional Literature Reviewed, how were Rubrics Created and Implemented?

In order to answer the third research question, a review of professional literature was done. The literature reviewed asserted that rubrics are an authentic assessment tool that cannot be developed quickly or without personal reflection (Goodrich, 1997). Also, the author suggested that students should actively participate in the construction of the rubric. The literature reviewed discussed six steps in developing and using rubrics in the classroom. These steps included using models, developing criteria, revising criteria, developing levels of quality, creating a draft, and revising a draft (Andrade, 2000). Each step was important in the successful development of a rubric.

The first step in creating a rubric was to have students look at models of both excellent and poor quality work (Andrade, 2000). Andrade suggested that students then discuss what contributed to the success or failure of each model, and what the
characteristics were of good and bad work. She indicated that responses should be recorded in order to use in later development of the rubric.

Second, Andrade (2000) stated that students should assist the teacher in listing criteria for grading the assignment. She found it helpful for students to first collaborate on what should be assessed and then for the teacher to add what was missing from the discussion. In addition, Andrade suggested using the state content standards to address what might be criteria for the rubric.

The next step in developing a rubric was to revise the criteria, or elaborate on it (Andrade, 2000). The author said that, typically, students devised a long and overlapping list of criteria that needed to be condensed in some areas and expanded upon in others. Andrade suggested that teachers should take time after the class discussion to revise and perfect the criteria for the rubric.

The fourth step in developing a rubric was to determine levels of quality (Andrade, 2000). According to Andrade, teachers benefited from using four gradations of quality for each criterion. For example, if a criterion was summarizing the plot of a story, the highest amount of points was given if a student briefly and accurately summarized the plot. The lowest number of points was given if the student did not summarize the plot. Point values in the middle were awarded for partial completion of the task. Furthermore, Goodrich (1997) noted that it was valuable to ask students about what kinds of common problems they had in writing in order to develop the levels of quality.

The fifth step, according to Andrade (2000), was to create a first draft of the working rubric and to show it to students. Goodrich (1997) also suggested having students use the first draft rubric to assess the models presented in step one.
Finally, the last step was to revise the draft rubric and allow students to use it for an assignment (Andrade, 2000). Goodrich (1997) also stated that teachers should use the rubric to later grade the assignment and should circle point values so that students know what they did right and wrong.

The literature reviewed discussed six steps to developing and using rubrics. These steps included using models, developing criteria, revising criteria, developing levels of quality, creating a draft, and revising a draft (Andrade, 2000). In addition, the literature reviewed asserted that rubrics should be developed with a great deal of thought and should not be rushed (Goodrich, 1997).

Summary

A review of literature was conducted in order to define rubrics, identify the benefits of using rubrics, and learn the steps suggested in developing successful rubrics for the classroom.

While it was difficult to formulate one common definition of rubrics, most were focused on two essential elements: a statement of criteria and a scoring scheme based on gradations of quality for each criterion (Peat 2006). According to Anson and Dannels (2002), rubrics were used by both teachers and students. They indicated that the main purpose of using rubrics was to provide feedback as well as instructional guidance during an assignment. Rubrics had three basic elements that included evaluative criteria, quality definitions, and scoring schemes (Popham 1997).

Next, the literature reviewed identified four major benefits of using rubrics. The benefits discussed were increased objectivity, the use of rubrics as instructional tools,
peer and self-assessment, and saved time (Andrade & Saddler, 2004; Goodrich, 1997; Moskal, 2000).

Finally, the literature reviewed suggested six steps in developing rubrics for the classroom. These steps included using models, developing criteria, revising criteria, developing levels of quality, creating a draft, and revising a draft (Andrade, 2000). In addition, the literature reviewed asserted that rubrics should be developed with a great deal of thought and should not be rushed (Goodrich, 1997).
Chapter III: Methods and Procedures

The purpose of this project was to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement in the area of writing. The research questions were:

1. How did the professional literature reviewed define rubrics?
2. What were the benefits, according to the professional literature reviewed, of using rubrics?
3. According to the professional literature reviewed, how were rubrics created and implemented?
4. Did using rubrics with secondary language arts students improve academic achievement in the area of writing?

The researcher worked with the cooperating teacher in order to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement in the area of writing over a period of three weeks. The researcher created and implemented a rubric in order to conduct the study.

Participants

The participants in this study were students enrolled in a pre-advanced placement English class, which was 42 minutes in length and held during the last class period of the day. The study included ten students, four males and six females, all juniors in a small high school in a rural, Midwestern state. Students participating in the study were of limited ethnic diversity. The study was conducted during the researcher’s student teaching experience.
Intervention

The intervention for this study was the implementation of rubrics for instructional and evaluative purposes for three specific writing assignments. For each writing assignment, the researcher implemented a grading rubric (see Appendix A for grading rubric). When the writing assignment was introduced, the rubric was also introduced and explained to the students in a teacher-led discussion. The researcher also modeled use of the rubric in order to guide the student work and the use of the rubric. Students completed their rubric-assisted writing assignments during a three-week period. The researcher evaluated the writing assignments based on the rubric.

First writing assignment.

After studying the Gettysburg Address, students were given the following writing prompt for the first writing assignment, “Of what value to Americans today are the ideas Lincoln expressed at Gettysburg?” The rubric (see Appendix A for grading rubric) was introduced and explained to students using teacher-led discussion. The researcher also modeled use of the rubric for the students. Student essays were graded using this rubric.

Second writing assignment.

For the second writing assignment, students read the memoir Night by Elie Wiesel (1955). After discussing the book, students were asked to respond to one essay question from a list of six essay question options (see Appendix B for essay question options). The rubric (see Appendix A for grading rubric) was again explained to students using teacher-led discussion. The researcher also modeled use of the rubric for the students. Student essays were graded using this rubric.
Third writing assignment.

For the third writing assignment, students read *Ballad of Birmingham* by Dudley Randall. Students learned about the elements or characteristics of a ballad. Finally, students read another ballad, *The Mermaid*, and were assigned to write a short essay describing why *The Mermaid* could be considered a ballad. The rubric (see Appendix A for grading rubric) was once again explained to students using teacher-led discussion. The researcher also modeled use of the rubric for students. Student essays were graded using this rubric.

Instruments/Protocols

In order to gather data, the researcher created a rubric (see Appendix A for grading rubric), which was used to evaluate students on three specific writing assignments. The rubric consisted of five evaluative criteria, three quality definitions for each criterion, and a scoring scheme for each gradation of quality.

Evaluative criteria.

The researcher developed a rubric (see Appendix A for grading rubric) consisting of three main features. The first feature was the evaluative criteria. These criteria were listed in the left-hand column of the rubric. The first criterion was organization. The second criterion was focus. The third criterion was evidence and the fourth criterion was grammar. The fifth criterion was spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. For each criterion, quality definitions followed in the columns to the right.

Quality definitions.

The second feature of the rubric was quality definitions. Three quality definitions, or descriptions of varying degrees of student work, were listed in the columns to the right.
of each evaluative criterion. For example, the evaluative criterion of grammar lists three qualitative levels, including zero to two errors, three to four errors, and five or more errors. For each gradation of quality, the researcher included a scoring scheme.

Scoring scheme.

The third feature of the rubric was a scoring scheme, which corresponded to the quality definitions. For example, if a student response had zero to two errors in grammar, that student received a score of five, or excellent, for that criterion. If a student had three to four errors in grammar, that student received a score of three, or emerging, for that criterion. Finally, if a student had five or more errors in grammar, that student received a score of one, or needs improvement, for that criterion. The best possible score for each assignment, based on the rubric, was 25 points.

Procedures

Prior to implementation of the intervention, the researcher met with the cooperating teacher several times in order to discuss a plan for the action research project. With the help of the cooperating teacher, the researcher selected a class to study and planned the three assignments for the intervention. The researcher and cooperating teacher also worked together to create and edit the grading rubric for the study (see Appendix A for grading rubric).

Next, the researcher presented the project plan to the school principal and received consent (see Appendix C for signed letter from the principal) in order to move ahead with the project. In addition, parents were informed of the project in a letter that was sent home with students (see Appendix D for parent letter). Parents were asked to
return the letter with their signature only if they did not want their child to participate in the project.

Finally, the researcher began the project by implementing the intervention (see Intervention section). The students were required to complete three writing assignments. After each assignment, the researcher collected the writing assignments, which were evaluated using the rubric. For each assignment, students received a score ranging from 5 to 25.

Data Analysis

Data was collected and analyzed in order to answer question four: Did using rubrics with secondary language arts students improve academic achievement in the area of writing? After using the rubric to assess each assignment, the researcher recorded student grades in a spreadsheet (see Appendix E for data collection sheet). The researcher then compared scores on the first, second, and third assignment for each student to determine if scores increased while using a rubric.

Conclusion

In order to answer question four, did using rubrics with secondary language arts students improve academic achievement in the area of writing, an action research project began in April 2009. To gather data, the researcher created a rubric (see Appendix A for grading rubric), which was used to evaluate students on three specific writing assignments. Data was collected and analyzed to determine if scores (academic achievement) improved.
Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement in the area of writing. The research questions were:

1) How did the professional literature reviewed define rubrics?

2) What were the benefits, according to the professional literature reviewed, of using rubrics?

3) According to the professional literature reviewed, how were rubrics created and implemented?

4) Did using rubrics with secondary language arts students improve academic achievement in the area of writing?

In order to answer the fourth research question, data was collected using the grading rubric (see Appendix A for grading rubric). Students were required to complete three writing assignments. After each assignment, the researcher collected the writing assignments, which were evaluated using the rubric. For each assignment, students received a score ranging from 5 to 25. The researcher recorded student grades in a spreadsheet (see Appendix E for data collection sheet). Finally, the researcher compared scores on the first, second, and third assignment for each student to determine if scores increased while using a rubric.

Data Results

In order to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement in the area of writing, data was collected using the
grading rubric (see Appendix A for grading rubric) and was recorded in a spreadsheet (see Appendix E for data collection sheet). In April 2009, the first writing assignment was introduced, completed, and assessed using the grading rubric. Students received a score ranging from 5 to 25; student 1 received a score of 23, student 2 received a score of 20, student 3 received a score of 22, student 4 received a score of 23, student 5 received a score of 21, student 6 received a score of 20, student 7 received a score of 25, student 8 received a score of 21, student 9 received a score of 21, and student 10 received a score of 22. Next, the second writing assignment was introduced, completed, and assessed using the grading rubric. Students received a score ranging from 5 to 25; student 1 received a score of 23, student 2 received a score of 23, student 3 received a score of 23, student 4 received a score of 24, student 5 received a score of 21, student 6 received a score of 21, student 7 received a score of 25, student 8 received a score of 21, student 9 received a score of 22, and student 10 received a score of 21. The data indicated that from the first to the second assignment, five students improved their scores (academic achievement), four students maintained their same scores, and one student decreased his score.

![Progress from Assignment 1 to Assignment 2](image)

Figure 1. Student Scores on First Assignment Compared to Second Assignment
Finally, the third writing assignment was assigned, completed, and assessed using the grading rubric. Students received a score ranging from 5 to 25; student 1 received a score of 23, student 2 received a score of 25, student 3 received a score of 24, student 4 received a score of 23, student 5 received a score of 21, student 6 received a score of 25, student 7 received a score of 25, student 8 received a score of 21, student 9 received a score of 25, and student 10 received a score of 23. The data indicated that from the second to the third assignment, five students improved their scores (academic achievement), four students maintained their same scores, and one student decreased his score.

![Progress from Assignment 2 to Assignment 3](image)

**Figure 2. Student Scores on Second Assignment Compared to Third Assignment**

The data indicated that from the beginning of the study to the end of the study (the first assignment to the third assignment), five out of ten students improved their scores (academic achievement) and five out of ten maintained their same scores. None of the students decreased their scores from the beginning of the study to the end of the study.
Progress from Assignment 1 to Assignment 3

Figure 3. Student Scores on All Assignments

Summary

The ten students who participated in this study were given three specific writing assignments. For each assignment, the grading rubric (see Appendix A for grading rubric) was introduced and explained in a teacher-led discussion. The students completed the writing assignments, which were assessed using the grading rubric. According to the grading rubric results, five out of ten students improved their scores (academic achievement) and five out of ten students maintained their scores when using rubrics. None of the student scores decreased from the beginning of the study (first assignment) to the end (third assignment).
Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this project was to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement in the area of writing. The research questions were:

1. How did the professional literature reviewed define rubrics?
2. What were the benefits, according to the professional literature reviewed, of using rubrics?
3. According to the professional literature reviewed, how were rubrics created and implemented?
4. Did using rubrics with secondary language arts students improve academic achievement in the area of writing?

Meaning of Findings

The findings of this study indicated that half of the students increased their writing scores (improved academic achievement) when using rubrics. The other half of students maintained their same scores from the beginning of the study to the end when using rubrics. None of the student scores decreased from the beginning of the study to the end when using rubrics. This might mean that using rubrics did help some students to increase scores on writing assignments.

Five out of ten students improved their writing scores when using rubrics. These students were able to identify the characteristics of excellent work and used the grading rubric as a guide when completing the three assignments. By distributing, explaining, and discussing the rubric before each assignment, these students were better equipped to produce quality work.
The other half of students maintained their same scores on the three writing assignments when using the grading rubric. When these students were presented with evaluative criteria before each assignment, they were able to produce consistent work. It is worth mentioning that some of these students did improve scores on some of the individual criteria. For example, student one scored a three in the area of focus on the first assignment, but scored a five in the same area on the second and third assignments. Due to fluctuating scores in other areas, however, student one had the same overall score on each assignment.

None of the student scores decreased from the beginning of the study to the end. It is worth mentioning, however, that student ten decreased his score from assignment one to assignment two, and then increased his score from assignment two to assignment three. This might mean that student ten recognized his mistakes on assignment two and used the grading rubric to improve his score on assignment three.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement in the area of writing. The ten participating students were instructed to complete three specific writing assignments, which were assessed using a grading rubric. The rubric was explained and discussed with the students before each assignment. Results of the study indicated that half of the students improved academic achievement (scores) in the area of writing when using rubrics, while the other half maintained their same scores. None of the student scores decreased from the first assignment to the last assignment. The conclusion to be drawn
from this project was that using rubrics might be effective in helping secondary language arts students to improve writing scores.

Recommendations

The researcher recommended several changes to this project. First, the researcher recommended an extended timeline for the study. A longer period of time would allow students to become more familiar with the rubric and to spend more time writing and editing assignments. An extended timeline would also allow for more assignments, thus creating more data for analysis.

The researcher also recommended a larger sample size for the study. The researcher believed that a larger sample of students might show more increased scores when using rubrics.

Finally, the researcher recommended that students be involved in creating the rubric and look at more examples of poor and quality work. According to the professional literature reviewed, students benefited from discussing at length what contributed to the success or failure of sample work. Also, when students discussed and helped to create criteria for the rubric, they better understood what was expected (Andrade, 2000).

Conclusion

In this study, which was conducted over a three-week period in a rural Midwestern school, the researcher sought to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement (scores) in the area of writing. The results of this study indicated that five out of ten students improved scores from the beginning of the project to the end, while five out of ten maintained their same scores.
Therefore, using rubrics might be effective in helping secondary language arts students to improve writing scores.
References


## Grading Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5 - Excellent</th>
<th>3 - Emerging</th>
<th>1 – Needs Improvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>The essay is well organized and easy to follow. The essay includes an introduction, body, and conclusion.</td>
<td>The essay is somewhat well organized and easy to follow. The essay is missing an introduction or conclusion.</td>
<td>The essay is disorganized and hard to follow. It is missing both an introduction and conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>The author focuses on the prompt and clearly addresses all parts of the topic.</td>
<td>The author mostly focuses on the prompt and addresses most parts of the topic.</td>
<td>The author diverts from the prompt and does not address most of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
<td>The author gives specific evidence to support his or her claims.</td>
<td>The author gives little evidence to support his or her claims.</td>
<td>The author does not give evidence to support his or her claims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td>There are 0-2 grammatical errors in the essay.</td>
<td>There are 3-4 grammatical errors in the essay.</td>
<td>There are 5 or more grammatical errors in the essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling, Capitalization, and Punctuation</strong></td>
<td>There are 0-3 errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</td>
<td>There are 4-5 errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</td>
<td>There are 6 or more errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</td>
</tr>
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Appendix B

Essay Question Options

Choose one of the following prompts for your essay. Please type your response (double spaced) in five-paragraph form. Use the provided rubric to be sure your essay is "excellent."

1. Discuss the significance of “night” in Elie Wiesel’s memoir. Cite examples from the story to support your answer.

2. Dehumanization is the process by which the Nazis gradually reduced the Jews to little more than “things” which were a nuisance to them. Discuss at least three specific examples of events that occurred which dehumanized Eliezer, his father, or his fellow Jews.

3. Trace the changes in Eliezer’s spiritual beliefs throughout the book. Cite specific examples from the story.

4. How does Elie Wiesel use symbolism in the story? Cite examples to support your answer.

5. In his speech, which we watched in class, Elie Wiesel makes several points about the lessons of the Holocaust. Discuss these lessons, including examples from the speech and the story.

6. How were the Jews heroes? Cite examples from the story to support your answer.
Appendix C

Signed Letter from the Principal

April 16, 2009

Mrs. Sue Dangler, Principal
Hicksville High School
958 E. High St.
Hicksville, OH 43526

Dear Mrs. Dangler:

During the second semester of the academic school year 2008-09, 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 secondary English classroom increases academic achievement in the area of writing. Mrs. Arlena Fleming 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 Hicksville High School during the second semester. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elaine M. Gerken

Elaine M. Gerken

[Signature]

Signature of School Principal

[Date]

4/16/09
Appendix D

Parent Letter

April 16, 2009

To: Parents of Students enrolled in Pre-Advanced Placement English

During the second semester of the academic school year 2008-09, 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 secondary English classroom increases academic achievement in the area of writing. Rubrics are descriptive guidelines that teachers and students use to establish assignment goals, guide the writing process, and assess 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 April 20, 2009, to Mrs. Fleming.

Sincerely,

Elaine M. Gerken

__________________________________________________________

I do not wish for my child _________________________________ to participate in the writing project.

__________________________________________________________

Parent's Signature
Appendix E

Data Collection Sheet

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