Landmark Teaching Principle™ #5

Provide Models

SETTING GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

Telling students to turn in a five-page paper, a set of math problems, a project, or even a homework assignment can often result in a series of questions about what the expectations are. If we don't provide a model and clear path to follow, we are likely to collect a pile of assignments that vary widely in how closely they meet our expectations. One way we can empower students' actions toward success is to provide clear models, such as both successful and unsuccessful examples of a similar assignment, and engage students in discussion about their own assignments in relation to the models. In addition, sharing a rubric to follow—or creating one collaboratively helps students ensure they are on track to meet or exceed our expectations for the assignment.

RUBRICS

The authors of *How Learning Works: 7 Research Based Principles for Smart Teaching* discuss using rubrics to communicate expectations. They note, "When students do not know what the performance criteria are, it is difficult for them to practice appropriately and to monitor their progress and understanding."[1] Rubrics should include each component of an assignment and a description of what characteristics would result in each score associated with that component.

Example:

Assignment: Comparison of Two Characters				
	Weight	3	2	1
Choice of Characters	10%	Chose two characters that have clear similarities and differences.	Chose two characters whose similarities and differences are not clear.	Chose one character.
Description of Attributes	50%	Describes three similarities and three differences between the characters; elaborates on each; provides a quote from the text to illustrate each.	Describes fewer than three similarities and three differences, and/or provides partial elaboration, and/or does not include a quote to illustrate each point.	Describes similarities OR differences, not both, and/or provides no elaboration, and/or provides no quotes to illustrate points.

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[1] Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. John Wiley & Sons.

Effective Writing	40%	Uses vocabulary from the unit; uses correct paragraph structure; has few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.	Uses no vocabulary from the unit, and/or has a few errors in paragraph structure, and/or has some errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.	Uses no vocabulary from the unit, and/or has many errors in paragraph structure, and/or has many errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.

PREVIOUS WORK

Showing students past examples of anonymous student work can help them see what the expectations are for an assignment, what components might look like, and what errors to avoid. As Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, and Norman mention, these examples can be "even more powerful when you either highlight or annotate for students particular features of the sample assignment that 'work.'"[2] In this way, you can use multiple examples that each demonstrate an exemplary component that students can follow.

For example:

- When asking students to complete math problems out of a textbook, show them examples of student work that involve a clear heading, organized layout, written out steps, and highlighted answers to problems in order to help them set up their own papers.

- When students are completing a project involving a timeline of events, using one student's timeline, another's description of the event, and a third's sketched out model of what happened can help them see multiple ways that they could effectively complete the assignment or the components they should include.

- When students are writing essays, hand out copies of previous essays and have them determine a component (such as correct formatting or the inclusion of adjectives and adverbs) they want to include when they write, and another that they want to avoid.

- When having students complete a lab assignment, examples of previous write-ups might help them see errors in the process that prior students had made and help them focus on the key steps they should take to be successful with the lab.

HOW DOES THIS PROVIDE MODELS?

- By giving students rubrics, they have a clear description of the criteria they need to address when completing an assignment. Alternatively, or in conjunction with rubrics, examples of prior work can help students determine what they could or should do to be successful.

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[2] Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. John Wiley & Sons.