Defined Academy

LAUNCHPAD ACTIVITY

# Formative Self-Assessment: Rubric

## OVERVIEW OF THE TEACHING PRACTICE

There are two types of assessment: formative and summative. Here's a good way to think about the difference: when the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; when the guests taste the soup, that's summative. In other words, formative assessment is about improving work in progress. Summative assessment is about judging the work after it's done. Examples of summative assessment are end-of-unit tests, course or state exams, final drafts of writing, or completed products or presentations.

Research has found that formative assessment is a key practice for effective teaching and learning. It can be used in traditional classrooms and is especially important in project-based learning. Because a project culminates with the creation of a product, presentation, or performance that is shared publicly, the work should be as high-quality as possible. To get high-quality work, we can't just hope for the best--it has to be checked along the way, to guide improvement.

Formative assessment can take the form of feedback from other students, the teacher, or outside experts and stakeholders. Students can also check their own work, by using a rubric or some other set of criteria. A rubric gives students a clear picture of what is expected. When students get into the habit of self-assessment, it's a skill they can take with them throughout their education and when they're on the job.

## EXPLANATION OF THE ACTIVITY

**TITLE:** Self-Assessment Check-In Rubric
**GRADES:** 4-12
**TIME:** 20-30 minutes

**PURPOSE:** This activity can be used for formative assessment at one or more checkpoints during a unit or project, to improve the quality of student work. Students build the skills of self-assessment and self-direction in this activity, and it also helps create a student-centered classroom culture.

## OVERVIEW

This activity works for any major assignment or product students are creating in a unit or project that requires multiple drafts or that goes through a planning stage. For example, it could be an experiment students design and conduct in science; a lengthy piece of writing in English class; a report or presentation in social studies; an analysis of a complex real-world problem in math; a work of creative art.

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At or near the beginning of a unit or project, teachers should share (or co-create) a rubric with students for the major assignment or product. This rubric is then used as a tool for formative assessment, not just for summative assessment when the work is completed.

At one or more checkpoints, students use the rubric to assess work-in-progress, which could be a rough draft, prototype, sketch, proposal or plan, or other artifact. They decide if they are on the right track, or identify what they might need: more time, support, research, or resources, or to learn or review some content or skills. Students share their analysis with the teacher, and the activity concludes with students and the teacher planning next steps based on what they found.

## STEPS

1. When planning the unit or project, decide when checkpoints will occur. You could have just one or several checkpoints, depending on the length of time allotted for the unit or project, the nature of the product, and the needs of students. For example, for a lengthy research project, you might have three checkpoints: after research notes have been gathered, after a rough draft of the written piece has been completed, and after the planning of a presentation.

2. Make sure students have a copy of the rubric (digital or paper) they can mark up or write notes on. Also distribute the “Self Assessment Report” form (digital or paper).

3. Decide whether students will look at all rows of the rubric, or only focus on a few or even one.

4. Explain the activity to students.

5. Set a time frame for the activity. For a simpler, shorter piece of work being assessed on only part of the rubric, less time will be needed.
6. Students review their work, comparing it to the rubric. They should take notes or circle or underline words and phrases in the rubric.

7. Students complete the “Self Assessment Report” form, to be turned in to the teacher at the end of the activity.

8. Students are placed into small groups of 3-4 and compare notes, discussing:
    - What are we doing well?
    - What do we need to improve on?
    - What next steps do we need to take–either on our own or with support from our teacher?

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9. Whole class wrap-up: students report out from their small-group discussion.

## NOTES

- The teacher may also wish to review student work on their own, to be sure students have adequately and accurately self-assessed.

- This activity could be adapted for peer assessment. Students (or teams) could pair up with others to assess the work with the rubric and give feedback.

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