

# FLW: Goals and Outcomes and the Creation of Effective Rubrics

CHRISTIE KITTLE: Lisa Johnson-Shull is going to be our presenter today. She's our associate director of our writing program. And she's also going to be doing a workshop next month tailored towards research papers. So I hope you enjoy today. And I'm going to go ahead and hand it off.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: All right. So welcome, everyone. I had a minute to look at some of the questions that were generated by I guess what you'd call that bit.ly outcomes link, so I can address some things specifically. What I always like to do in a presentation like this is have it, to the best of the conditions, be a conversation rather than me just speaking at you. So the degree to which Spokane and Tri-Cities want to ask questions, you might need to sort of wave your hands around. You're awfully little on the screen, some of you, so that I can make sure that you get a chance to be part of the conversation.

So the conversation today is about goals and outcomes and the effective creation of rubrics. So I'm gonna start just with a little bit of an anecdote, so I'm going to switch to the document camera here. I have had people in multiple circumstances really pooh-poo the use of rubrics as somehow not real life. And I actually heard that anecdote not very long ago, a criticism saying, I don't like to use rubrics for my students, because I just don't see that that's part of real life. And I thought, oh yeah? [CHUCKLES] And this, I thought, was a great example to come across my life.

If you ever had your home inspected, if so, here-- this is nothing but an intense rubric where they take the general categories-- and in this situation-- I don't if you can see that. It's a little bit-- let's see if I can get that a little higher resolution. They'll take categories like the roof or the garage and the carport, your electrical system, the structure the attic, the basement, the fireplace. And then in each one of those situations, they developed criteria for what makes it acceptable and then definitions. Here are the definitions again.

Let me see if I can zoom this in. It's awfully small. Here we go.

So they have acceptable, not present, not expected-- not inspected, marginal, and defective. So these are your analogs to what we do in a course rubric where we would have emerging, achieving, or mastering, or A, B, C, D, F. These are all just the criteria for the proficiency stage that the particular artifact that you're inspecting is at.

So I think it's important when we look at rubrics and we talk about rubrics to say that you can do two kinds of an evaluation with a rubric-- just like home inspection rubric-- one that is summative. This is some ed-speak that sort of summarizes or labels what is true about this particular thing, whether it's a student paper or whether it's a home that's being inspected so that the student can look to see where the areas of improvement need to be for future. Or they

can be formative, which is also ed-speak for a rubric that's in the process of guiding a student to making it better.

And they're very similar, one formative or informative is where the teacher gives the student feedback about what to do next. But even a summative rubric like a home inspection, I can look at this because it's so detailed and know number 10 here, which is in the sort of low category, that that means I need to do some work in that particular area. It might not tell me exactly what the work is that I need to do. But at least I have the information that there is a weak spot there.

So I think the most important thing I wanted to start out with in terms of contextualizing rubrics is just how often we see them in our lives. A credit report is another thing that's based on a rubric. Now these are front and center in my mind, because I was [? still ?] looking at a house purchase. So all of these things show that rubrics are everywhere. So that was kind of how I wanted to locate this conversation.

The other handout that I like to show-- because I think it's really important in terms of how the rubric conversation is all based in vocabulary-- is a handout on wine term. I think a lot of people see this as a very strange handout to have in a rubric conversation. But what I love about it is it shows you how important a vocabulary is to building a good rubric.

So for a minute, if we all just agree to be average wine consumers, none of us really connoisseurs, there is a point where if I all-- gave everyone a glass of wine and I asked you to taste it, you could tell me some simple things. You could tell me whether you like it or you don't like it. You can tell me whether it's sweet or dry. And you might be able to tell me if it's red or white just by looking at the color, or acidic, or some of these very gross motor things.

But the minute I would give you this vocabulary, you would begin to then drill down into what you were noticing to give more information. So a good rubric creates, maintains across the board a consistent vocabulary whereby you communicate with your students so that you can see and then they can see more deeply into what they have created. The other reason that I like to use wine terms to sort of set the stage for a conversation about rubrics-- so for example, if I now gave you this and said, taste this red wine, you might be able to say, it tastes like earth as compared to wood. Because now you have this vocabulary that allows you to see that and taste that, that you didn't have before. Or if it's a white wine, you might be able to tell the difference between fruit and sugar and spice on a gross motor level. And then these subterms just allow you to get more and more precise.

These subterms and these gross motor terms are all discipline-specific. So one of the things about rubric creation is they all are pretty much located in what discipline you're actually in. And the people in the Tri-Cities, forgive me if I keep moving away from the camera, because I'm not used to knowing where it is. So anyway, so I want you to look at this.

The other thing that's really important, I think, about how a wine terms rubric sets the stage for a conversation about rubrics is that at some point, it doesn't matter whether you like a wine or you don't like a wine. If it's doing what it was intended to do, it's good. If it's not doing what it was not intended to do, it's not good. And that has nothing to do with liking it or disliking it.

One of the things that you'll find in peer review all the time, which is why I do not recommend doing peer review unless you really know what you're doing-- and I'm happy to teach people how to do that-- is that if you put students in a peer review without a lot of good preparation, they'll default to I like it or I don't like it. Yeah, no. Is it doing what it's supposed to do or not doing what it's supposed to do, depending on what it is?

So in a wine analogy, I might say a gewurztrami or a moscato, which are very, very sweet white wines-- I don't like either one of them-- does not mean they're not doing what they're supposed to do. They're supposed to be white wines that are very sweet and very dessert-like. So the point would be for all good rubrics is they need to be descriptive as much as they are evaluative. Because it's the description that makes the teacher and then the student, because the idea is that the student then comes to see what the teacher sees, be able to observe things, observe components, and observe features in the rubric about what's working or not working based on what it is they were actually asked to do. So in a wine analogy, a varietal is asked-- a chardonnay is asked usually to be buttery or oaky where as a moscato or an ice wine is asked to be maybe more sweet.

So what I thought I would do then is to bring us back to the reality of writing in rubric creations relative to not just writing, because obviously, some of you might be rubric-ing other things. But if you're looking at rubrics relative to writing instruction, what I've done here is broken out what I call genre components. A genre is simply like a varietal. The varietal would be whatever the wine type is.

The genre in the conversation about writing is what did-- what's the type of the thing that you ask students to create? If it's a writing assignment, did you ask them to create a research report? Did you ask them to create a cause and effect explanation? Did you ask them to compare and contrast or do an eyewitness report, a story analysis, an argument? I have all kinds of different things that people ask students to do that are in the academic genre. You might ask them to do a historical analysis, which is very different than a case study.

Why don't I take a minute here and just ask people, what kinds of writing do you assign? Or what sort of things-- what are some of the genres that are represented here using the definition as type-- types of writing? Yes.

AUDIENCE: Comparison and contrast, and cause and effect.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: OK, you do comparison and contrast, and cause and effect.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: We do research reports.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: You do research reports, OK. Some people will do op-eds. If you're in journalism, it might be an op-ed.

CHRISTIE KITTLE: I have one that's-- I know that it shouldn't-- it's not by itself, but a reflection.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: A reflection, right. A reflection is an interesting one. Because reflection is a perfect one in the sense that if you're going to ask students to write in a particular genre you need to know what goes in that so that they know what goes in it. A reflection may have, in your mind, things that go in it that, in the student's mind, don't go in it. And at the very least, if you explicate what goes in it, then you're both on the same page.

And here's another thing I want to say about rubrics. I've heard many, many times, yeah, I don't-- well, I don't like to use a rubric. Yeah, you always use a rubric, whether it's in your head or not in your head, you're using it. at the very least, get it out of your head so that your students can use it with you. This is particularly important for weaker students.

And what I like about starting here with this concept of genre component as the first stage of creating a rubric is that it doesn't start with evaluation as the predominant perspective it starts with an observation. Like, what are the ingredients of this particular thing that I've asked students to do? And then, you can list them, and that's where you-- I would say you would want to start as an educator creating a rubric is, what have I asked them to do?

And reflection is a great example. Because I'm going to guess that what the components or ingredients for what Christie says a reflection is might be very different from the components or ingredients of what Sam might say a reflection is or what [? Theron ?] might say a reflection is. So the place to start is, what is the type of writing I'm asking them to do? And what are some of those ingredients? And then, those ingredients can be morphed or consolidated into then what ends up in this part of the rubric, which would be your criteria cells vertical-- on the vertical axis.

So let me stop here for a minute. Any questions or comments or anything anybody wants to say at this point? You all good? OK.

CHRISTIE KITTLE: I don't think I would shoot for cat pee, Band-Aids, or kerosene in my wine.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: No, you wouldn't.

[LAUGHTER]

But isn't that fascinating, that that vocabulary so-- are actually how nuanced taste can be. And I think what I like about the wine rubric-- because it's about something that's fairly ineffable. And

we often think that writing instruction is very subjective. But really, it has to do with us not drilling down deep enough into a precise vocabulary to locate what's there.

So back to this idea, then. The rubric is sort of a set of values. It's an articulation of those values. It's an articulation of a set of criteria then that are determined based on a scheme of, is it yay or boo, and whatever's in between. And there are different ways to kind of go about filling in the yay and boo spectrum, and we can certainly talk about that.

But I want to back up just one minute and come at this again. Because I noticed that one question that was asked early on in that computer-generated survey was wanting to know the difference between goals and outcomes. And I think that's a really good definition to have as we move forward to talk about rubrics.

So goals and outcomes, for those of you who like football, we can just look at that goal post. If you like soccer, you can think more about it in terms of a net. A goal is something that you aim for. It's what you shoot for. The kicker in a football game kicks for the goalpost, or the soccer kicks for the net.

I don't know how many Seahawks fans, but if you were a Seahawks fan, you know got rid of Blair Walsh because he missed the goal more often than he should have, which tells you how goals and outcomes are different. A goal is what you aim for. It doesn't necessarily mean you reach it. The outcome is the scoreboard. The outcome is the measure of whether or not you have met the goal and to what degree.

So rubrics do both. They set goals, and they measure outcomes. Anybody want to say anything about that or question about that?

CHRISTIE KITTLE: We had two that got added after [INAUDIBLE]. One was how to teach students how to use rubrics, and the other one was increasing creativity.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Increasing creativity, OK. We'll try to come back to that. OK, so what you can see also in this handout-- and this is something that you, I think, will be given or have been given by Christie-- is vocabulary, then, that should also be an analog to the wine terms that I gave you.

In rubric creation in the Academy, we're using verbs often to articulate what our goals are for students. These goals-- or these verbs particularly come from Bloom's taxonomy, which is 1950 scientists who looked at learning based on kind of a linear scheme. It's more complicated than that. But for the purposes of the Academy and how we work in the Academy and how we structure coursework and how we grade it, I think Bloom's Taxonomy works pretty well.

And what it does is offer you a vocabulary, in verbs, of the kinds of things that you would have as goals-- whether or not you want your students to define, identify, describe, label, list, or name or state things. You would ask your students to do those types of things if you're asking

them to do something fairly simplistic. If you're asking them to understand, then, which is a little more complicated-- I might know the word thesis or the word hegemony, but I may not fully understand what they mean.

All of you have vocabulary in your discipline which students may know the words, but it might take experience and time and repetition to really get the concept. That was true for me for the term hegemony. Took a while to really understand what that meant, even though I knew the term. Apply that term. Use it in a way-- or apply the knowledge is the next level. Analyze, evaluate, create-- these are all things that sort of occupy a little bit of a-- what do they say-- a progression in cognition.

But there's another handout, I think, that does probably that concept a little bit more justice in that it presents it as circular or as recursive, and not necessarily as linear. But the bottom line is when you can start with creating in order to be interested enough to remember, in order to be interested enough to understand and apply, you might start by applying in order to learn how to understand and remember it. So these things are not always linear, but they are important to consider when you ask students to do certain tasks. And they're important to consider in terms of the scaffolding of rubrics and whether or not they're moving from simple to complex over time.

One of the things that you will want to think about-- and I see this a lot with faculty assignments-- is they'll often start here when students don't really understand. And then they'll say, well, I don't understand why my students can't analyze this, take it apart. Well, perhaps they don't really understand what it is they're analyzing quite yet. And especially if they're asked to analyze a sophisticated concept that they don't really fully understand, then you might want to back them up and do some assignments that have to do with understanding it.

Creation now, is, taking the place of synthesis. And we'll see a lot of people asking students to do synthesis when students don't really understand how to take it apart, much less put it together. So this is just another sort of way of looking at how we ultimately come back here to make a document that helps students understand, number one, what do we want them to do?

And then, how do we define success in each one of those things that we want them to do? So your verbs that are in the taxonomy that are in the handouts that I gave you would show up here. But then they'd also show up here in that if they're really doing well at identifying, it'll say, student does really well at identifying the vocabulary of the discipline, or student does really well at analyzing this and this and this.

So all of us, I think, no matter what field we're in, can work from a basic grid like this. I think these often are the best way to lay out rubrics. Although, if you saw from my home inspection report, that rubric is not laid out anything like this. But it's the same sort of concept-- that you have criteria, and then you have degrees of proficiency.

One of the things I often recommend when you are defining success in a category is to put that here. And then, copy and paste, copy and paste, and then back up on the level of proficiency expected. What happens also in rubric creation with people is they'll define success. They'll define achieving. They'll define emerging. They'll define them as three separate things, and then the vocabulary starts to move around.

So you might start here with mastering, saying they really understood the purpose. And then you'll say, but something about organization. And then all of a sudden, students are really confused. So one of the things that's very good about rubrics is I think that they help the teacher and the student to be on the same page about what the expectations are. And then if you fill these in again starting from defining mastery and then cutting and pasting and then simply backing off on the degree of success, then you're not going to end up with that vocabulary that moves around.

Now, I have a pen that keeps moving around. And when I find it--oh there we go. That's because Christie took it. Let's go ahead and fill one of these out. Does somebody want to be a guinea pig about a particular criteria that they might have in an assignment that they give and what a definition of success in the mastery category might look like?

CHRISTIE KITTLE: I have one that I have a lot of trouble defining.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: OK, let's do that. If you have trouble defining it, that's even better, because there's nothing better than like 30 smart people in one place to help.

CHRISTIE KITTLE: There you go. [INAUDIBLE].

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: [INAUDIBLE]

CHRISTIE KITTLE: So one of the things-- I don't know the exact terminology, but I teach future teachers. And they use the [? Ed TPA ?], and it's a lot of-- that's how they get assessed. And one of the words they use is superficial. So part of their rubric, lower end, is like a superficial understanding or a superficial explanation of it. And so I'm trying to copy that over into mine.

And as an expert, it's obvious when they answer. It's like, yeah, and you can see on page 12, they said this. I'm like, and? But basically the level of depth that I really want from them-- I don't want them to be superficial. Yeah. Like, yes, that's factual. It's like for Bloom's, it's moving from being able to state it into what that really means as being a teacher, so getting past that. Yeah, [INAUDIBLE].

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: OK, so the criteria that I hear her talking about is assessing depth, assessing depth in the answer and writing about the answer to a question. Right?

CHRISTIE KITTLE: Mhm.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: OK. So you want sort of depth of answer if you've asked a question. Look at my spatial capacity there, right? [LAUGHS] Had to use the whole box [INAUDIBLE] at the very bottom.

The depth of answer-- so now what we have to do-- because if you say to a student, I want depth in your answer-- and certain students will be like, yeah, I get it. I've been good at this all my life. I know what depth means. And some students may have absolutely no idea, so that's where we have to go now and define.

And you can do this either way. You can start with some vocabulary that defines the exact opposite of mastery and then work your way up. And what I heard Christie saying is it's superficial.

Well, what does that actually mean? What does superficial mean? It doesn't take into account certain things. Help me out here. What does superficial mean to you if you're trying to develop more vocabulary to express that concept?

AUDIENCE: Kind of like a top layer understanding of something.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: OK

AUDIENCE: Not like a very deep understanding.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: OK. So top layer. And we're just drafting here. Yeah?

AUDIENCE: They use non-technical--

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Non-technical, OK. Good.

AUDIENCE: Basic.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Basic.

AUDIENCE: Kind of like an immediate impression, like the thing you come up with inside of five seconds.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: OK. Let's say maybe off the cuff or off the top. So all of this-- and we're just drafting right now-- none of this is wasted time. I think one of the things that's important to realize is that when teachers write rubrics, and they write writing assignments, this is a drafting process as much as when students write the papers that we ask them to write. So you want to be brainstorming, what does superficial mean in terms of the depth of an answer?

So I'm going to look here. Maybe if I look at Bloom's taxonomy now, which is identified as knowing and understanding, or at the low end of the spectrum, maybe a superficial answer

might have the student just identifying, or describing, or stating, or naming, when what you actually want them to do is compare, or discriminate, or correlate, or integrate, or criticize. So you can begin to see how this particular vocabulary when you're at a loss for, what does superficial mean, might actually help you then to explain it, that superficial might be, because it is sort of the lowest level, is simply describing something.

I see this all the time. In the humanities, which is more where I have my playing field, that I'll ask students to do a critique of a particular film. Maybe we're choosing a film that's pretty sophisticated, and we want them to do a critique. And what they do instead is describe or summarize. And so you're reading it, and you're like, wait a minute. I didn't want you to tell me what the movie was about. I wanted you to tell-- wanted you to analyze it.

And again, analysis is one of those that it also really helps to have a deeper vocabulary. Because analyze is one of those words that if students don't understand that they really need to be comparing, contrasting, inferring, discriminating, subdividing, that analysis might just also be one of those words that we use all the time that they don't necessarily understand what we mean. So a huge piece of rubric creation then is this unpacking of a vocabulary that then allows you-- and this is where it rubrics are really helpful to teachers as well as they are to students-- to look at a-- yeah.

AUDIENCE: So I see what you're saying. You're trying to categorize all of these six into superficial and mastery. But I can see even under analysis, you could see people go superficial versus, you know.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Yes. Yes.

AUDIENCE: So even when they're doing the analysis, they might be very general or just the layman-ish.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Yes. And I think that that sort of brings you back to the sort of thing, that it's not really linear and that education is not-- it's really complicated to sort of come up with this vocabulary, that, what does superficial in analysis actually mean? And I think it might mean that they really don't look at all the pieces, that they don't-- let's go with that for a minute.

So the depth of an answer, then, is a little bit different than the analysis of, what, analysis of a concept? All right, so we're going to go-- all right, one of the criteria is you want to see how well they analyze the concept. So let's look at what you would expect to see in a really sophisticated analysis of a concept.

Now, you would expect to see specifics if you're going to talk about-- so probably examples as related to specifics maybe.

AUDIENCE: Relationships?

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: OK. Relationships, good.

AUDIENCE: Argument and instruction.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Oh, OK. Now, let's talk about that for a minute. This actually is going to bring to the next workshop [CHUCKLES] is your argument structure [? thesis ?] to proof or hypothesis to-- so there are different structures for argument.

AUDIENCE: Yes.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: So again, you would then also want to say which structure. If you're in the sciences, your argumentation public has a very different structure than if you're in the humanities. So again, that would be one of those things to start with and then unpack it.

One of the things that is often very frustrating to teachers in the sciences is that students are taught to write mostly by English teachers. So the argument structure that they understand usually starts with the thesis and then proves it rather than starts with the research question and then fills in the evidence or the-- see, I can't even speak in those terms. Anybody a scientist here that wants to give me more vocabulary for maybe the difference between a hypothesis research argument structure versus a thesis argument structure? Yeah.

AUDIENCE: We lay out the-- we'll state our hypothesis, but then we lay out the evidence paragraph by paragraph supporting or refuting that hypothesis.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Right, supporting [INAUDIBLE]

AUDIENCE: And then come to a conclusion.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Then come to a conclusion. So you could either, then-- let's go back to this sort of thing in terms of criteria. Argument structure might be its own thing. And then depending on what that structure is, mastery looks different if it's a thesis-based versus a hypothesis-based versus just a report-based-- which isn't really an argument-- structure. So structure is one of those criteria, then, and you define what's mastering, what's achieving, what's emerging.

Questions, comments, or challenges at this point for this process and what is coming up for you about that doesn't work for me, or that's not how I might see it working, anything like this that can-- give me something to respond to.

CHRISTIE KITTLE: You know I always have something to say.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Right here, always here. That's good.

CHRISTIE KITTLE: The other thing is I always want a rubric for anything from a two-point discussion board post to a 28, 80-point paper. There's certain things that I feel like are just bare bones necessary that I want to communicate. It's like I'm not gonna even bother with this rubric, like if you can't make [INAUDIBLE]. How many things do I put in there? I don't have like a five criteria every single time. Being able to narrow it down, combine--

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Yes. Yes. In fact, that's one of the questions that somebody also put on the link, is, how do I create a rubric that doesn't have 25 different things in it? And I think that's an excellent question. Because one of the things that's really daunting-- it's like my home inspection report. I just wanted to throw it in the trash. It was just like too much. [FAKE SCREAMS] This is too much. This is too much information.

And students are the same way. It's too much information. So part of what you want to do, especially sort of if you've got an assignment that is building across the semester or if you have a series of assignments that are related, is to do kind of a big ticket items first sort of thing. Like, what's the most important thing in this particular assignment that you want students to focus on? Those are the things-- I'm going to get another one of these. You gave me a whole bunch of these blank rubrics. What did I do with them? Here we go.

So part of this is a priority exercise for you as the teacher. Most of us, a piece of writing, any good piece of writing at any time probably has 25 different things going on. It has grammar and punctuation. It has organization. It has a main point.

It has topic sentences. And it has transitions, and it has supporting evidence. That evidence might be anecdotal. It might be research evidence. It has citations. It has all kinds of things going on.

But based on the genre of what it is you are asking them to do and the learning goals, the things you're shooting for in terms of they're actually performing the assignment-- like why did you give them this assignment-- your first and heaviest-weighted rubric items need to be associated with the most important learning goal of why you asked them to do that in the first place. One of the things I see people do all the time is throw grammar and punctuation in there as if it's the be all and end all of what they ask students to do. And unless you are a grammar teacher, unless that's the class, then that probably isn't the most important one that you're working with. And I'll show you how to do grammar and punctuation in a rubric where it's not even in the main one, where it's something you're allowed to notice, and you're allowed to comment on. But it's not in the big ticket or the meat and potatoes place of the rubric.

So one of the things that you want to do to not have 20 items is to figure out early on in terms of the goals that you have, which ones are the most important? I like to use a triage analogy, like an emergency room. You're a doctor. This paper is coming. It's bleeding to death or its heart has failed.

What are the most important things that this paper needs in order for it to have life? And usually if it's been in a motorcycle accident, which most of the papers we see have been, it is not the scrapes and the scratches and the abrasions. It's much bigger than that.

So that's one thing is, especially in maybe the early drafts of a paper, is what's most important? And because if you give students 20 items and they try to focus on all 20 items, then they'll really give you what we often see-- and again, 30 years of my career was spent in a writing center. So I see student papers all day long, every day-- not so much anymore, because I am not a tutor all the time anymore-- but where students are trying to do too much. And so they're not doing a good job at anything.

So again, back to the home inspection analogy. In my home inspection-- I'm looking at this-- the walls need to be painted. The floor needs to be covered. But the most important things are the roof and a heat system and the foundation.

So what are the roof and the foundation and the heating systems of what you've asked students to do? And then, those are the things that really should be the main-- the meat and potatoes. And I would argue you don't want a rubric that probably has more than six criteria. So anybody want to respond to that, challenge that? Yes.

AUDIENCE: Not challenge, but I would say like a good way to-- not to overwhelm students might be to-- if you have a large rubric for a single project, breaking it up into the parts of the project.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Yes.

AUDIENCE: Like a thesis, for instance, did they hit all parts of the correct thesis?

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Yeah. Right.

AUDIENCE: And then, that kind of segments it a little bit into different parts of the products, so they're not as overwhelmed. So you might have-- let's see-- organization. There's a bunch of things that you might have in this.

AUDIENCE: Style.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: OK, style. But I guarantee you for the very first crack at this thing, actually the thesis is going to be the most important. One of the things I see in the writing center all the time towards the end of the semester is a student who's got a 10-page paper and four different main points that they are trying to prove, and it's a mess. And oftentimes what I see is a teacher comment that says, you have no good tense verb agreement, and you have a lot of grammar mistakes. And number three-- it's not a great argument.

It's like [FAKE SCREAMS] The only thing that's important with that particular paper is that it doesn't have a great argument. Because the point of the paper was it to have a great argument. And so the very first thing-- and again, all of these conversations in terms of rubric creation relative to writing instruction-- and rubric creation is not always just about writing instruction-- really means that they focus on one thing, maybe can improve it, and that this gives them feedback on those things, but that these two things would be priority one, meat and potatoes, of an argument.

And maybe then the next time they turn it in-- and you guys are thinking, oh god, they can't keep turning it in. I don't have time. And I do get that. And we talk about that to. The next time maybe these things would be come important. Anybody want to talk about rubric creation that has nothing to do with writing instruction? Yes.

AUDIENCE: So you talked about the formative.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Yes.

AUDIENCE: So if the assignment is about a process, like maybe includes planning, implementation, and feedback [INAUDIBLE] So those could be examples of where you could include stuff that is not writing selections or characteristics of good writing, which would be more related to the content itself.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Yes, more related to the content itself, yeah. And I think actually that's where writing teachers need to focus also, that we often, and people who use writing to have students communicate their knowledge, I think gets too sidetracked with issues of how well it's written, actually, than with how well it expresses the overarching concept that you were trying to teach. And I see that people get tripped up in that all the time. And I'm going to give you just really quickly a way to get around that.

This is what I call sort of a neutral-to-negative rubric. So I would put sort of grammar, punctuation, maybe even citation here. So these are things that are part of a presentation or the production of a presentation that are important in terms of how well that presentation is received. But they really are not part of how well the student understands the information they're presenting.

You can have different abilities that preclude you from graphically writing things and still be an analytical and intelligent person. So what we're listening for-- and I think listening is a really good way to think about it-- what we're listening for in this part of the rubric is, have you mastered the subject, or the concept, or the procedure, or the metacognitive awareness that I was asking for? Can you do this?

But then, here's where-- but you had so many mistakes that it was distracting or detracting or subtracting from what it was you were trying to demonstrate to me that you knew. So the neutral part here is-- for the most part we should expect-- and you're all going to laugh. But for

the most part we should expect that students have mastered their language. And so getting points for it-- no. It's neutral. It's expected.

But if you have troubles with sentence creation, or sentence construction, or grammatical correctness, or correct citations, then you lose points. And if you have lots and lots of trouble, then you lose more points. Now, this is entirely up to you to do. But what I like about this is that it keeps this clear.

So a student who may struggle with sentence construction, they may struggle with the standard edited American English and its conventions, they don't lose out in the core of what you ask them to do. Non-native speakers of English is the perfect example. Move the language stuff out of the way.

And I have teachers all the time saying to me, well, I can't read it. I can't understand it. Oh, you can. You're just not trying hard enough. Trust me. It is very, very rare that you cannot understand what a student is talking about if you try. It happens, but it's only really in severe cases that I found that to be true. And I've read hundreds of student papers.

You have to just step back and stop reading it if you're an editor or stop reading it as if you should have written it instead because you're a much better writer, and read it as the teacher to whether or not that student has demonstrated competence or whatever degree of competence with those meat and potatoes items you were trying to teach. But then, you can say, hey, red flag over here. You had 100%, or you had an A here. Now, you have a C, or a D, or an F, or whatever you decide to do with these, because you haven't taken the time or found the resources or done whatever you need to do. And in the 21st century with the internet, it's really possible for students to do some of this work on their own if you point it out to them.

And again, the Writing Center is not a copy-editing service. But we're more than happy to try to help students learn to be better at these things. And we also have two new courses, just to briefly say-- this is not a commercial.

But the writing program has a new prefix. It's W-R-I-T. We have a 405 course and a 205. 405 is on the books. 205 is in catalog subcommittee that's simply about helping students with sentences and paragraphs so that you would no longer have to be like, what am I going to do? I've got to teach them this. No, you simply need to help them understand it's a problem.

And some people may think certain mistakes in grammar and punctuation are a bigger problem than others. Entirely up to you. I would say that if it's a non-native speaker of English, you have to expect that they're not going to write as well in English as native speakers do. And if you have a tendency to really ding them for it, then I would like you to prove how well you write in another language. It's very, very hard. In the actual standards, which is the American Council of Teacher of Foreign Languages, will allow you to be advanced high in their rubric and still make mistakes with the language. So anyway, this is my way of dealing with, let's stay with the meat and potatoes.

This could be sort of the salt and pepper. It matters. If any of you have ever been on a low-salt diet or had someone cooking for you where there's no salt, like [FAKE SCREAMS] but it is not the most important thing. Anybody want to challenge that, argue with that, have a better way?

AUDIENCE: That's a new perspective. Because I would say that I've been on the other side. Now, it's good to think the way you're thinking.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: So yeah. So I would recommend that. And then, you don't get all caught up in the, well, how many 10% points, when it actually-- anyway, good. All right.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, I really like that as well, how you have the baseline where it doesn't add points, but it doesn't take it away.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: But you can take it away, and you can make a statement. And the statement is, this is going to be a problem for you, and I don't want to not share that with you. And yet, you can use your own personal discretion to determine how much of a problem you determine it is in how you ultimately grade the rubric.

And one of the things that I have-- and I would invite you to ask Christie this in whatever email list she has-- is I have a PowerPoint presentation that takes at least an hour to get through, but it's very, very good about how you use rubrics to grade. It talks about numbers and weighting of categories. It's a PowerPoint that was done by our office assistant who no longer works for us who really is-- it's very self-explanatory.

And it's the part where if you say I want this worth 20 points and this worth 60 points, and I want this to be weighted most, how do you actually do the math so that it allows you to grade? That's not something we have time for in today's conversation, because this is more of just about the gross motor concept of rubrics in general. But if that part interests you, let Christie know. She'll let me know, and I'll send you that PowerPoint.

We have three more minutes. Any questions that I can field? Yes.

AUDIENCE: [? Question ?] Because I teach international students, and we use rubric that...The issue is with some students they come with background with zero knowledge.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Mhm.

AUDIENCE: So how do I make them understand [INAUDIBLE] rubric?

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: You mean they have no knowledge of rubrics?

AUDIENCE: Yes. [INAUDIBLE]

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: OK, yeah. Well, the important thing about rubrics is that it is the over-articulation of the value system of the teacher. What's really challenging about student-teacher relationships as opposed to, say, stakeholder-constituent relationships out of the institution is you have no idea what your teacher values unless she tells you what she values. And so the important thing about a rubric is that it's right here, what's most important to me.

If thesis is number one in my rubric, and it's worth 50% of the grade, then I know as a student that when I go home to study, or I go home you write this, or I go to the writing center to ask for support that this is where she wants me to focus most of my attention. So I think part of a class period that just discusses what rubrics are actually for-- and they are a combination of ingredients. Like, what is in this genre, this thing I've asked you to do?

And you said a compare and contrast. And so that's going to be part of this whole rubric process is, a compare and contrast introduces the subject. It does so in an intriguing manner, so obviously intriguing is going to maybe be on your mastering category. It discusses how the subject's going to be prepared. So in a way-- and it's not like a recipe per se. Although, it can be. That's one of the dangers.

At least tell students-- and this is really good for weaker students that have no idea of the genre they're being asked for. And this is also, I think, helpful in the sciences where, again, students taught to write by English teachers don't know what are the components in a scientific article or in a lab report unless they have been specifically taught. I would say the benefit to students is that they don't have to guess, that you have laid it out there for them. Any more-- Theron.

THERON: So it seems like there's a lot of process that's involved. So for example, in the wine tasting, you would never just give them a rubric. You would also taste the wine, talk to them, and have a conversation, and then give them feedback on their application of the rubric.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Right.

THERON: So that process of self-assessment and peer-assessment with feedback from you is that's part of learning the language.

LISA JOHNSON-SHULL: Right. And for those of you who like to use writing assignments in your class and you have big classes, then I would really advocate a peer-review process, but that peer review is on peer observation, not peer evaluation. So it's really easy for you to ask students to locate things, or name things, or list things, or underline things that they find in their peers papers. None of that is an invitation to say how they liked it or how well that thing was doing. So use peer review in your classes to help you, but simply have peers do actions that involve observation.

Did you find a thesis? If so, underline it. If you found a thesis, what was it? Did it have a conclusion, and what did the conclusion conclude?

Those are things that are not evaluative. They're observational. And you'll get much better results with peer review if it's not critique. It's simply observation.

How many paragraphs were there? How many pages? How many-- I mean, you can choose what you have them observe.

And then, they don't need a lot of instruction. Because it's the teacher that does the evaluation, because that's the instruction that takes the extra education. All right, it is 1:01, and we are done. And thank you for your time. And if you're interested in research writing and how that plays out, then I'll see you next week.