CLASSROOM ASSIGNMENT SCORING MANUAL: Elementary School

May 2002

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The classroom assignment rating scales described here were developed for use in the evaluation of the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP) and the Local District Accountability Program implemented by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Support for the development of this work was provided by the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST); the Stuart Foundation; and the Program Evaluation and Research Branch of LAUSD. The purpose of this manual is twofold: first, to document our work so far, and second, to serve as a training guide for researchers and practitioners who might be interested in applying this framework. This manual also is intended to be a source of information for ways to describe the quality of learning opportunities afforded to students as well as to guide teachers’ attention toward these areas to improve teaching and learning.

The criteria used for investigating the quality of language arts assignments were based on research focusing on effective instructional practices. We focused on language arts because enhancing students’ literacy skills was a goal shared across the schools that were part of LAAMP’s reform effort and many other reform efforts as well. We hope that this framework will be adapted and used by teachers in other subject areas and grade levels as well.

Different types of language arts assignments were collected in elementary, middle and high school classrooms. Teachers completed a one-page cover sheet for each assignment detailing their learning goals and grading criteria and submitted copies of their rubrics (if they used one) and four samples of student work they considered to be of medium and high quality. The quality of the assignments then was assessed using 4-point scales (1 = poor, 4 = exemplary) to rate the following six dimensions:
Introduction

- Cognitive challenge
- Clarity of the goals for student learning
- Clarity of the grading criteria
- Alignment of learning goals and task
- Alignment of learning goals and grading criteria
- Overall quality of assignment

This manual describes each of the dimensions and provides anchor assignments to illustrate each of the scale points for “typical” reading comprehension assignments and “typical” writing assignments with rough and final drafts for the third grade. It is important to note that this manual is a work in progress. It is likely that the descriptors and anchor papers will be revised based on the data we collect from a broader range of schools in the future.

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May 2002
The purpose of this dimension is to describe the degree to which students have the opportunity to apply complex thinking skills (i.e., to think critically, predict, interpret, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information) and engage with core academic content material when completing the assignment task. Specifically, this dimension considers the opportunity students have to construct or transform knowledge as opposed to recalling, describing, or identifying basic information. Additionally, the degree to which students have the opportunity to elaborate and extend their ideas through extended writing in a genre is considered. To receive a high score on this dimension the assignment task would require students to engage with substantive, academic content material and to engage with subtle nuances of the text and overarching or larger significance of the work (i.e., connection to ideas beyond the events in the story). Students also would be required to write extensively on a topic (i.e., to compose a multi-paragraph composition).
WRITING  Assignment Scored a 4 for Cognitive Challenge

In this writing assignment students used Laura Ingalls Wilder’s descriptive, sensory writing style as a model for their own descriptions of a setting. The students chose a familiar place to describe; wrote notes about the place, paying particular attention to sensory details; and then wrote several drafts of their descriptions. Students also drew a picture of their setting as part of their brainstorming exercises.

This assignment was given a score of 4 on cognitive challenge because of the elaborate preparation required of students prior to writing, their involvement with high-level reading content, and the length and sophistication expected in their descriptions. As part of their prewriting, students read and analyzed Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie* and used her writing style as a model for their own writing. They completed a worksheet that structured their prewriting notes. The following are examples of some of these worksheet questions.

- What do I see?
- What do I hear?
- What do I smell?
- What other details do I want to include?
- Will I use lots of details in my description?
- Will I paint a believable picture with my words?
- Will readers feel as if they have visited the place I describe?
Student Work

The beach is the best place to be! Some people walk around the beach, and many come to swim. There are kids playing in the sand and making sand castles, and sometimes the waves destroy their creations. Waves crash against the shore, and slimy seaweed land on the sand. The white and naughty seagulls steal peoples sandwiches while they are dozing under their umbrellas, or playing in the water.

It is very hot at the beach, but it has very cold water. There are dolphins hardly jumping out of the water because they are afraid of the humans, and people are riding on waves, either on their stomachs or on their boogie boards.

The bright yellow sun shines over the large wide salt water sea. Airplanes and helicopters fly over the great and adventurous ocean. The beach is such a lovely place and it has so much adventure.

READING COMPREHENSION Assignment Scored a 4 for Cognitive Challenge

This reading assignment asked students to write an essay comparing and contrasting characters from two books read in class, *The Big Wave*, by Pearl Buck, and *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, by Scott O’Dell. As a prewriting activity, students were given a worksheet asking them to explain the ways in which the characters were alike and different. The following were some points on which the characters had to be compared:

- Where do they live?
- Their personalities
- Their main problem
- What must they do to solve the problem?
- Which likeness between the characters is strongest?
- Which difference is strongest?
This assignment scored a 4 for cognitive challenge because of the high-level reading content with which students engaged and the higher order thinking required. In this assignment students analyzed two high-level novels by comparing and contrasting the main characters. Students not only compared and contrasted the characters on a worksheet, but also wrote an essay on the topic. Students used the worksheet to help guide their essay writing.

**Student Work**

Jiya and Karana are both different and alike. Karana is from Island of the Blue Dolphins and Jiya is from The Big Wave. Karana and Jiya both live by the ocean and their parents both die. However, Jiya lives in a fishing village in Japan, but Karana lives in an Indian village on San Nicholas. Their personalities are different because Karana is lonely when she is left on the island and Jiya is happy at the beginning of the book and sad in the middle then happy at the end. Karana’s main problem is that she gets left on the island and Jiya’s main problem is the big wave. To solve the problem Karana must think of the good times he had with his parents. Their strongest different is Jiya has a friend and Karana is alone.
Assignment task requires students to construct and transform knowledge, and this is evident in students’ work. However, students may engage with surface-level details more than less obvious meanings or nuances of a text. Students also may be required to use evidence to support a position, but that evidence may not be well-supported or elaborated. Assignment task also requires students to engage with substantive academic content material and write extended responses (i.e., at least one paragraph).

WRITING Assignment Scored a 3 for Cognitive Challenge

For this writing assignment, students were asked to write an original fairy tale. Prior to writing their original stories, students read several fairy tales from around the world and discussed common elements the stories shared. They discussed such elements as the special gift or power of the main character, the villain and the problem he or she brings to the story and how the problem is solved. After many discussions about the stories’ common themes, students were instructed to develop their own fairy tales. Prior to writing their fairy tales, students mapped out their stories using a story map.

This writing assignment was scored a 3 for cognitive challenge because it required students to think deeply about the stories they read through analysis and discussion of numerous fairy tales. This assignment did not score a 4 because students were not expected to write thorough detailed fairy tales. Students were expected to have a different paragraph for the beginning, the middle and the end of their stories, but the paragraphs did not have to be proper paragraphs.

Student Work

Once upon a time there was a princess named Jasmine. She was very pretty. Her mother gave her a magic ring that had special magical powers. The rings powers made her invisible. She lived with her mother the queen and her father the king. They lived in a beautiful castle in a beautiful kingdom high up in the mountains.

One day while the princess was singing beautiful songs, the evil witch appeared. The witch said “give me you magic ring.” The princess said no never. The witch became furious and turned the princess into an ugly princess. Then the princess screamed for help. The knight heard her scream and found her in the castle just as the witch as leaving. The princess told the knight what had happened.

After awhile, the knight went looking for the witch. The knight found the witch. Then, the knight threw the witch in the pond and destroyed her.
READING COMPREHENSION  Assignment Scored a 3 for Cognitive Challenge

In this reading comprehension assignment, students were asked to predict how a party given by Beezus in the book *Beezus and Ramona*, by Beverly Cleary, would be similar or different from the party given by Ramona in the book. The exact wording of the prompt was the following:

Ramona’s party was loud and noisy, and was not planned in advance. If Beezus were to have a party, how would it be different from Ramona’s party? How would it be similar? Give reasons for your answers.

This assignment was scored a 3 for level of cognitive challenge since it required that students analyze and compare characters from the book. Students were required to understand the book, speculate or make a prediction, and use details from the text as evidence to justify that prediction. The assignment was scored a 3 and not a 4 for cognitive challenge because students were not required to justify their answers based on what they already knew about the characters from their reading. Although they were supposed to give reasons, they were only expected to do so in a cursory manner, without depth of thought, thoroughness, or elaboration. The following is an example of what the teacher considered high-level work for this assignment.

**Student Work**

Beezus’s party would be different from Ramona’s party because I think Beezus is not going to want to be the boss of the party because she doesn’t act bad like Ramona does. Her party would be organized. It would not have little kids running around the house. It would be the same because they will eat and play.
WRITING Assignment Scored a 2 for Cognitive Challenge

For this writing assignment, students had to write a story using the steps of the writing process. The story had to include the “basic ingredients: characters, setting, problem, solution, ending.”

This writing assignment was scored a 2 for cognitive challenge because it was a writing assignment that required only moderately complex thinking. Students were taught the steps to the writing process and then told to write a story. Students were not given explicit information on how to include the “basic ingredients” that make up a story. Furthermore, this assignment did not require students to engage with any substantive content material.

Student Work

Two Ants

One day there were two ants. They lived in the ground. They thought they were in the mountains. But they were not in the mountains. They were in the ground. They were climbing a wall. But they thought they were climbing the mountains. One day they went to a house. They got in to a glass. The glass had sugar. But they thought it was crystal. They were sleeping in the glass of sugar. The other ants that were with the two ants went home. The next day the people got coffee and sugar. The ants were inside there. So they went inside the people’s mouth and they died.
READING COMPREHENSION  Assignment Scored a 2 for Cognitive Challenge

For this reading comprehension assignment, students answered the following questions after reading the book, Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing by Judy Blume:

   How does the story compare with real life?

   Who is the main character?

   Write three main events of the story.

   What similar experiences did you have with your friends?

Students were expected to write one to three sentences for each question.

This typical reading comprehension assignment scored a 2 for cognitive challenge because it required only moderately complex thinking skills. Students were required to write only one to three sentences for each question, not enough space to answer the questions fully. For this assignment to be considered more cognitively challenging, the questions would have had to require students to grapple with ideas that went beyond the facts of the story. For example, the teacher could have asked students to write about a character’s motivation for behaving in a particular way or she could have asked students to compare and contrast two different characters from the story.

Student Work

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing.

How the story compares with real life?
WHERE IN FOURTH GRADE WE GET TO DO PROJECTS AND A REPORT WITH OUR CLASS, WE ARE GOING TO IN GROUPS, WILL HAVE PARTNERS AND SAME EQUIPMENT

Who is the main character?
PETTER THE图HER AND JUMMY AND SHELLIA. WHO IS DOING A REPORT OF TRAGIC AND AIRPLANE AND

Write three main events of the story?
THERE GOING TO DO A PROJECT BUT FUDGE SCRIBBLES ON THE PROJECT PAPER. AND PETTER GETS MAD AT FUDGE AND HE CRY.

What similar experience you've had with your friends?
I TRIED TO DO AN EXPERIENCE WITH MY FRIENDS CARE CRYSTALS WITH ALL MY FRIENDS.
WRITING  Assignment Scored a 1 for Cognitive Challenge

For this writing assignment, students had to write a one-paragraph story with a beginning, middle, and end, using the following story starter:

Oh no! I was lost! I turned and saw . . .

This writing assignment was scored a 1 for this dimension because students were asked to write a creative paragraph with no focus or structure. There was no evidence that the teacher provided students with any guidance regarding how to structure or develop their story. Furthermore, students were only given a paper with four lines (including the story starter) on it to write their stories, which was not enough room to write a story with a developed beginning, middle, and end.

Student Work

The Abominable Snowman

Oh no! I was lost! I turned and saw an Abominable snowman. I ran as fast as I could to my mother’s cabin. The snowman was big and scary. It had legs that made him run very fast. It had a stick in its hand. I was running then the snowman tripped me with the stick and I fell. This story happened in snowfall forest and suddenly the sun came up. It melted him and I was saved by the sun.

READING COMPREHENSION  Assignment Scored a 1 for Cognitive Challenge

For this assignment, students read an excerpt from the novel, Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing from their basal reader and then filled out a worksheet that asked them to finish the following sentences about the story:
1. The committee decided that Sheila would copy all their written work into the booklet because . . .
2. At times the committee had a hard time getting along because . . .
3. Peter became furious with Fudge when . . .
4. Sheila decorated the booklet with flowers because . . .
5. The story could be called “The Flying Train Committee” because . . .

This assignment was scored a 1 for cognitive challenge because students were required only to provide basic, factual information about the story they read. Similar to the assignment that scored a 2 for cognitive challenge, students read *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* by Judy Blume. However, in this case, students only read an excerpt of the novel from their basal reader. Additionally, students were required to compose only single-sentence responses.

**Student Work**

1. The committee decided that Sheila would copy all their written work into the booklet because
   Sheila had the best handwriting of them all.

2. At times the committee had a hard time getting along because
   Sheila thinks shes the boss because shes a girl.

3. Peter became furious with Fudge when
   he ruined his poster that he and Jenny made.

4. Sheila decorated the booklet with flowers because
   Jenny was mad because she put his name and Peters name.

5. The story could be called “The Flying Train Committee” because
   Sheila saw a train in the air. Jenny said they didn’t finish it.
The purpose of this dimension is to describe how clearly a teacher articulates the specific skills, concepts, or content knowledge students are to gain from completing the assignment. The primary purpose of this dimension is to describe the degree to which an assignment could be considered a purposeful, goal-driven activity focused on student learning. An assignment given a high score on this dimension would have goals that were very clear, detailed, and specific as to what students were to learn from completing the assignment. It also would allow for assessment of whether or not students had achieved these goals.
WRITING Assignment Scored a 4 for Clarity of the Goals

This writing assignment asked students to write a five-page report on an animal of their choice by answering teacher-generated questions such as, “How are its young born? Are they hatched from eggs or are they born alive from their mothers’ bodies?” In completing the assignment, students wrote a rough draft; revised it with a peer; submitted a revised copy to the teacher for editing; and wrote a final draft. The assignment and the responses were written in Spanish. The teacher’s stated goals were as follows:

- How to write a report. Practice revision. Develop the skill of using reference material to find answers. Learn the concepts of life cycle, food chain (whether their animal is prey, predator, or both), habitat, and the idea that different animals live on different continents.

This assignment scored a 4 for this dimension because each of the four goals was clear and specific about what students were to gain from the assignment. The goals pertaining to the life science content that students were supposed to learn was particularly explicit. The way in which they were stated left no question about their meaning. In addition to being clear and specific, the individual goals formed a coherent set of goals that appeared to mutually support the development of students’ report writing skills.

READING COMPREHENSION Assignment Scored a 4 for Clarity of the Goals

This reading comprehension assignment asked students to compare and contrast characters from two books read in class, The Big Wave, by Pearl S. Buck, and Island of the Blue Dolphins, by Scott O’Dell, and to write an essay based on their findings. After a lengthy discussion of the book, students explained the ways in which the characters were alike and different, including a discussion of the pivotal problems both main characters encountered. For this assignment, the teacher’s stated learning goals were:
The broad learning goal for this assignment was to give students experience in organizing their thoughts about the story element of conflict for a main character. I wanted students to be able to recognize a dilemma for a character. I wanted them to analyze character traits and synthesize story elements. We worked on how to write a comparison sentence prior to the assignment. We spent a lot of time discussing both of the books and analyzing conflict for the characters. We did several assignments on prediction of how the characters might solve a problem in a chapter. They could show me their skill by comparing two characters from two books, as opposed to simply answering questions about a character.

This assignment was rated a 4 for this dimension because the stated goals were clear and explicit and focused on skills the teacher wanted the students to learn from completing the assignment. What students were to gain from the assignment was clear: to be able to analyze character traits and conflict for a character; to be able to recognize a dilemma for a character; and to be able to organize their thoughts. The teacher also elaborated on her goals by including how students would demonstrate their skills.
WRITING Assignment Scored a 3 for Clarity of the Goals

For this writing assignment, students wrote an essay documenting a nature hike field trip they had taken. Students were to study plants, animals, and their habitats from the perspective of a local Native American tribe. On the hike, students were guided by a naturalist and learned about native plants and how Native Americans use them for medicinal and other purposes. Back in class, students had a lengthy discussion documenting what they saw, what they learned, and other interesting facts about the field trip. After writing students’ ideas on the board, the teacher asked students to write an essay about their experience.

For this assignment the teacher’s stated goals were:

My goal for this assignment was that students learn to take information they had experienced firsthand and transfer it in an organized way into main points and details.

This writing assignment scored a 3 for this dimension because of the specificity of the teacher’s goals. It was clear what students were to learn from the assignment. Furthermore, the goals were framed in terms of student learning, not activity for activity’s sake. This assignment did not score a 4 because the goals, although specific, were not elaborated.

READING COMPREHENSION Assignment Scored a 3 for Clarity of the Goals

In this reading comprehension assignment, students read *The Hundred Dresses*, by Eleanor Estes, as a whole class. After completing the book, students wrote about their opinion of the book answering these questions:

- What did you learn?
- Which character did you identify with most? Why?
- What connections can you make with the story in your own life?
The teacher’s stated goals were as follows:

My goal for the students was for them to be able to analyze what they read, to state an opinion, or evaluate something in the story. I wanted them to be able to make a connection to their own life.

This assignment scored a 3 for this dimension because the stated goals were clear and focused on skills the teacher wanted the students to learn from engaging in the lesson activities. This dimension was not rated a 4 because the teacher did not elaborate on her goals.
The teacher’s goals are somewhat focused on student learning. Goals are somewhat clear and explicit in terms of what students are to learn as a result of completing the assignment.

WRITING Assignment Scored a 2 for Clarity of the Goals

For this writing assignment, students wrote a story using the steps of the writing process. The teacher’s stated goals for this assignment were as follows:

To use the various steps of the writing process, i.e., pre-writing, rough drafting, revising, editing, final copy.

This assignment was rated a 2 for this dimension because the goal was stated as an activity and did not specify what students were to learn from engaging in the activity. The way the goal was stated seemed to imply that any product would be acceptable as long as the student carried out all of the steps of the writing process. To receive a higher score, the teacher would have needed to clarify what he or she specifically wanted students to learn as a result of completing this assignment.

READING COMPREHENSION Assignment Scored a 2 for Clarity of the Goals

For this assignment, students read the picture book Dr. De Soto, by William Steig, and answered comprehension questions about the story. The teacher’s stated goals were:

We were working on comprehension and answering in complete sentences.

This dimension was rated a 2 because the goal was broadly stated. It was a straightforward goal that students comprehend a text and answer questions in complete sentences. However, there are many skills and concepts that students need to master to fully and deeply comprehend a story. Based on the teacher’s stated goals, it was not clear which specific concepts or comprehension skills the teacher was intending to have students develop as a result of completing this assignment. For this reason, this assignment was not given a higher score for this dimension.
The teacher’s goals are not focused on student learning and are not clear and explicit in terms of what students are to learn as a result of completing the assignment.

**WRITING** Assignment Scored a 1 for Clarity of the Goals

In this writing assignment, students were asked to revise a report using notes provided by the teacher. The teacher’s stated goals for the assignment were the following:

*To delete information and improve the information needed.*

This assignment scored a 1 for this dimension because the stated goals did not describe what students were to learn from completing the assignment. The teacher’s goal of deleting and improving information merely described the activity in which students were to engage. One learning goal for this assignment, for example, could have been that students work on developing their revision and proofreading skills. It is possible that more clearly defined goals that focused on student learning could have helped students understand the purpose behind the work they were doing.

**READING COMPREHENSION** Assignment Scored a 1 for Clarity of the Goals

For this assignment, students were to write about their name and what their name meant to them following a proper paragraph format. Students began by working on a prewriting assignment to collect information about their name and organize their thoughts. The teacher’s stated goals were:

*I want the students to write a minimum of four sentences.*

This assignment was rated a 1 for this dimension because the teacher’s statement of goals was no more than a partial recounting of the desired student activity. More importantly, the teacher did not specify what concepts or content knowledge students were to learn from completing the assignment. It was not clear from the teacher’s goals what these four sentences were to focus on and how they were to work together to create a proper paragraph format (i.e., with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence).
The purpose of this dimension is to assess the quality of the grading criteria for the assignment in terms of their specificity, elaborateness, and potential for helping students improve their performance. How clearly each aspect of the grading criteria is defined is considered in the rating, as well as how much detail is provided for each of the criteria. An assignment given a high score for this dimension would have grading criteria that clearly detailed the guidelines for success and provided a great deal of information to students on what they needed to do to successfully complete the task.
The teacher’s grading criteria are very clear, explicit and elaborated. The teacher uses a rubric that is very detailed and provides specific information to help students improve their performance.

**WRITING** Assignment Scored a 4 for Clarity of Grading Criteria

For this writing assignment, students had to write a story in which they described in detail a meeting between themselves and a character from the novel, *A House at Pooh Corner* by A.A. Milne. They had to describe in detail the setting and events that led to the meeting.

Students’ stories were assessed with the following rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Content** | - The introduction strongly engages the reader.  
- All sentences stay on the topic.  
- A descriptive and varied vocabulary is used. | - The introduction somewhat engages the reader.  
- Most sentences stay on the topic.  
- The vocabulary is somewhat descriptive and varied. | - The introduction is weak.  
- Some sentences stay on the topic.  
- Some descriptive words are used. | - No introduction is evident.  
- Few sentences stay on the topic.  
- The vocabulary is basic and not descriptive. |
<p>| <strong>Setting</strong> | - The description of the setting is elaborated with details. | - The description of the setting is clear with many details. | - The description of the setting is described in general terms with few details. | - There is little or no description of the setting. |
| <strong>Characters</strong> | - The characters are described in clear and specific detail. | - The characters are described with some detail. | - The characters are mentioned, but few descriptive words are used. | - The characters are not described or may not be mentioned. |
| <strong>Plot</strong> | - The plot is thoroughly developed and exhibits originality. | - The plot is developed with some lapses and exhibits some originality. | - The plot is weak and exhibits minimal originality. | - The plot is not evident. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Organization**  
- The sentences are well organized and follow a logical sequence.  
- Supporting details are used throughout the writing. | **Organization**  
- Most sentences follow a logical sequence with few lapses.  
- There are supporting details throughout most of the writing. | **Organization**  
- Some sentences follow a logical sequence with some lapses.  
- There are few supporting details. | **Organization**  
- The sentences do not follow a logical sequence.  
- There are no supporting details. |
| **Sense of Audience**  
- A strong sense of voice or self is exhibited. | **Sense of Audience**  
- Voice or sense of self is exhibited. | **Sense of Audience**  
- A minimal awareness of the audience is evident. | **Sense of Audience**  
- A sense of audience is not evident. |
| **Mechanics**  
- The writing contains two paragraphs with complete sentences.  
- Clear and descriptive vocabulary is used.  
- The writing contains few or no spelling errors.  
- Correct capitalization, indentation, punctuation, and grammar are used throughout the writing. | **Mechanics**  
- The writing contains two paragraphs with mostly complete sentences.  
- A somewhat descriptive vocabulary is used.  
- The writing contains few spelling errors but does not inhibit readability.  
- Correct capitalization, indentation, punctuation, and grammar is used throughout most of the writing. | **Mechanics**  
- The writing may contain only one paragraph with a few complete sentences.  
- Little descriptive vocabulary is used.  
- The writing contains many spelling errors, which may inhibit readability.  
- Capitalization, indentation, punctuation, and grammar are inconsistent throughout the writing. | **Mechanics**  
- Paragraph form is not evident.  
- The writing lacks any descriptive vocabulary.  
- Most words are misspelled and inhibit readability.  
- The writing contains little or no evidence of correct capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. |
| **Legibility**  
- Appropriate spacing, letter formation and size are consistently used.  
- The writing is very neat and presentable throughout the piece. | **Legibility**  
- Appropriate pacing, letter formation and size are used most of the time.  
- The writing is somewhat neat and presentable throughout the piece. | **Legibility**  
- Little evidence of appropriate spacing, letter formation and size is present in the writing.  
- The writing is minimally neat and presentable throughout the piece. | **Legibility**  
- No evidence of appropriate spacing, letter formation, and size appears throughout the writing.  
- The writing is not neat or presentable, and readability is affected. |
The grading criteria for this assignment were scored a 4 because the rubric was clear and detailed. The criteria upon which their work would be assessed also were shared with students ahead of time, furthering students’ opportunity to meet the expectations of the assignment.

**READING COMPREHENSION** Assignment Scored a 4 for Clarity of Grading Criteria

For this reading comprehension assignment, students read a picture book, called *Mufara’s Beautiful Daughter, an African Cinderella Story*, by John Steptoe, and wrote a retelling of the story.

The students’ work was assessed with the following rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6     | • Accurately retells the beginning, middle and end of the story in own words  
      | • Gives essential details  
      | • Includes all story elements (characters, setting, problem, plot, resolution)  
      | • Synthesizes text into a key theme, lesson, oral, or deeper meaning  
      | • Makes a logical inference(s); makes a connection(s) to self/other text/world; and/or questions, agrees, or disagrees with the author |
| 5     | • Accurately retells the beginning, middle and end of the story in own words  
      | • Gives essential details  
      | • Includes most story elements (characters, setting, problem, plot, resolution). Note: these may be implied; they do not need to be labeled, e.g. “The setting was…”  
      | • Synthesizes text into key theme, lesson, moral or deeper meaning |
| 4     | • Retells enough information in own words to adequately convey the beginning, middle and end of the story  
      | • Gives some details  
      | • May include minor inaccuracies  
      | • May include some story elements beyond characters and plot episodes, such as the setting, problem, and/or resolution |
| 3     | • Retells information to minimally convey the beginning, middle and end of the story; some essential information is missing  
      | • May give some details  
      | • May include some inaccuracies |
| 2     | • Retells some of the story but does not convey the beginning, middle and end of the story  
      | • May be out of sequence  
      | • May include some inaccuracies |
| 1     | • Relates a minimal amount of information about the story  
      | • May include information that is off topic |
| 0     | • No response or off topic |
The grading criteria for this assignment were scored a 4 because the rubric was clear, explicit, and detailed. Each scale point was clearly defined and specified what students needed to include in order to successfully complete the assignment. For example, students were told up front how much and what type of information they needed to include in their stories. The teacher also explained the rubric in detail to the students by modeling sample answers and discussing why different score points were given.
The teacher’s grading criteria mostly are clear and explicit. The teacher may use a rubric or an elaborate scoring guide (i.e., a detailed list of the dimensions upon which student work will be scored). The rubric or dimensions are fairly helpful for students’ use in improving their performance.

**WRITING Assignment Scored a 3 for Clarity of Grading Criteria**

For this writing assignment, students were asked to write a letter to a friend persuading them to move to California.

The criteria for grading this writing assignment were as follows:

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This writing assignment was scored a 3 for clarity of the grading criteria because the rubric was mostly clear and specific about what students needed to do to successfully complete the writing assignment. The rubric was not scored a 4 because some of the scale points could have been more clearly defined. For example, “five strong paragraphs with five strong supporting sentences” could have been defined so that students knew more precisely what was expected of them.

READING COMPREHENSION Assignment Scored a 3 for Clarity of Grading Criteria

After reading a story, called “What’s Cooking,” students answered comprehension questions. The following rubric was used:

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<td></td>
<td>• Answer focuses on question throughout and thoroughly answers the question with no extraneous information.</td>
<td>• Answer focuses on question generally.</td>
<td>• Response somewhat answers the question but includes unrelated ideas.</td>
<td>• Answer does not focus on question or only vaguely focuses on question.</td>
<td>• Illegible, no answer, or not related to prompt.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses relevant supporting details to fully explain reasoning behind answer.</td>
<td>• Uses adequate supporting details to explain reasoning behind answer, but some may be irrelevant.</td>
<td>• Uses some supporting details to explain reasoning, but they are not fully developed and may be irrelevant.</td>
<td>• Has little or no relevant details to explain reasoning behind answer.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The grading criteria for this assignment were scored a 3 because the rubric was mostly clear and explicit. For example, the thoroughness of the student’s answer, the relevance of the supporting details, and how well the answer focused on the comprehension question were addressed. However, the criteria lacked the level of specificity needed to be scored a 4 for this dimension.
The teacher’s grading criteria are in the form of a scoring guide (i.e., a list of criteria), or an extremely rudimentary rubric. The list of criteria is not elaborated or detailed and provides little help to students to improve their performance.

WRITING Assignment Scored a 2 for Clarity of Grading Criteria

For this writing assignment, students were asked to write a story about the Abominable Snowman using the vocabulary words, “abominable,” “snow-covered forest,” and “snowman.” The students were to begin the story with the following story starter:

Oh no! I was lost! I turned and saw …

The teacher used the following rubric to grade students’ work:

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<td><strong>Outstanding</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Not Satisfactory</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Unable to Accomplish the Task.</strong></td>
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This rubric was scored a 2 because it did not clearly specify what the teacher was looking for in students’ work. The criteria given for the different scale points were not concrete enough to inform students about how they could improve their performance. It was not clear what the teacher meant by “fluent and articulate” in students’ work. Furthermore, the only criterion that distinguished a 3 from a 4 was spelling errors, which was not mentioned in any of the other scale points.

READING COMPREHENSION Assignment Scored a 2 for Clarity of Grading Criteria

For this reading comprehension task students wrote a retelling of the story, “My Great Aunt Arizona,” after listening to it read aloud. The teacher’s grading criteria were very general:

I wanted my students to be able to demonstrate their understanding of the story by writing a retelling of it with a beginning, middle, and an end.
This assignment was scored a 2 because the grading criteria were fairly non-specific. Unlike the previous retell rubric, which was scored a 4, it was not clear what a student needed to do to show that he or she understood what was read. How much detail did the teacher expect students to include? Was the retelling supposed to be a straight recall, or did the teacher expect the student to add something to show deeper understanding of the story’s meaning? There was so much left open, that unless the teacher modeled with lots of examples of good work, students would likely not know from this rubric what exactly they needed to do to fulfill the task requirements.
The teacher’s grading criteria are unclear and unspecified. The grading criteria do not help students in improving their performance.

**WRITING** Assignment Scored a 1 for Clarity of Grading Criteria

For this writing assignment, students were asked to write a story based on a picture they were given. The teacher reported the following:

I graded the pieces by looking at story development and creativity—completely subjective.

The grading criteria were scored a 1 because they were unclear and, according to the teacher, “completely subjective.” The criteria listed were story development and creativity, which are both very broad. Unless the teacher showed many examples of good work and explained exactly what was meant by “story development” and “creativity,” these criteria likely would not help students successfully complete the assignment.

**READING COMPREHENSION** Assignment Scored a 1 for Clarity of Grading Criteria

For this reading comprehension assignment, students read a nonfiction story, called “Sunken Treasure,” from their text and then answered comprehension questions.

The grading criteria were stated as follows:

The high papers were ones that had more thorough answers. The others had shorter, less detailed answers.

The grading criteria were scored a 1 because they were very broad. For example, they did not address the relevance of the supporting details or specify what the teacher considered to be a thorough answer.
Alignment of Learning Goals and Task

This dimension focuses on the degree to which a teacher’s stated learning goals are reflected in the design of the assignment tasks students are asked to complete. Specifically, this dimension attempts to capture how well the assignment appears to promote the achievement of the teacher’s goals for student learning. An assignment given a high score on this dimension would involve tasks and goals that overlapped completely.
There is exact alignment between the teacher’s stated learning goals for students and what the task requires students to do. The task fully supports the instructional goals. The tasks and goals overlap completely—neither one calls for something not included in the other.

**WRITING** Assignment Scored a 4 for Alignment of Goals and Task

In this writing assignment students used Laura Ingalls Wilder’s descriptive, sensory writing style as a model for their own descriptions of a setting. The students chose a familiar place to describe; wrote notes about the place paying particular attention to sensory details; and then wrote several drafts of their descriptions. Students also drew a picture of their setting as part of their brainstorming exercises.

The teacher’s stated goals were:

**Practice the writing process, create their own sensory style.** To learn to write descriptively, to learn to describe a setting with sensory language that makes the place believable and helps the reader feel present. I wanted them to be able to learn from a good writer and to be able to use her writing as a model for their own writing. This was accomplished by having a class discussion where we talked about Wilder’s specific style of writing in describing the setting of the story. After students chose the place they were to describe, they used a prewriting organizer to help plan their description.

This assignment was scored a 4 for this dimension because of how well the assignment appeared to promote the achievement of the teacher’s stated learning goals. Students were given extensive prewriting activities to help achieve their learning goals of writing descriptively and creating their own sensory style. They discussed the story they read with particular attention to the descriptive style used by the author; created a prewriting organizer to plan their description; and observed the teacher modeling how to use an excellent writer as a mentor for their own writing.

**READING COMPREHENSION** Assignment Scored a 4 for Alignment of Goals and Task

For this reading comprehension assignment, the teacher read the original story of *The Three Little Pigs*, by Paul Galdone, and then *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, by Jon Scieszka. Students were asked to compare and contrast the stories and then decide whether they believed the pigs’ or wolf’s version of the story. Students filled out a “you be the judge” worksheet in which they put either the pig or the wolf on trial. On the worksheet they wrote evidence from the text backing up their choice. After they completed the worksheet, students wrote a persuasive letter to the judge outlining the charges with evidence to back up their opinion.
The stated goals were as follows:

From this assignment students were expected to be able to write persuasively, compare and contrast point of view of the characters, and justify their opinions in writing using evidence from the text.

This assignment scored a 4 because there was exact alignment between the teacher’s stated learning goals and what the task asked the students to do. The task required students to read critically in order to compare and contrast the characters’ points of view. Students also had to write a persuasive piece supporting their opinion with evidence from the text. These were the exact skills that the teacher wanted students to learn as stated in the learning goals, and the task represented an effective way for students to achieve those objectives.
For this writing assignment, students had to use the writing process to write their own individual fairy tale. The teacher’s stated learning goals were as follows:

Students will go through the writing process and write their own individual fairy tale. Students will learn the elements of what a creative-type story should include as well as the main ingredients of any story—beginning, middle, and ending and include characters, setting, problem, climax, solution, and ending.

This assignment was scored a 3 on this dimension because the task was aligned with and supported the instructional goals. However, although the task guided students toward the goals, the goals were not elaborated as well as they might have been. For example, how much revision and editing would be required of students? What specifically were the goals other than learning the elements of a story? For these reasons, this assignment was not scored a 4 for the alignment of goals and task.

For this reading comprehension assignment, the teacher read aloud the chapter book, Morning Girl, by Michael Dorris, about the life of an American Indian girl and her brother. The first-person narrative alternated between the boy and the girl. After finishing the book, students were asked to write a diary entry from either character’s perspective.

The goal of the assignment was:

To demonstrate comprehension by writing from the character’s point of view, referring to events in the text but expanding on characters’ thoughts and emotions.

This assignment was scored a 3 for the alignment of goals and task because there was basically good alignment between the task and the stated goals. The requirements of the task, however, did not support all of the instructional goals. Students were asked to write a diary entry from a character’s perspective, but the teacher did not emphasize expanding on the character’s thoughts and emotions in her directions to them. The task, therefore, in the end was more superficial than the expectations of the goal. For this reason, this assignment was not scored a 4 for this dimension.
WRITING Assignment Scored a 2 for Alignment of Goals and Task

For this writing assignment, students wrote a book report about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., including a table of contents and title page.

The teacher's stated goals were as follows:

The objective was for the students to be able to take information and put it in their own words. They were to write paragraphs organizing them in some order (and have correct punctuation).

This assignment was scored a 2 for this dimension because the goals were broadly stated and were only somewhat aligned with the task. The task was to write a book report about Dr. King. To do this successfully, students needed to first comprehend what they read, and then synthesize and summarize key points in paragraph form following a logical and coherent order. The teacher’s goals for this assignment, to have students put information in their own words and to write paragraphs, were much less specific than this, however. For this reason, we considered the alignment between the goals and task to have occurred only at a general level. In order to receive a higher score on this dimension, the teacher would have needed to state more explicitly what students were to learn from completing the task, and have followed this through in the assignment task and in her directions to the students.

READING COMPREHENSION Assignment Scored a 2 for Alignment of Goals and Task

Following a lesson on volcanoes, the teacher asked students to write down what they knew about volcanoes. The teacher’s goals for the assignment were for students to work on:

Recall, memory, writing skills and remembering important facts.

This task was scored a 2 for this dimension because many of the facts students were asked to recall were actually written on the board for students to copy, thus negating one of the main goals for giving the assignment (i.e., developing memory skills). Also, the teacher listed “writing skills” as a goal, which was general and vague. The teacher did not clearly state which writing skills students would develop as a result of completing the assignment. This task would have received a higher score if the facts had not been left on the board to copy and if the teacher had described her goals for students to develop writing skills with more clarity and specificity.
There is very little or no alignment between the teacher’s stated goals and what the task requires students to do. The task does not support the instructional goals.

**WRITING** Assignment Scored a 1 on Alignment of Goals and Task

For this writing assignment, the teacher read to the students, “‘Twas the Night Before Christmas” and then had them write three paragraphs discussing three things they wanted for Christmas.

The teacher’s stated goal was as follows:

I wanted them to answer the prompt correctly.

This assignment scored a 1 for this dimension because the teacher did not state what students were to learn as a result of completing this assignment. For example, were students to develop better paragraph writing skills or further their grasp of writing mechanics? Answering the prompt correctly could not be considered a learning goal, especially when the content (students reporting what they want for Christmas) was completely subjective.

**READING COMPREHENSION** Assignment Scored a 1 on Alignment of Goals and Task

In this reading comprehension assignment, students had to respond to the prompt below after reading *The Seminoles* by Virginia Sneve.

The U.S. government broke the promise it made in the treaty with the Seminoles. Has anyone ever broken a promise to you? How did you feel? How seriously did you take a promise made by that person afterwards? What does a promise mean to you? Write at least 2 paragraphs telling your thoughts on the meaning of a promise and relating a time when someone broke a promise they had made to you.

The teacher’s stated goals for the assignment were the following:

The student would recall and interpret the information read and discussed. They then would apply one specific concern to a personal experience bringing a better understanding of the Tribe through real-life experiences.

This assignment was scored a 1 for this dimension because students were not in fact required to “recall or interpret the information read and discussed” as was stated in the goals. It was clear from the assignment that students were only required to write about their own personal experience. Students were not required to go further and relate their personal experience back to what they were studying about the Seminole Tribe. As a result, there was almost no alignment between the teacher’s stated goals and what the task asked students to do.
Alignment of Learning Goals and Grading Criteria

This dimension is intended to describe the degree to which a teacher’s grading criteria support the learning goals, i.e., the degree to which a teacher assesses students on the skills and concepts they are intended to learn through the completion of the assignment. Also considered in this rating is whether or not the grading criteria include extraneous dimensions that do not support the learning goals, as well as the appropriateness of the criteria for supporting the learning goals. An assignment given a high score on this dimension would involve grading criteria and goals that overlapped completely.
There is exact alignment between the teacher’s stated learning goals for students and the stated grading criteria.

WRITING Assignment Scored a 4 for Alignment of Goals and Grading Criteria

For this writing assignment, students were asked to respond to the following prompt:

The Best Time: Write a page telling about the best time you ever had with one of your grandparents. Don't forget to tell when and where and use details in your sentences.

The teacher’s stated learning goals were:

To be able to write a memoir about the best time you ever had with one of your grandparents. I want students to be able to develop their writing fully and include description and details and the background leading to the incident. Also, I want students to convey the importance of the incident and how it affected them.

The teacher used the “Autobiographical Incident Scoring Rubric” below to assess students’ papers:

To score a 6, in your writing you will:
- Have a fully developed incident that tells a story. Your writing will include dialogue, movement, gestures, names of people and /or objects, and sensory details that build to a climax.
- Describe the background leading to the incidents clearly using many sensory details.
- Tell why the incident is important and describe how it affected or changed you.

To score a 5, in your writing you will:
- Tell a well developed incident or time that lets readers picture the event in their heads. It may include dialogue and suspense.
- Describe the background to the incident with some sensory details.
- Tell why the incident or time is important and what feelings you remember.
To score a 4, in your writing you will:
• Describe only 1 incident or time, or your writing may be told as a list of events.
• Describe the background to the incident.
• Tell why the incident or time is important.

To score a 3, in your writing you will:
• Tell about 1 incident or time, or your writing may be told as a list of events.
• Describe too much or give too little background information.
• Not tell why the incident or time is important.

To score a 2, your writing will:
• Have stated an incident or time.
• Be very short or hard to understand.

To score a 1, your writing will:
• Have no incident.
• Be about other people instead of yourself.

This assignment was scored a 4 for this dimension because there was exact alignment between the teacher’s learning goals and the grading criteria. The criteria in the autobiographical scoring rubric fully supported the teacher’s stated learning goals and provided guidance about the exact kinds of descriptions and details students should include in their writing.

READING COMPREHENSION Assignment Scored a 4 for Alignment of Goals and Grading Criteria

In this reading comprehension assignment, the teacher read her students the book, My Life With the Wave, by Catherine Cowan, three times, and then students wrote an essay retelling the story. The teacher’s goals were as follows:

The students will show their understanding of the story by writing a detailed retell of the story in their own words with enough information to adequately convey beginning, middle, and end. I want students to be able to write about all the story elements including character, setting, problem, and plot.
The following is the rubric the teacher used to grade students’ papers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Accurately retells the beginning, middle and end of the story in own words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gives essential details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes all story elements (characters, setting, problem, plot, resolution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesizes text into a key theme, lesson, oral, or deeper meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Makes a logical inference(s), makes a connection(s) to self/other text/world, and/or questions, agrees, or disagrees with the author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Accurately retells the beginning, middle and end of the story in own words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gives essential details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes most story elements (characters, setting, problem, plot, resolution). Note: these may be implied; they do not need to be labeled, e.g. “The setting was…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesizes text into key theme, lesson, moral or deeper meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Retells enough information in own words to adequately convey the beginning, middle and end of the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gives some details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May include minor inaccuracies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May include some story elements beyond characters and plot episodes, such as the setting, problem, and/or resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Retells information to minimally convey the beginning, middle and end of the story; some essential information is missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May give some details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May include some inaccuracies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Retells some of the story but does not convey the beginning, middle and end of the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May be out of sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May include some inaccuracies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relates a minimal amount of information about the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May include information that is off topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No response or off topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This assignment was scored a 4 for this dimension because the teacher’s grading criteria fully supported the stated learning goals. The skills and concepts assessed by the rubric directly aligned with the skills and concepts that students were to learn through completion of the assignment. Although the rubric included more detail than the stated goals, the grading criteria still aligned with and supported the learning goals.
WRITING Assignment Scored a 3 for Alignment of Goals and Grading Criteria

For this writing assignment, students used the steps of the writing process to write their own fairy tale. The teacher’s stated learning goals were as follows:

Students will go through the writing process and write their own individual fairy tale. Students will learn the elements of what a creative-type story should include as well as the main ingredients of any story—beginning, middle, and ending including characters, setting, problem, climax, solution, and ending. Also, I wanted my students to be aware of audience while writing and to include descriptive words.

The teacher used the following rubric to assess students’ papers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.0 Writing Strategies</th>
<th>2.0 Writing Applications</th>
<th>1.0 Written Language Conventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students write compo-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sitions that describe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and explain familiar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objects, events, and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences. Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing demonstrates a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>command of standard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American English and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the drafting, research,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and organizational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategies outlined in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Standard 1.0.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students write with a command of standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process (e.g., prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing successive versions).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1.0 Writing Strategies</th>
<th>2.0 Writing Applications</th>
<th>1.0 Written Language Conventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Exceeds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Writes well-developed paragraphs using topic, supporting and concluding sentences.</td>
<td>• Uses above grade level descriptive words and phrases to support topic.</td>
<td>• Uses complex, complete sentences and a variety of sentence structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stays on topic using extensive details throughout.</td>
<td>• Includes personal experience when appropriate.</td>
<td>• Writing demonstrates mastery of punctuation, capitalization and grammar usage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shows complete awareness of audience.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Spelling at and above grade level words is exemplary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Fluent (Meets Standard)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses paragraph form: topic, supporting and concluding sentences.</td>
<td>• Uses descriptive words and phrases to support topic.</td>
<td>• Uses complete sentences using a variety of sentence structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stays on topic.</td>
<td>• Includes personal experience.</td>
<td>• Writing has few, if any, errors in capitalization, punctuation and grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shows awareness of audience.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Spelling of grade level and high frequency words is generally correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses some supporting details.</td>
<td>• Uses some descriptive words and phrases to support topic.</td>
<td>• Some sentences are incomplete with sentence fragments and run-ons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lacks topic or concluding sentence.</td>
<td>• Includes some personal experience.</td>
<td>• Writing has many errors in punctuation, capitalization and grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strays from topic some of the time.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Phonetic spelling is still evident with some high frequency words misspelled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Some awareness of audience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This assignment was scored a 3 for this dimension because the grading criteria supported the learning goals. However, it was not scored a 4 because two of the goals were aligned with the grading criteria at a very general level only. For example, students learning “the elements of what a creative-type story should include as well as the main ingredients of any story” was not specifically mentioned in the rubric.

**READING COMPREHENSION**  Assignment Scored a 3 for Alignment of Goals and Grading Criteria

For this reading comprehension assignment, students were asked to write a concluding chapter for the book, *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, by Richard Atwater, which they had just finished reading. Students were told to make sure that their chapter related to the story and that it had a problem and a solution.

The teacher's stated goals were as follows:

> The students were to demonstrate their comprehension of the novel by including characters and ideas from the story in their chapter. They were also expected to use their learning of proper paragraph writing and punctuation in their chapter.

The teacher's grading criteria were as follows:

> I assessed the students' understanding of the novel by looking at whether or not the chapter related to the novel in an appropriate and comprehensible way, e.g. did they include references to events that occurred in the novel. Also, I looked for whether or not there was a problem and a solution included in their chapter and did they use proper paragraph format and writing mechanics.

This reading comprehension assignment was scored a 3 for the alignment of goals and grading because there was generally good alignment between the teacher's stated goals and the stated grading criteria. Both the goals and the grading criteria addressed comprehension of the story by relating back to the novel. The teacher, however, included skills in the grading criteria that did not correspond with the stated goals, such as problem and solution. For this reason, this assignment was not scored a 4 for this dimension.
There is only some alignment between the teacher's stated learning goals and the stated grading criteria.

**WRITING** Assignment Scored a 2 for Alignment of Goals and Grading Criteria

For this writing assignment, students wrote a report about a topic of their choice. The teacher's goals for this assignment were as follows:

- Brainstorming, drafting, learning to write report of information, and putting meaning to text.

The teacher's grading criteria were:

- Content and written expression.

This assignment scored a 2 on this dimension because both the goals and the grading criteria were vague, making it difficult to determine their degree of alignment. For the goals, the teacher wanted students to learn how to brainstorm, draft, and write an informational report. The teacher did not specify the actual skills involved in this task, however, such as finding resources, taking notes, judging what information would be germane to the report, writing paragraphs using one's own words, etc. The stated grading criteria, “content and written expression,” also lacked clarity and specificity. It was not clear how the teacher intended to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the content of students' work, or the quality of their written expression. For example, did content mean how many facts were included in their report? Did written expression mean clarity, writing in complete sentences, or varying the beginning of sentences? The teacher would have needed to be much more specific about her goals and grading criteria to have received a higher score on this dimension.

**READING COMPREHENSION**

Assignment Scored a 2 for Alignment of Goals and Grading Criteria

For this reading comprehension assignment, students read a book of their choice and then completed a story frame identifying the setting, characters, problem, and conclusion.

The teacher's goals were as follows:

- Students needed to identify all the parts listed above independently, without assistance. As a class we have been discussing these story elements orally almost every day with read alouds.
The teacher's grading criteria were as follows:

I was looking for papers with complete sentences, accurate information, and detailed description.

This assignment was scored a 2 for the alignment of goals and grading because the teacher's stated goals, to identify the setting, characters, problem, and conclusion in the book, only somewhat aligned with the teacher's stated grading criteria of complete sentences, accurate information, and detailed description. The grading criterion of “accurate information” was broad, and hence aligned with the goals on only a general level. Furthermore, the grading criterion of “detailed description” was not included in the teacher's stated learning goals.
There is very little or no alignment between the teacher’s stated goals and what the task requires students to do. The task does not support the instructional goals.

**WRITING** Assignment Scored a 1 for Alignment of Goals and Grading Criteria

This writing assignment required students to choose a character from a story; assume that character’s persona; and describe their life as that character. The teacher’s stated goals for this assignment were as follows:

*Sentences, paragraphs, and writing creatively.*

The teacher’s stated grading criteria upon which the students’ work would be judged were the following questions:

*Did they choose a character? Did they take on the role? Did they follow instructions?*

The teacher added that creativity was not included in the criteria.

This task was scored a 1 because there was no alignment between the teacher’s stated learning goals and the teacher’s stated grading criteria. The teacher’s goals centered around writing: sentences, paragraphs, and creativity. The grading criteria, in contrast, focused on whether students were able to choose a character and become that character. There was no alignment between these two aspects of the assignment.

**READING COMPREHENSION** Assignment Scored a 1 for Alignment of Goals and Grading Criteria

Students were asked to write a retelling of a story of their choice. The teacher’s goal was as follows:

*I wanted them to be able to recall the story in correct sequence.*

The teacher’s grading criterion was as follows:

*I gave students higher scores if they had a lot of details.*
This task was scored a 1 for the alignment of goals and grading criteria because there was no alignment between the teacher’s stated learning goals and the teacher’s stated grading criteria. The teacher’s goal was for students to recall the story in correct sequence, but they were graded according to the number of details they included in their retellings. A student could have included many details in their writing yet not have retold the story in correct sequence. Conversely, a student may have told the story in correct sequence but not included many details. For this reason this assignment received a low score on this dimension.
Overall Quality of Assignment

This dimension is intended to provide a holistic rating of the quality of the assignment based on its level of cognitive challenge, the clarity of the goals for student learning, the clarity of the grading criteria, the alignment of the learning goals and the assignment task, and the alignment of the learning goals and the grading criteria.
In this writing assignment students used Laura Ingalls Wilder’s descriptive, sensory writing style as a model for their own descriptions of a setting. The students chose a familiar place to describe, wrote notes about the place, paying particular attention to sensory details, and then wrote several drafts of their descriptions. Students also drew a picture of their setting as part of their brainstorming exercises.

The following were questions that students were to answer about their settings before they started to write their description.

- What do I see?
- What do I hear?
- What do I smell?
- What other details do I want to include?
- Will I use lots of details in my description?
- Will I paint a believable picture with my words?
- Will readers feel as if they have visited the place I describe?

This assignment was scored a 4 for cognitive challenge because of the elaborate preparation required of students prior to writing; their involvement with high-level reading content; and the length and sophistication expected in their descriptions. As part of their prewriting, students read and analyzed Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie* and used her writing style as a model for their own writing. They completed a worksheet that structured their prewriting notes.

The teacher’s stated goals for the assignment were:

Practice the writing process, create their own sensory style. To learn to write descriptively, to learn to describe a setting with sensory language that makes the place believable and helps the reader feel present. I wanted them to be able to learn from a good writer and to be able to use her writing as a model for their own writing. This was accomplished by having a class discussion where we talked about Wilder’s specific style of writing in describing the setting of the story. After students chose the place they were to describe, they used a prewriting organizer to help plan their description.
The grading criteria were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Proficient| • You described the setting with specific sensory language that makes the place believable and helps the reader feel present.  
             • You understood and followed instructions of assignment. Your work is neat and organized. |
| Apprentice| • The setting is described, but not always in vivid detail. The place may not be believable. The reader may not feel present.  
             • You understood and followed the basic point of the assignment, but missed some details. Your work was fairly neat and organized. |
| Novice    | • The description may be vague or generalized rather than detailed and vivid. It may not transport the reader to the scene.  
             • You did not understand the assignment. Your work was unorganized and messy. |

This assignment was considered to be a 4 overall because it demonstrated high quality on all the dimensions. Students were engaged with substantive content material and were required to use complex thinking skills. The teacher’s goals were clear in terms of what students were to learn by completing the assignment, and these goals were reflected in the grading criteria. Finally, there was exact alignment between the teacher’s stated learning goals and the requirements of the task.

**Student Work**

The beach is the best place to be! Some people walk around the beach, and many come to swim. There are kids playing in the sand and making sand castles, and sometimes the waves destroy their creations. Waves crash against the shore, and slimy seaweed land on the sand. The white and naughty seagulls steal peoples sandwiches while they are dozing under their umbrellas, or playing in the water. It is very hot at the beach, but it has very cold water. There are dolphins hardly jumping out of the water because they are afraid of the humans, and people are riding on waves, either on their stomachs or on their boogie boards. The bright yellow sun shines over the large wide salt water sea. Airplanes and helicopters fly over the great and adventurous ocean. The beach is such a lovely place and it has so much adventure.
READING COMPREHENSION Assignment Scored a 4 for Overall Quality of Assignment

This reading comprehension assignment required students to write an essay comparing and contrasting characters from two books read in class, *The Big Wave*, by Pearl Buck, and *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, by Scott O’Dell. Students were given a worksheet to complete in which they were to describe the ways characters were alike and different. Students also were asked to identify the main problem for the protagonists in both novels.

The following are questions students answered about the characters:

- Where do they live?
- What were their personalities like?
- What was their main problem?
- What must they do to solve the problem?
- Which likeness between the characters is strongest?
- Which difference is strongest?

This assignment was scored a 4 for cognitive challenge because students engaged with high-level reading content and were required to apply higher order thinking skills. Students practiced comparing and contrasting the characters on a worksheet and then wrote an essay based on this analysis.

The teacher’s stated learning goals for this assignment were as follows:

The broad learning goal for this assignment was to give students experience in organizing their thoughts about the story element of conflict for a main character. I wanted students to be able to recognize a dilemma for a character. I wanted them to analyze character traits and synthesize story elements. We worked on how to write a comparison sentence prior to the assignment. We spent a lot of time discussing both of the books and analyzing conflict for the characters. We did several assignments on prediction of how the characters might solve a problem in a chapter. They could show me their skill by comparing two characters from two books, as opposed to simply answering questions about a character.

The criteria used for grading the assignment were specified in a rubric generated by the teacher and the students. This rubric is as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Quality of Assignment</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You clearly stated at least three main comparisons of characters, using specific examples and details from the text. You focused well on the characters’ conflict. You included complex sentences and comparative sentences. Each paragraph had a topic sentence.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You stated two main comparisons of characters. You used some details from the text. You focused on the characters’ conflict, but this needs some work. You included at least one comparative sentence.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You referred to the text without comparing the characters. You need to focus on the characters’ conflict. You need to use comparative sentences.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Comments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “You could use more examples to illustrate how your two characters were happy and sad.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “You need separate paragraphs for the problem and the solution.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Good topic sentences.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You used correct sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, indentation, and spelling.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You need instruction and practice in one or two of the following areas: sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, indentation, spelling.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You clearly need instruction and practice in a few of the following areas: sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, indentation, spelling.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Comments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Excellent spelling throughout.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “You did not indent.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adherence to Instructions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You understood and followed instructions of assignment. Your work is neat and organized.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You understood and followed the basic point of the assignment, but missed some details. Your work was fairly neat and organized.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You did not understand the assignment. Your work was unorganized and messy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Comments</strong></td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This assignment was scored a 4 for overall quality because students applied higher order thinking skills as an extensive focus of the task and engaged with substantive content material. It was clear what skills students were to gain from completing the assignment—e.g., to be able to analyze character traits and conflict for a character; to be able to recognize a dilemma for a character; and to be able to organize their thoughts. The teacher also elaborated on her goals by including how students would demonstrate their skills. The goals also were fully supported by the task and were reflected in the grading criteria. Additionally, the grading criteria were generated by both the teacher and the students, which likely furthered students' opportunity to understand what was expected of them to successfully complete the task.

**Student Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character 1:</th>
<th>Character 2:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong> Jiya</td>
<td><strong>Name:</strong> Karana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Book:</strong> The Big Wave</td>
<td><strong>Book:</strong> The Island of the Blue Dolphins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOW ARE THE CHARACTERS ALIKE?**
There both almost the same age. They both have a problem. They both don't have a family near them.

**HOW ARE THE CHARACTERS DIFFERENT?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With regard to:</th>
<th>Karana</th>
<th>Jiya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where they live</td>
<td>On a island east of California in a village.</td>
<td>On a island in Japan. On the shore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their personalities</td>
<td>She likes animals and has a dog.</td>
<td>Jiya's hurt down inside of him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their main problem</td>
<td>She forgot her little brother and went back to get him.</td>
<td>A big wave comes and kills her Jiya's family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What they must do to solve the problem</td>
<td>She needs to live and take care of herself on the island.</td>
<td>Needs to face fears and the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOCUS QUESTION:

In your opinion: Which likeness between the characters is strongest?

The both like the Island that they live on.

Which difference is strongest?

Karan likes animals and has a dog and Jiya doesn’t like animals.

Jiya and Karana, characters from the books the big Wave and Island of The Blue Dolphins have many differences, however, they both needed to face their losses of their family. When Jiya had done that he decided to build a house on the sea shore however, Karana decided to build a small hut with whale bones as a fence. Both Jiya and Karana had friends. Jiya’s friend was named Kino and Karana’s friend’s name was Pontu, a dog. Karana had a dog as a pet, however Jiya did not like animals and did not have anything as a pet. Those are the differences between Jiya and Karana.

Here are the subjects that are the same. They both live on a island, however Jiya’s and Karana families had both past away. Those are the differences and similarities between Jiya and Karana.
For this writing assignment, students were asked to write a report about Native Americans. As described by the teacher, “Each child chose a tribe, made a character face from the tribe and wrote a report. To help organize their thinking, students filled out a fact sheet on their tribe.”

This task was scored a 3 for cognitive challenge because it required some degree of complex thinking and engagement with substantive content material. Students could have been provided with much more guidance, however, about how to write an informative report. As evidenced in the student work sample, a report considered by the teacher to be of high quality for the class only needed to be one paragraph long. For this reason, this assignment did not receive a higher score for the level of cognitive challenge.

The teacher’s stated goals for the assignment were as follows:

1) Learning about Native Americans, 2) Learning how to do a research report, 3) Writing a paragraph with topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion.
The teacher used the rubric below (translated from Spanish) to assess student work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Progress in Academic Areas</td>
<td>Shows minimal comprehension of grade-level concepts and skills. Still needs to develop appropriate skills for participation. Shows difficulty producing work or the work reflects a lack of development of the concepts.</td>
<td>Shows some comprehension of grade-level concepts and skills. Is developing skills to participate in lessons. Work reflects a limited control of the subjects.</td>
<td>Shows basic comprehension of grade-level concepts and skills. Participates regularly with partial focus on the lesson’s goal. Work is generally satisfactory.</td>
<td>Shows good comprehension of grade-level concepts and skills through significant participation in the work produced.</td>
<td>Shows excellent comprehension of grade-level concepts and skills through active participation in class discussions and work is consistently superior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• English as a Second Language (ESL)</td>
<td>Shows minimal comprehension of grade-level concepts and skills. Still needs to develop appropriate skills for participation. Shows difficulty producing work or the work reflects a lack of development of the concepts.</td>
<td>Shows some comprehension of grade-level concepts and skills. Is developing skills to participate in lessons. Work reflects a limited control of the subjects.</td>
<td>Shows basic comprehension of grade-level concepts and skills. Participates regularly with partial focus on the lesson’s goal. Work is generally satisfactory.</td>
<td>Shows good comprehension of grade-level concepts and skills through significant participation in the work produced.</td>
<td>Shows excellent comprehension of grade-level concepts and skills through active participation in class discussions and work is consistently superior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Level of English Production</td>
<td>Is beginning to understand English; doesn't speak it yet. Shows comprehension through actions.</td>
<td>Responds in English with one word or short phrases.</td>
<td>Understands and uses phrases and simple sentences in English conversation; is beginning to combine listening, speaking, reading, and writing.</td>
<td>Understands and uses phrases and complicated sentences in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.</td>
<td>Understands and uses listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English at grade-level or close to it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This assignment was scored a 3 for overall quality because the task required students to engage with substantive content material, but did not require the application of higher order thinking skills as an extensive focus of the task. The teacher’s goals were clear, but not detailed, and the alignment between the goals and task were adequate for some, but not all, of the goals. Notably, the teacher wrote that students were to fill out a fact sheet about their tribe, but there was no indication that students were instructed on how to effectively research and write up information for a report. Therefore, the task did not fully support the goal of “learning how to do a research report.” Finally, the scoring rubric was fairly comprehensive but did not specifically address each goal. For these reasons, this assignment was not given a higher score for overall quality.

**Student Work**

The Hopi People

The Hopi people were a great Nation. They lived in Arizona and New Mexico. Hopi women baked bread. They plant corn, beans and something and the Hopi say that when people come into the fourth world they climbed through a hole called the Sipapu. For ceremonies they painted their bodies and danced. They made silver jewelry, sashes, kilts, and pots. Hopi have chosen to tend their crops rather than to make war. The Hopi today are a proud people.

The End.

**READING COMPREHENSION Assignment Scored a 3 for Overall Quality of Assignment**

For this reading comprehension assignment, students were asked to write a concluding chapter for the book, *Mr. Popper’s Penguins*, by Richard Atwater, which they had just finished reading. Students were told to make sure that their chapter related to the story and that it had a problem and a solution.

This assignment was scored a 3 for cognitive challenge because asking students to generate new information based on prior events in the story required the application of higher order thinking skills and a deep understanding of the story. Students were not provided with guidance on how to be consistent with the text in terms of tone, character, motivation, or any other components that make up a story, however. For this reason, this assignment was not scored a 4 for the level of cognitive challenge.
The teacher’s stated goals were as follows:

The students were to demonstrate their comprehension of the novel by including characters and ideas from the story in their chapter. They were also expected to use their learning of proper paragraph writing and punctuation in their chapter.

The teacher’s grading criteria were as follows:

I assessed the students’ understanding of the novel by looking at whether or not the chapter related to the novel in an appropriate and comprehensible way, e.g., did they include references to events that occurred in the novel. Also, I looked for whether or not there was a problem and a solution included in their chapter and whether they used proper paragraph format and writing mechanics.

This assignment was considered to be a 3 for overall quality because it required some degree of complex thinking. The teacher’s goals were clear and focused on student learning, although they lacked some specificity. Likewise, the grading criteria were clear but not very explicit, which somewhat limited their potential for helping students improve their performance. For example, statements such as “the chapter related in an appropriate way” could have been more clearly defined, which would have provided more guidance to students about what they needed to do to successfully complete the assignment task. The goals were mostly aligned with the task and grading criteria, though there were some skills in the task and grading criteria that were not included in the teacher’s goals. For these reasons, this assignment was not scored a 4 for overall quality.

Student Work

Mr. Popper and the penguins quickly got used to their new home. They kept warm and lived in a big igloo. Mr. Popper went sledding and he cut a hole in the ice so the penguins could go swimming. They ate fish and sometimes they played with a friendly seal. One morning Mr. Popper could not find his mittens or boots or even hats. The next day he told Admiral Drake “the North Pole is no place for me. But it is great for the Penguins. Mr. Popper said good bye and left. Mr. Popper was glad to see his family and they too. Mr. Popper started painting again. But he never forgot the fun adventures he had with the penguins.
READING COMPREHENSION  Assignment Scored a 2 for Overall Quality of Assignment

For this reading comprehension assignment, students read *Dr. De Soto*, by William Steig individually and in a group. After reading the book, students answered the following comprehension questions:

1. Why did Dr. De Soto have a lot of patients?
2. How did Dr. De Soto work on extra large animals?
3. Why do you think the De Sotos decided to treat the fox?
4. What was wrong with the fox?
5. What tools did Dr. De Soto and his wife use to pull the fox’s bad tooth?
6. What does woozy mean?
7. Describe the plan the De Sotos came up with to keep the fox from eating them.
8. What did the fox really mean when he said, “Frank oo berry mush?”
9. What did you like the most about this story?

Students were provided with the page numbers for where to find the answers to these questions. The teacher’s stated goals for this assignment were as follows:

We were working on comprehension and answering in complete sentences.

The teacher’s stated grading criteria were as follows:

I checked for answers that were in complete sentences and whether they understood the question and wrote it clearly. Certain students had acceptable answers even if not in complete sentences.

This assignment was scored a 2 for overall quality because asking students to summarize facts represents only a basic level of cognitive challenge. The fact that the page numbers were given to the students so that they would know where to find the answers to the comprehension questions further lowered the level of cognitive challenge.

The teacher’s goals were broadly stated, and the grading criteria were undefined and did not clearly specify what students needed to do to successfully complete the assignment. Finally, the task and grading criteria were aligned only at a very general level.
Student Work

Reading Questions: Answer the following questions in the space provided. Use complete sentences. (Note: page numbers on which the answers were found were provided to students.)

Why did Dr. De Soto have a lot of patients?
Dr. De Soto had a lot of patients because he did very good work.

How did Dr. De Soto work on extra-large animals?
He sent them to a special room where he was hoisted into the patient's mouth by his wife.

Why do you think the De Sotos decided to treat the fox?
I think they decided to treat the fox because he looked as if he were in real pain.

What was wrong with the fox?
The fox had a rotten bicuspid and unusually bad breath.

What tools did Dr. De Soto and his wife use to pull the fox's bad tooth?
Dr. De Soto and his wife used an extractor and a winch to pull the fox's bad tooth out.

What does “woozy” mean?
I think woozy means a little dizzy.

Describe the plan the De Sotos came up with to keep the fox from eating them?
After putting the gold bicuspid in, Dr. De Soto said he had a special formula that would get rid of toothaches. He painted the fox's teeth, then told him to close it for one minute. After one minute, the fox's teeth were stuck.

What did the fox really mean when he said, “Frank oo berry mush?”
The fox really meant “Thank you very much.”

What did you like the most about this story?
I like how Dr. De Soto and his wife out-smarted the fox because it shows that little creatures can be clever too.
WRITING Assignment Scored a 2 for Overall Quality of Assignment

For this assignment students were provided with a picture of a bear looking down at a fish swimming in a river and were asked to write a proper paragraph describing how the bear in the picture was going to get dinner. Prior to this writing assignment, the students had been studying bears and their habitats. Students wrote a rough draft that was read and corrected by three peers before writing the final draft.

The teacher’s stated goals were as follows:

Writing a paragraph beginning with a rough draft and proofing by peers. Then writing a final draft for a rubric grade.

The teacher used the school-developed third-grade writing rubric to grade student work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 – A</td>
<td>Excellent—The writing is fluent and articulate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – B</td>
<td>Outstanding—Good fluency and articulation. Few spelling errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – C</td>
<td>Satisfactory—Completion, writer exhibits some articulation and fluency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – D</td>
<td>Not Satisfactory—Incomplete, difficult to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – F</td>
<td>Unable to accomplish the task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This assignment was scored a 2 for overall quality because it was limited in terms of the cognitive challenge of the task. Students were required to infer only a simple main idea based on the picture (i.e., that the bear would catch fish for dinner). The teacher’s goal for this assignment was paragraph writing, and this was not elaborated. For this reason, the alignment of the goal and task occurred at a very general level only. Additionally, the teacher’s grading criteria were not explicit and did not provide students with much information about how to successfully complete the requirements of the assignment.
Once upon a time a black bear named Pomo who was looking for dinner in a lake. First, he checked the water to see the temperature. Then he looked for a waterfall because if there was one he could fall and kill himself. After that, he'll scratch the fish so it's slower because it's hurt. Finally, he catches the fish. Now he has dinner.
WRITING Assignment Scored a 1 for Overall Quality of Assignment

For this assignment, students described three things they wanted for Christmas. This assignment was scored a 1 for the level of cognitive challenge. Students were not required to engage with substantive content material (or any content material), nor were they required to even apply proper paragraph format. The teacher’s stated goals for the assignment were as follows:

To use the writing process to describe what they want for Christmas.

The teacher’s grading criteria were as follows:

The higher papers had more complete ideas. Did they describe three things they wanted?

This assignment was scored a 1 for overall quality of assignment because it did not require students to apply higher order thinking skills or engage with content material. The goals and grading criteria were both broadly stated. Furthermore, the alignment between the goals and grading criteria was virtually nonexistent, because the teacher did not assess any aspect of the students’ work that was explicitly connected to the writing process.

Student Work

There are several presents I want for Christmas. First I want a megatron from best wars.

The second present is a pokédex. The third present is a game boy color.
READING COMPREHENSION  Assignment Scored a 1 for Overall Quality of Assignment

For this assignment, students read an excerpt from the novel *Koya Delaney and the Good Girl Blues*, by Eloise Greenfield, in their basal reader and then answered questions from a worksheet about the story.

The goals of the assignment were:

- I wanted students to be able to answer questions that were in a format they were not accustomed to.

The following was the teacher’s grading criteria:

- Students who fully answered the question got a higher score than students who only partially answered the question.

This assignment received a 1 for overall quality. In terms of cognitive challenge, the assignment did not provide students with an opportunity to think in a complex way. Students only read part of the novel and answered basic factual questions about the story. Further, they were only required to write a sentence for each question. Additionally, the teacher’s goals did not specify what she wanted them to learn from the assignment. Finally, the teacher’s specified grading criteria did not specify what she was looking for in her students’ work. In fact, it was not possible to determine how the teacher graded students given her stated criteria.

Student Work

1. What is Double Dutch?
   A double Dutch is like jump rope but not exactly you have to do tricks.

2. I noticed Loritha DeLaney did not take part. Why not?
   Loritha DeLaney did not take part in the freestyle because she did not know how to do it.

3. Why did Barnett School lose points during the freestyle routine?
   Barnett school lost points because they made a little mistake.

4. Who won?
   The Wilson School won because they did not do any mistakes.
Appendix A

CRESST Language Arts Assignment Rubric
## APPENDIX A: CRESST LANGUAGE ARTS ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC

### Cognitive Challenge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Assignment task requires students to construct and transform knowledge and to engage with less obvious meanings or nuances of a text, and this is evident in the students’ work. Students also may be required to marshal well-supported and elaborated evidence to support a position. Assignment task also requires students to engage with grade-appropriate, academic content material and to write extensively on a topic (i.e., compose a multi-paragraph composition for students at grades 4 and above).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assignment task requires students to construct and transform knowledge, and this is evident in students’ work. However, students may engage with surface-level details more than less obvious meanings or nuances of a text. Students also may be required to use evidence to support a position, but that evidence may not be well-supported or elaborated. Assignment task also requires students to engage with grade-appropriate academic content material and write extended responses on a topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assignment task requires students to summarize straightforward information, infer simple main idea, or apply the appropriate format for a given genre, and this is evident in students’ work. Students may be required to provide reasons for their position but are not required to support their positions with evidence. This is evident as well in students’ work. Assignment task may not require students to engage with grade-appropriate content material, or write extended responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Assignment task requires students to recall very basic information or definitions (e.g., What color was the character’s car? Where did the character go after he left the store? etc.); or to write on a topic with no structure or focus. This is evident in students’ work. Assignment task may not require students to engage with grade-appropriate content material, or write extended responses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Clarity of the Goals for Student Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The teacher’s goals are very focused on student learning. Goals are very clear and explicit in terms of what students are to learn as a result of completing the assignment. Additionally, all of the goals are elaborated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The teacher’s goals mostly are focused on student learning. Goals are mostly clear and explicit in terms of what students are to learn as a result of completing the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The teacher’s goals are somewhat focused on student learning. Goals are somewhat clear and explicit in terms of what students are to learn as a result of completing the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The teacher’s goals are not focused on student learning and are not clear and explicit in terms of what students are to learn as a result of completing the assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Alignment of Learning Goals and Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>There is exact alignment between the teacher’s stated learning goals for students and what the task requires students to do. The task fully supports the instructional goals. The tasks and goals overlap completely—neither one calls for something not included in the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There is only some alignment between the teacher’s stated learning goals and what the task requires students to do. The task only somewhat supports the instructional goals. Or the goals may be so broadly stated that the task and goals are aligned only at a very general level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There is very little or no alignment between the teacher’s stated learning goals and what the task requires students to do. The task does not support the instructional goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>There is very little or no alignment between the teacher’s stated learning goals and what the task requires students to do. The task does not support the instructional goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Clarity of the Grading Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The teacher’s grading criteria are very clear, explicit and elaborated. The teacher uses a rubric that is very detailed and provides specific information to help students improve their performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The teacher’s grading criteria mostly are clear and explicit. The teacher may use a rubric or an elaborate scoring guide (i.e., a detailed list of the dimensions upon which student work will be scored). The rubric or dimensions are fairly helpful for students’ use in improving their performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The teacher’s grading criteria are in the form of a scoring guide (i.e., a list of criteria), or an extremely rudimentary rubric. The list of criteria is not elaborated or detailed and provides little help to students to improve their performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The teacher’s grading criteria are unclear and unspecified. The grading criteria do not help students in improving their performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Overall Quality of Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Excellent quality in terms of level of cognitive challenge, clarity and application of learning goals, and grading criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good quality in terms of level of cognitive challenge, clarity and application of learning goals, and grading criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Limited quality in terms of level of cognitive challenge, clarity and application of learning goals, and grading criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poor quality in terms of level of cognitive challenge, clarity and application of learning goals, and grading criteria.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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