Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip

This month’s tip: Backward Design for Grading Rubrics

Rationale: Wiggins and McTighe’s (2005) three-step backward design process focuses on goal-centered teaching and learning. The process is “backward” in the sense that one considers desired learning outcomes and grading criteria before designing learning assignments and activities.

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<th>Backward Design Process Steps</th>
<th>Focus of the Step</th>
<th>Example: Horticultural Science (HORT)</th>
<th>Correlation: sample HORT Grading Rubric</th>
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| **Step One: Identify “Big Picture” Goals and Questions** | ● What are the fundamental questions with which your learners will grapple?  
● What should students know and be able to do by the end of the unit or course—that is, what knowledge and skills should students be able to transfer? | ● An introductory Horticultural Science course might require students to grapple with fundamental questions about potential landscape uses for woody and herbaceous plants. | A grading rubric—defined as a systematic scoring guide used to evaluate students’ writing, presentations, problem sets, and so forth—draws upon these fundamental questions and goals with detailed descriptions of performance standards:  
By the end of the course, students should be able to:  
● identify and accurately recall ~250 woody and herbaceous plants by scientific names  
● select appropriate plants for specific purposes, given their characteristics and environmental requirements |
| **Step Two: Identify Paths to Achievement and Evidence of Achievement** | ● What goal-centered criteria will you use to evaluate learners’ demonstrated knowledge and performance? | | Sample HORT grading criteria:  
● Plants’ scientific names are identified accurately  
● Plant choice is environmentally appropriate for northern Minnesota |
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Step Three: Identify Goal-Centered Instructional Strategies and Learning Opportunities

| What assignments and activities provide learners the opportunity to grapple with fundamental questions and goals? | Students will serve as guest “Garden Guru” newspaper columnists to answer novice gardeners’ questions about woody and herbaceous plants. | The Garden Guru’s answer to the novice gardener identifies accurately the environmentally-appropriate plants for the “dry” part of a rain garden. | Student demonstrates adequate understanding of scientific nomenclature by identifying woody and herbaceous plants by accurate scientific names. |

Learn more: Attend and participate in the Center for Writing’s TWW Backward Design for Grading Rubrics Workshop

Resources:
- Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Minnesota (n.d.). Elements of backward design [self-paced tutorial].

Questions? Visit us online at http://writing.umn.edu/tww/index.html

Check out this semester’s Teaching with Writing events: Log in to your ULearn account: ulearn.umn.edu. Use the search for C4W to view all events hosted by the Center for Writing.

Further support: Contact a member of the WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) team for a phone, email, or face-to-face teaching consultation: http://z.umn.edu/twwconsultation

Our purpose is to provide practical strategies for teaching with writing. Our goal: to offer timely and pragmatic support to faculty members and instructors who teach with writing in undergraduate and graduate courses in all disciplinary areas.