HANDOUT Title: **WestEd: What is a Rubric?** Handout #:**5**

Content:

What is a Rubric?

A rubric is a scoring scale used to assess student performance along a task-specific set of criteria. Authentic assessments are typically criterion-referenced measures; that is, a student's aptitude is measured by comparing the student's performance against a specific set of criteria for the task. A rubric is a scoring scale used to identify and label the essential *task criteria*, as well as appropriate *levels of performance* for each criterion. What separates a rubric for a checklist or observation protocol is the inclusion of *gradations of quality*.

Characteristics of a Good Rubric:

- Criteria: A good rubric must have a list of specific criteria to be rated. These should be uni-dimensional, so students and raters know exactly what the expectations are.

- Levels of Performance: The scoring scale should include 3-5 levels of performance (e.g., Excellent/Good/Fair/Poor). A four-point scale is preferable for most uses.

- Gradations of Quality: There should be clear gradations of quality based on the degree to which a criterion/standard has been met. These gradations should include specific descriptions of what constitutes *Excellent, Good, Fair* or *Advanced, Basic, Below Basic,* or whatever your levels of performance are. Effective rubrics use a lot of descriptive language. The more specificity used, the easier it is for raters to assign a score and the easier it is for students to verify and understand their scores.

- Continuity: The difference in quality between a rating of 4 and a rating of 3 should be the same difference in quality from a rating of 3 to a rating of 2. All descriptors should model and reflect consistent levels of continuity.

- Reliability: A good rubric should be able to be used by various raters and have them all arrive at similar scores… in other words, it should lend itself to inter-rater reliability. Reliability also refers to time: for example, if you are scoring your 100th essay, the rubric should support you in rating it in the same way you rated the first essay read.

- Validity: A rubric with good validity:
  - rates what it was intended to rate, and
  - scores what is central to the assignment rather than what is easy for the eye to see or simple for the teacher to grade.

A well-done rubric is both an *instructional tool* and an *assessment tool*.