Introduction

The creation and development of the Informative Writing Coaching Rubric took place at Emmet Belknap Middle School in Lockport, New York. This project began as an administrative directive to the English Department. Mr. Ted Werner, the school principal and I, as the English Department Chairman, developed a timeline and process to create this rubric. The main objective was for the English Department to assist all content area teachers in learning a strategy to teach writing no matter what the subject content. Also, a primary objective was to help reinforce the idea of writing as a systematic thinking tool in all content areas. Consistency across the disciplines is extremely important to the student because it reinforces the principals of writing no matter what subject area in which the student writes. Consistent rules and expectations in all content areas from all teachers (not only English) enable the student to know the accountability and expectation of his/her writing level for all classes.

The English Department convened and brainstormed a developmental outline for the writing rubric. It was important for this strategy to be uniform throughout the school and applicable to all subject areas. Across the content areas, students very often feel that they do not need to carry through with the writing process in subject areas other than English. Many teachers have also
expressed concern in "not knowing how to teach writing." The outline includes the topics of Content, Organization, and Mechanics (Addendum A). In addition, a checklist is provided for student use (Addendum B).

The next step in the process was for the department chairman from all subjects to meet and discuss, change, and "genericize" the rubric. The revised, generic Informative Writing Coaching Rubric was then presented to the faculty for their input and revision.

This Informative Writing Coaching Rubric is used at Emmet Belknap Middle School, Lockport, NY for Grades 6, 7, 8 in all subject areas. This rubric is placed and visibly displayed in every classroom in the school as a laminated poster. The rubric is also included in the students' school handbook, and it is accessible for reference in the content-area notebooks.

Step 1: Identifying the Strategy
The goal of this strategy is to enable a student to write effectively in all subject areas. It is important for the student to realize that the writing process is a communicative skill to be used in all subject areas.

Often students have difficulty with transferring writing skill techniques from one content area to another. Involvement of metacognitive reflection takes place during the use of the Informative Writing Coaching Rubric, which includes measures that guide checklists or questions. The real strategy, thus, resides in the student reflection engendered by the constant reinforcement. The qualities of writing on the rubric and checklist are the standard qualities of good writing. The real power of the strategy is teaching these consistent qualities across all the content areas. The activity requires the student to build upon prior skills in writing and to apply them to all subject areas. Students work individually and in collaborative groups to evaluate writing projects and products in all subject areas. Student utilization and application of the Informative Writing Coaching Rubric applies to a student's assessment of writing techniques in all academic areas of study.

Step 2: Modeling the Strategy
The first time the Informative Writing Coaching Rubric is presented to students, it is based on an independent writing assignment to a heterogeneously grouped English class. The assignment objective is for students to write a compare and contrast essay based on the characterization of the main characters Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones from the short story "The Legend of Sleepy
Hollow.” The essay should contain an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs of comparison and contrast and a concluding paragraph.

With the use of an overhead projector, the teacher presents the Informative Writing Coaching Rubric to the class. Each student also has a copy of the rubric in his/her English notebook and Student Handbook. The paper of an anonymous student or volunteer is used as a benchmark example. The division and sub-topics of Content, Organization and Mechanics are reviewed with the students. The Checklist is presented in a sequential order.

Step 3: Scaffolding the Strategy

This Informative Writing Coaching Rubric is administered after any written assignment-paragraph, essay, narrative, etc. The rubric and checklist can be used by the individual student or in a group collaborative peer editing process. The repetitive use of the rubric checklist becomes ingrained in the students when checking their writing process and product. Repetitive use of the Informative Writing Coaching Rubric helps strengthen students’ subsequent writing skills as a universal process in all subject areas.

Step 4: Providing Additional Practice

The Informative Writing Coaching Rubric is presented in sixth grade at the beginning of the year in Language Arts class and reintroduced at the beginning of seventh and eighth grade English class. The rubric is used throughout the school year in all subject area classes for all writing assignments. This is considered an all school writing rubric that has a generic use for all subjects.

Conclusion

Benefits of using the Informative Writing Coaching Rubric include a uniform all-school, all-content area participation in administering the New York State English/Language Arts Standards. This also maintains an all-school focus on preparing students for the eighth grade New York State English Assessment.

Another benefit of the all school writing rubric is an increase in student writing responsibility in all the content areas, along with a higher level of a student writing product.

Thinksheets

Copies are attached.
Thinksheet (Addendum A)

INFORMATIVE WRITING
COACHING RUBRIC

CONTENT

The topic/task/question is clearly addressed.
All information and vocabulary are appropriate, complete, factual and accurate.
The topic is thoroughly supported with details, examples and data.
The conclusion/solution is clearly stated.

ORGANIZATION

Introduction, body and closing are developed in paragraphs to show logical sequential ideas.
Each paragraph shares the same ideas and thoughts.
Each paragraph has a topic sentence, which introduces an idea or thought.

MECHANICS

Proper sentence structure and grammar are evident throughout with no run-ons or fragments.
There are no errors in indentation, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
The paper appears neat and the handwriting is legible to everyone.
Thinksheet (Addendum B)

Content

- Is your topic or purpose for writing clear?
- Did you include information that supports your topic accurately?
- Did your information include supporting details, specific examples, and other facts that will help the audience fully understand your topic?
- Did you do your best to present a full, complete picture of your topic that makes sense?
- Is there other important information about your topic that you should include?
- Did you use specific vocabulary?
- Did you clearly present your conclusion (closing) or solution? Is it logical?

Organization

- Have you organized your ideas in a logical, easy-to-follow way?
- Did you attempt to interest your audience at the beginning with a fascinating or appealing introduction that clearly states your topic?
- Does each paragraph have one clear main idea or topic sentence that is thoroughly developed?
- Does each paragraph stick to its own main idea?
- Did you use transitions to help your audience follow your train of thought from paragraph to paragraph?

Mechanics

- Have you indented the first line of each paragraph?
- Does each sentence begin with a capital letter and close with an end mark (., !, ?)?
- Does each sentence form a complete thought with no run-on sentences or fragments?
- Did you use words accurately, following rules for proper grammar?
- Did you follow all capitalization and punctuation rules?
- Did you correctly spell all words?
- Did you use your most legible handwriting?
- Does your paper appear neat?