

Assessment in Prentice Hall Senior English

Assessment suggestions and practices in *Prentice Hall Senior English* have been made with the following assumptions:

- Assessment is a natural and ongoing part of the teaching/learning process. In this way, assessment will be **authentic, interactive, and focused on improving student achievement**.
- Assessment should be **multifaceted**, so that insights into student performance are based on many indicators and use a range of strategies. Students should be given numerous and varied opportunities to demonstrate their achievement. The aim is to gather quality information about students' performance in authentic situations and to use that information in informed ways.
- Assessment criteria and standards should be **clear to students** so that they can increasingly become more adept at assessing their own learning. Students will produce better products when the criteria for assessment have been made clear to them.
- Assessment is **proactive and constructive**. Assessment of the process is as important as assessment of the product. With the help of their teachers and the proficient use of the assessment tools provided, students can be guided to plan strategies for improvement.

Effective assessment involves much more than judging the extent to which students have met course expectations. While assessment *of* learning is a key aspect of effective programs, assessment *for* learning can play an even larger role in improving students' understanding; their creative, critical, and inquiry skills; the quality of their communication; and their ability to make connections and apply what they have learned. Well-constructed rubrics can support both kinds of assessment.

Assessment in *Prentice Hall Senior English* is based on research that documented the power of assessment and evaluation to improve student achievement significantly, particularly for low-achieving students. Researchers Paul Black and Dylan William¹ have identified five key factors in using assessment practices to create improved results:

- **Providing effective descriptive feedback to students**

Both the rubrics and checklists in the teacher resource and the checklists in *Reference Points* provide detailed descriptions of specific aspects of a wide variety of products and processes. These help students to understand what is expected of them, as well as provide profiles of what they have achieved and what they need to work on.

- **Actively involving students in their learning and assessment**

Prentice Hall Senior English offers a variety of strategies and resources that can help teachers to actively involve students. Learning activities and performance tasks in both *Viewpoints 12* and the teacher resource are *open-ended* and often provide structured opportunities for students to make choices about how they will approach their work, what specific content or issues they will address, and how they will represent and demonstrate their learning. Teachers are frequently encouraged to engage students in identifying criteria and descriptions of quality work.

- **Adjusting instruction to reflect assessment results**

The rubrics and checklists in the teacher resource allow teachers to assess specific areas of achievement and weakness for individual students and the class. The resulting diagnostic patterns can be used

¹ Paul J. Black and Dylan William, "Assessment and Classroom Learning," *Assessment in Education* 5, no. 1 (1998): 7-74.

to guide instruction (i.e., to make decisions about which areas need further attention, what kinds of tasks and materials might be appropriate as a next step, and how to provide appropriate challenges for students).

- **Recognizing the powerful effect assessment has on motivation and self-esteem (both of which, in turn, influence achievement)**

Student motivation and self-esteem are enhanced when students know what they are expected to accomplish and how their work will be assessed (i.e., when they have clear targets for success that are within their capabilities, when they are able to understand and implement strategies for improving, and when they can recognize small steps and progress). The rubrics in the teacher resource help to define expectations in specific, understandable terms, and, through the detailed descriptions of four levels, provide targets and allow students to recognize small steps of improvement. The profiles of achievement that the rubrics provide—rather than unitary evaluative judgments—allow students to feel a sense of control and optimism about their ability to improve.

- **Providing opportunities for students to learn how to assess themselves and how to improve**

Prentice Hall Senior English emphasizes the importance of engaging students in reflection, metacognition, and goal-setting. The rubrics, checklists, self-evaluation strategies, and metacognition forms can support students in learning *how* to self-assess; in knowing *why* it is important to reflect on their progress; and in *applying* this knowledge to analyze their progress, according to relevant criteria, to set appropriate goals and create realistic and effective action plans. These skills and dispositions are important not only within the context of school study, but also in the context of lifelong learning.

Teachers, Students, and Peers

Viewpoints 12 provides opportunities for students to practise and demonstrate curriculum expectations through a wide variety of performance tasks, accompanied by a comprehensive set of rubrics and checklists that reflect the grade 12 expectations and the Achievement Chart for English. A variety of strategies and tools for prompting metacognition is also provided (see Assessment Masters 178–181).

- *Teachers* can use the materials for *diagnostic, formative*, and *summative* assessment and evaluation, focusing on descriptive feedback that supports students as they develop and practise skills and understanding. The materials can also be useful in evaluating the extent to which students have met expectations and adjusting instruction as needed. The rubrics and checklists in the teacher resource can also provide models for teachers and students to create or tailor their own assessment tools.
- *Students* can use the assessment and evaluation tools to guide them as they work on various assignments and performance tasks. The materials can also prompt reflection and assist with personal goal-setting. In some cases, teachers might choose to have students submit a self-evaluation along with a completed assignment. This can help teachers to diagnose the extent to which students understand the nature of the work required. When the assessment tools are combined with an emphasis on metacognition, students are able to assess themselves and chart paths to improvement.
- *Students* can also use the rubrics and checklists to provide descriptive feedback to their *peers*. This feedback is generally most helpful while students are preparing an assignment or practising a skill or process.

Viewpoints 12

- Selections are followed by activities that encourage students to develop and demonstrate, collaboratively and independently, the knowledge and skills required by the curriculum.
- At the end of each unit and “In-Depth” section are **consolidating** and **culminating activities and tasks**. Some of these activities allow students to consolidate their critical thinking and communication skills as they reflect on the unit as a whole, while others provide opportunities for assessment (using the scoring rubric provided in the teacher resource). Suggestions for using these activities and tasks appear at the end of each unit’s Course Planning Chart.

Reference Points

- **Learning Focus** boxes appear throughout the text, identifying the knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop and demonstrate.
- **Checklists** and key questions for handy reference and self-assessment are provided throughout.

Viewpoints and Reference Points Teacher Resource 12

- The Course Planning Charts identify the curriculum coverage options offered by each selection, as well as the related material in *Reference Points* and the teacher resource.
- Notes for each selection identify the assessment options and tools that are supplied.
- Suggestions for performance assessment using the activities at the end of each “In-Depth” section and each unit are provided, and appropriate rubrics identified.

- The teacher resource contains 181 blackline masters:
 - 35 **assessment rubrics**
 - 24 **assessment checklists**
 - 4 **metacognition forms**
 - 77 to save time in supporting specific activities
 - 41 language instruction and grammar sheets

These blackline masters will help students in their independent self-assessment, while assisting them to understand clearly methods for improvement as they consolidate their literacy, critical thinking, and communication skills in their final mandatory English course.

Tips for Using Rubrics

- Be selective about when and how you use rubrics. Focus on important assignments and on products/processes that are particularly important in your course. Over-using rubrics will trivialize them and decrease their impact on student learning. Not every assignment needs to be evaluated with a rubric.
- Introduce one rubric at a time. Allow students to become comfortable and confident in using a rubric before introducing others.
- Distribute and discuss the rubric you will be using to evaluate a task or project before students begin working. Clearly identify any criteria or descriptors that are not relevant. (Note: It is not necessary to use all the descriptors for every assessment.)
- When students are working with a new rubric, provide opportunities for them to discuss the criteria, to state the descriptions in their own words, and to practise evaluating samples from previous classes or other sources.
- Consider making a copy of a rubric for each student; then use a highlighter pen to indicate which descriptions best reflect the qualities you see in a student’s work. Where students complete similar assignments over time, you can use the same copy of the rubric but change the colour of highlighter you use. This technique allows you and the student to see clearly the nature and extent of improvement.
- Try to focus students’ attention on the descriptors (assessment) rather than emphasizing the levels (evaluation). While students know that the evaluation levels are critical in terms of their eventual achievement in the course, it is the descriptors that can help them improve.
- If possible, create a selection of samples that illustrate various levels of achievement on tasks that are frequently repeated throughout the course (e.g., essays of various types, character analyses, poetry). Make these samples easily accessible (e.g., in the library or resource centre), so that students can consult them independently.
- Once students have some experience with the rubrics for this course, provide opportunities for them to work collaboratively to develop rubrics for specific tasks and assignments. You might begin by having them develop rubrics for activities outside of school (e.g., a vacation, a dance lesson).
- Tailor existing rubrics, as needed, to ensure that they are useful for your class and assignments. Elicit students’ suggestions for changes and improvements. In some cases, you might combine parts of two or more rubrics to create a new one. You can customize the content of the rubrics provided with this resource using the Microsoft Word files for the rubrics, included on the *Teacher Resource CD-ROM*.