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Please submit in duplicate.
Idealism, Pragmatism, and Student Motivation:
Implementing Grading Systems, Practices, and Policies in Context

(TITLE)

BY
Kaleigh McRoberts

THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2016
YEAR

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Abstract

This thesis argues for the implementation of contextually-appropriate policies and practices that not only clarify the meaning of grades for teachers, parents, and students, but also give students more autonomy and improve their intrinsic motivation to learn. The literature about motivation reveals that the conventional wisdom—the use of contingent rewards—works when students are asked to complete simple, algorithmic tasks such as turning in assignments on time, but not when they're asked to complete complex, heuristic tasks such as those articulated by the Common Core State Standards. The literature about grading and grading systems reveals similarly misleading conventional wisdom: Educators often assume there is a shared understanding of what grades mean, but there is not. Varied purposes lead teachers to implement varied policies and practices that have a significant impact on how students perceive learning and how they complete their assignments. The final chapter of this thesis offers contextually-appropriate recommendations for one rural, public high school making the transition to the standards-based grading system. Though there is no research arguing that this system is better than another, an examination of the school's context suggests this system—and the recommended purpose, policies, and practices that align with it—will clearly communicate the meaning of grades, improve students' autonomy, and increase their intrinsic motivation to learn.
To my grandfather, Dr. Jerry W. McRoberts
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Finally, I wish to thank all of my professors in Eastern Illinois University’s English department. I am a better teacher because of their support and encouragement, and much of my career success has stemmed from what they have taught me. I hope that I will go on to represent this department well in all of my future endeavors.
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**Introduction**

Educator Rick Wormeli describes grading as “‘the elephant in the room’” (89), an important subject that we never discuss. But, he argues, we must make grading an essential part of our professional conversations (Wormeli 89). Grades are an important part of the feedback loop among teachers, parents, and students. They tell students how well they’re performing on assessments and, therefore, in their classes. They prove that students are ready to advance to higher-level courses. They suggest how likely it is students will be successful at the college level, and they determine students’ eligibility for scholarships. Grades matter. Grading matters. Yet we rarely examine our grading practices and policies. Instead, our professional judgment regarding grading is often informed by what we experienced in school, not by researched best practice about grading and assessing (Tierney, Simon, and Charland 222). We have to reflect on what we’re doing, and we have to understand how our choices impact students’ attitudes toward learning when we formulate policy and practice.

Our decisions should be driven by understanding the science behind motivation, especially incentives, because grades and grading policies often function in the same ways other incentives do. Chapter 1 explains the research about motivation and incentives, defining important terms like algorithmic and heuristic tasks. The research conducted by scientists like Edward Deci and educators like Howard R. Pollio and Hall P. Beck reveal when motivation functions as we assume it would and when it functions counter to our assumptions. Knowing this research not only helps us understand why we have some of the policies that we do, but also reveals the impact these policies have on students. Furthermore, research on motivation shows how grading systems play into our
understanding of motivation. The traditional grading system most of us are familiar with—a teacher assigns a single mark (usually A, B, C, D, or F) to indicate a student’s achievement in a course—functions within the conventional wisdom about motivation. It tends to motivate students with contingent rewards: “Reward me and I’ll work harder” (Pink 15). In other words, the person offering the reward (the teacher) exerts control over the person receiving the reward (the student). The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) require students to complete these kinds of tasks, so we need to know how students will respond to them when grades are involved, especially since the research reveals that our assumptions about motivation—and our corresponding motivational strategies—won’t work as well with the new standards.

Chapter 2 explains how we can take that research and apply it to our choices regarding students’ education by choosing a purpose for grades, then choosing grading policies and systems that support the purpose, ideally helping students gain more autonomy over their learning. When we work together to discuss and choose a purpose for grades, it becomes clear that many of us assume we have a shared understanding of grades and what they mean, but we don’t. In the traditional grading system, teachers can combine into a single grade any number of factors, many of which limit student autonomy: punctuality, standards mastery, homework completion, participation. Making choices about how to use the research on motivation and about how to apply that research to a grading system begins with defining a purpose, and it will allow us to determine what factors should be included in a grade. Choosing a specific purpose will help us explain what a grade means and, in some cases, why one is assigned. Chapter 2 examines the six most common purposes for grades and explains how they’re used. We must have a
clear understanding of these purposes so we choose wisely. Understanding the purposes and choosing the one that works best for our students is, perhaps, the most important step because our methods of instruction and assessment will stem from the purpose we choose (Brookhart 12; Guskey 5, 15) and impact the level of control students have over their education. Once we’ve decided on a purpose, we have to know why the grading system we use works for students; then, we have to figure out the best strategies to use in order to implement that system effectively. Chapter 2 explains why the standards-based grading system works better to provide students with autonomy given the research on motivation, and it offers strategies schools can use to implement it.

Chapter 3 takes the information from the first two chapters and applies it to a grade-level 11 English class in a rural, public high school that is in the process of switching to the standards-based grading system. Taking the district’s and the high school’s context into account, the chapter presents recommendations to make the transition to the new system effective and meaningful for all interested parties, with a specific focus on policies and practices that not only provide teachers with meaningful information about student learning, but also grant students some autonomy in their education. The recommendations of the chapter are, overall, meant to benefit everyone in the school community.

The assumptions we make about incentives and motivation do have an impact on the choices we make about grading, and we make that clear to students by communicating policies regarding late work, requirements involving revisions and retakes, and calculations of grades. Furthermore, our assumptions about how to use grades to motivate students lead us to our choices about what to include in grades and
about what the overall purpose of grading is. The intentions may be good, but the practices may be harmful. Once we combine our understanding of motivation and incentives with purpose and practice, we can work together in our schools and districts to make informed decisions about the best grading system to use. We may have no definitive, quantitative proof that one grading system is better than another (Guskey 109; Marzano 18), but we do have research that tells us how incentives function in business and educational environments, and we do have research that helps us understand how our choices regarding policy and practice impact grades. We have to take what we do know to help us confront what we don’t know about grading. That elephant in the room must be seen and addressed by using the information we do have in order to help students learn and succeed in and beyond the classroom.
Chapter 1: Incentives

In his 2006 TEDTalk, educator Sir Ken Robinson argues that children can solve problems creatively under the right conditions: “Kids will take a chance. If they don’t know, they’ll have a go […]. They’re not frightened of being wrong. I don’t mean to say that being wrong is the same thing as being creative, but what we do know is, if you’re not prepared to be wrong, you will never come up with anything original” (Robinson). Children, Robinson argues, will take a chance when they can learn from the mistakes they might make, when they have nothing to lose, when they aren’t incentivized to give the right answer. Those incentives could be anything: certificates, food, grades. When those incentives are offered, children’s behavior—whether they are in kindergarten or high school—will change, and whenever we consider changing grading practices or grading systems, we have to understand why incentives function as they do.

Understanding incentives and how grades function as such is especially important now with the onset of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These standards require students to meet high expectations in English and math courses, and standards like CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A reveal how much more complex the tasks are: “Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence” (“Writing: Grade 11–12”). Meeting these standards requires students to think creatively through the completion of these complex tasks. We know from decades of research that using grades as incentives will have an impact not only on how students perceive the types of tasks described in the CCSS, but also in how they approach those tasks.
Business management expert Daniel Pink describes two types of tasks—heuristic and algorithmic—and the impact incentives have on them throughout his book, Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us. Heuristic tasks, tasks such as those students must complete to meet the CCSS, are tasks that require individuals “to experiment with possibilities and devise a novel solution” (Pink 31). In other words, there is not one correct way to complete the tasks, and the answers or solutions may vary greatly. Algorithmic tasks, on the other hand, require a person to “follow a set of established instructions down a single pathway to one conclusion” (Pink 31). There is only one correct answer and only one way to figure out that answer. The Common Core State Standards take students away from algorithmic tasks and move them toward more heuristic ones, and this is abundantly clear in nearly all of the upper-level (Grade 11–12) standards, even in Language. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.11-12.1.A, for example, requires students to “[a]pply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested” (“Language: Grade 11–12”). Students will need to complete the algorithmic task of memorizing comma rules to meet this standard, but they’ll also need to know that the comma rules are sometimes “broken” or ignored or applied in unexpected ways and apply that knowledge to their own reading and writing.

Our decisions about grading systems and policies impact students’ perception of algorithmic and heuristic tasks. When it comes to algorithmic tasks, like turning homework in on time, grades can function really well as incentives, which is what Cullen et al. discovered and discussed in “The Effects of the Use of Grades as an Incentive.” The negative incentive, “If you do not hand in this assignment, you will lose x amount of points on your final grade of this marking term,” proved most effective, with assignment
completion ranging from “25% to 88%” (Cullen et al. 278). The language that Cullen et al. used indicates a strong emphasis on the algorithmic task of turning in an assignment. There is no need for students to come up with a novel solution or think creatively regarding the task: they must turn in the assignment, and that’s it. The negative condition makes that clear in the language: “If you do not pass in the assignment” (Cullen et al. 278). The focus is on submission of the assignment. There are no instructions regarding the level of mastery toward a standard, nor does the condition indicate that creative solutions are important in the completion of the task. The focus is on turning the assignment in, an algorithmic task, and the results show that negative incentives do work to motivate students to meet that kind of expectation.

Using incentives in this way is part of a well-known system, one that Pink calls Motivation 2.0. It functions on “contingent rewards—if you do this, then you’ll get that” (Pink 38, emphasis in original). It’s been a long-standing tradition to run businesses and schools with this model, for it is deeply rooted in the conventional wisdom surrounding motivation. We often assume that if we offer a reward or threaten a punishment that people will do what we want them to do. And in many situations, that assumption is correct. We can motivate students to engage in some of the more mundane tasks of learning, such as memorizing the comma rules or completing homework assignments. But this trade-off doesn’t always work as well as we might think it does, and it might not, therefore, be as useful in education as we assume. This is especially true as schools rewrite curriculum to meet the CCSS and require students to complete the more heuristic

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1 The positive incentive differed slightly: “If you hand in this assignment, you will receive x amount of points on your final grade. If you do not pass in the assignment, it will not affect your grade in any way” (Cullen et al. 278). With the positive incentive, assignment completion was lower, ranging from “0% to 50%” of students completing the assignment (Cullen et al. 278).
tasks that come with it. We tend to assume, for instance, that grades function in the same way that money does. This assumption has lingered for over 100 years; in 1912, University of Illinois professor Stephen Colvin “likened students’ pursuit of good grades to workers’ performance for pay—even when those workers consider the tasks they are doing monotonous and boring. Grades […] are the students ‘pay’ for studying and maintaining high academic standards” (Juarez 375). Colvin makes a few assumptions that don’t really work for students in academic, heuristic settings. One of those assumptions is the “exchange rate” for grades. Money can be exchanged for goods outside of the work environment: housing, entertainment, food. A student earns an A, and he can it exchange it for none of that. It is true that he may earn a scholarship or gain entry into a good college, but that doesn’t translate to students in the same way that money translates to adults doing their jobs. Grades may have worth for intangible, future rewards within the school system, but they don’t outside of it. Students tend to recognize that grades have no immediate tangible value outside of school, which can influence the way they perceive the heuristic and algorithmic tasks involved in school work as well as the value of earning the reward of an A and the punishment of an F.

The other assumption that Colvin makes is that school is meant to be boring. Indeed, some aspects of education are boring. Most students, for instance, will not be thrilled about spending time learning how to cite sources correctly. In these cases, using grades can motivate students to take notes and engage with the more mundane aspects of a subject area: The promise of a quiz over the material can encourage students to pay attention. But when the tasks are more complex and require students to solve problems independently, when every student may give a completely different, yet valid, answer,
grades actually exacerbate the assumption that everything students learn is boring. Grades as extrinsic motivators “can transform an interesting [possibly heuristic] task into a drudge. They can turn play into work” (Pink 37). In Drive, Pink illustrates this transformation of play into work by describing a famous study by Mark Lepper, David Greene, and Robert Nisbett. These three researchers observed preschoolers at play, focusing specifically on those who chose to spend their time drawing. They then separated the children into three groups:

The first group was the ‘expected-award’ group. They showed each of these children a ‘Good Player’ certificate—adorned with a blue ribbon and featuring the child’s name—and asked if the child wanted to draw in order to receive the award. The second group was the ‘unexpected-award’ group. Researchers asked these children simply if they wanted to draw. If they decided to, when the session ended, the researchers handed each child one of the ‘Good Player’ certificates. The third group was the ‘no-award’ group. Researchers asked these children if they wanted to draw, but neither promised them a certificate at the beginning nor gave them one at the end. (Pink 37-38)

The researchers went back two weeks later to observe changes in the children’s behavior. The Motivation 2.0 system would lead us to believe that those children who received an award would draw more. After all, they were incentivized to participate in an activity it seemed they already enjoyed, so we could assume those children would draw because they were rewarded for it. But what Lepper, Greene, and Nisbett discovered didn’t fit in the Motivation 2.0 system. Instead, it revealed that contingent rewards can turn
interesting, heuristic tasks into obligatory drudge work: “Children previously in the ‘unexpected-award’ and ‘no-award’ groups drew just as much, and with the same relish, as they had before the experiment. But the children in the first group—the ones who’d expected and then received an award—showed much less interest and spent much less time drawing” (Pink 38). The results indicate the opposite of what most of us might expect. The contingent reward of a “Good Player” certificate actually discouraged the children from drawing because it “turned play into work” (Pink 38). The researchers’ work aligns with the conclusions Deci and two colleagues came to after analyzing 30 years of research—128 experiments: “tangible [contingent] rewards tend to have a substantially negative effect on intrinsic motivation […]. When institutions—families, schools, businesses, and athletic teams, for example—focus on the short-term and opt for controlling people’s behavior,’ they do considerable long-term damage” (qtd. in Pink 38-39). The children stopped drawing because it was no longer an exercise in free play, but work they had to complete to earn some kind of reward: An offer that rewarded their compliance to an authority figure’s expectations. This experiment—and the hundreds of others that have been conducted since—suggest that these types of rewards can significantly damage students’ intrinsic motivation. If we use grades in a similar manner, as a means of controlling behavior in learning situations, we may persuade students to complete the assigned task, but they may not internalize the skills associated with it, and they may not find the task fulfilling or meaningful.

Despite all of this evidence, we still think we can incentivize creativity and extrinsically motivate students into completing tasks well. We assume that dangling an A in front of them for successfully meeting the CCSS will motivate them to work, to engage
in learning. The truth is, “[analyzing] the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to
develop and relate elements of a story or drama” (“Writing: Grade 11–12”) is a heuristic
task that, in some ways, requires students to experiment and seek a novel solution. Using
grades to motivate students, especially as a means of getting them to turn the assignment
in on time, offers students a “short-term boost—just as a jolt of caffeine can keep you
cranking for a few more hours” (Pink 16), but, as Alfie Kohn argues, it makes them more
concerned about the A—and about what the teacher wants to hear or read—than about
what the students themselves actually think about what they read, watch, or hear (30).

Our beliefs and corresponding actions regarding incentives significantly alter not
only how students perceive their education, but also how they perceive their instructors’
perceptions of education. According to Howard R. Pollio and Hall P. Beck, our choices
regarding grading systems and policies show that we tend to assume that our students are
more grade-oriented than learning-oriented (99). Pollio and Beck define grade-oriented
students as those who tend to “view [education] as a crucible in which they must endure
continual testing and evaluation”\(^2\) and learning-oriented students as those who tend to
“regard [education] largely as an opportunity to acquire new information that is
personally relevant and intrinsically rewarding” (84). Grade-oriented students, then,
respond to the extrinsic reward—even, and usually, at the expense of learning. Learning-
oriented students are not as concerned about the extrinsic reward and typically place
more value on learning for its own sake than on the reward or punishment of a grade.

\(^2\) Public education and the constant testing that comes with it (measuring student growth for teacher
evaluation, standardized testing for school and district evaluation) invite grade orientation, especially at the
high school level. The stakes are high for teachers (who need good evaluations to maintain ranking on the
Reduction in Force list) and for students (who need high scores to gain acceptance to colleges and to
qualify for scholarships).
Pollio and Beck came to these conclusions from their research at Appalachian State University, focusing on the learning and grade orientations among undergraduates and professors. After analyzing all of the data, they found that "97% of students [surveyed] would like to be more learning-oriented" but felt they couldn’t because "instructors encourage grade orientation and give scant attention to learning orientation" (Pollio and Beck 90). Furthermore, they expressed that they “are prevented from achieving their high learning-oriented and low grade-oriented ideals because they feel coerced to abide by their professors’ instructional and grading demands” (Pollio and Beck 90). The students in this study articulated an understanding of the system they were in—a system that seemed to put more value on grades than on learning—and they felt it was harming their ability to authentically learn. Rather than learning how to solve problems creatively or learning for its inherent value, they were learning how to meet professors’ demands.³ They were chasing the proverbial carrot—their education was not, in their eyes, authentic; it was hoop jumping.

Such assumptions, Pollio and Beck contend, are understandable given the climate of many educational institutions, pointing out important expectations for educators:

Almost every syllabus contains descriptions of how grades are calculated; few address the need to find excitement in course material. [...] Grades are a required part of every class, but instructors are not obliged to stimulate interest in course content. In fact, it is possible for someone to

³ Cullen et al. point out that instructors are not the only factors that can influence students’ responses to incentives, though. They claim that guardians, work habits, interest in the class, and the relationship with the teacher can all influence students’ responses to incentives (278). They conclude through “check questions” that these factors did not influence students’ assignment completion in their study (278), but that doesn’t mean they never influence students’ grade and learning orientations.
teach for an entire career and not excite interest in his or her discipline; any instructor who failed to assign grades would be dismissed after only a short tenure. (93)

We tend to focus more on what it takes to achieve in courses than on how we can inspire genuine interest in what we teach. We feel pressured to record and report grades in order to meet expectations of the institutions we teach in, and that pressure comes across on syllabi, assignment sheets, and even in our conversations with students. Education seems to require us to extrinsically motivate students: We have standardized tests to prepare students for, student growth to prove, and grades to update. Our own external motivators sometimes motivate us to implement late-grade policies or weigh methods of assessments differently. They may even influence how we talk to students about assessment and learning. Students seem to sense our own orientations through what we do in our classrooms and logically respond to the way the system is structured.

Such response makes educators perceive that students are more grade-oriented than they actually are, or at least, desire to be. Of 154 instructors surveyed, “most […] reported their ideal student would be less, and not more, grade oriented” (Pollio and Beck 96). These same instructors “are highly dissatisfied with the learning orientations of most students” (Pollio and Beck 96). It seems that the contingent rewards system of education has embedded students and teachers in a vicious cycle. Students’ response to the Motivation 2.0 system in educational institutions reflects what Pink argues it would: less intrinsic motivation and a perception of assigned tasks as drudge work. Teachers see this response and assume the incentive is what the students want, so they use grades to motivate students (Pollio and Beck 99). The Motivation 2.0 system has everyone stuck in
the cycle, and as a result, few individuals experience education the way they claim they
would like to. Pollio and Beck explain that in the Motivation 2.0 system, “professors may
be teaching their students that studying and learning are burdens and not intrinsically
worthwhile” (99). We may also be teaching students that algorithmic tasks, like meeting
deadlines and writing an exact number of paragraphs, are much more important than
exploring ideas, taking risks, and “having a go” at heuristic tasks. We could be telling
students that our emphasis is more on compliance than it is on thinking.  

As grades are used in most systems now—especially with the emphasis on
algorithmic tasks—they are extrinsic motivators, and they almost always give students
something to lose. Grades make students fear failure and encourage them to worry about
what they earn instead of what they learn. In order to lessen these problems, Pink and
Pollio and Beck argue for a de-emphasis on extrinsic rewards in order to encourage
intrinsic motivation and movement toward mastery (Pink 47; Pollio and Beck 101). De-
emphasizing grades whenever possible can encourage students’ autonomy and improve
their mastery levels. Based on the research of Deci, Pollio and Beck, Pink, and others, it
is likely that a shift in emphasis would be welcomed by both teachers and students. Pink
argues, “Human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined,
and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and
live richer lives” (63). Grading systems often dampen the inner drive because they are
contingent rewards that usually overemphasize algorithmic tasks and underemphasize

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4 Cullent et al.’s research proves that incentives are effective tools for collecting student work (278), and
we need to collect student work in order evaluate student growth and make instructional decisions.
Incentives become problematic when they affect the content students generate. Students might, in fact, cite
the three sources we said they needed in order to pass the assignment, but they might not say anything
meaningful about those sources and how they’re connected if the incentives emphasize the algorithmic task
of citing three sources without placing equal or greater emphasis on the heuristic tasks of commenting on
and connecting the sources.
heuristic ones. So if it’s possible, significant changes are recommended in order to help students successfully complete heuristic tasks and become more learning-oriented.

Though it seems that this research would encourage us to abandon grades and grading systems altogether, we don’t need to. Indeed, it may not be possible. For instance, an individual teacher may want to abandon grades, but is required by her school or district to report them. A school may be required to maintain a grading system because a district uses the grades to gather data and serve the needs of its community. Even in these situations, though, knowing the results of decades of research can help us understand how and why our students respond to grades in the ways they do. We can get a better perspective on how the language we use, the syllabi we write, and the policies we follow communicate specific attitudes toward learning and how our implied attitudes translate to our students. We can make more informed choices about what we do and how we communicate our attitudes toward grades and help students become the more learning-oriented people they claim they want to be. What we know about motivation can help all of us make decisions about how to use grading systems, ideally minimizing the damage done to students’ motivation to learn and moving classrooms more toward helping students develop their sense of autonomy and, ideally, a lifelong love of learning. The next chapter explores how we can accomplish this goal by defining the purpose of grades and communicating an appropriate balance between algorithmic and heuristic tasks.
Chapter 2: Purposes and Policies

As discussed in the last chapter, depending on our goals, incentives can support or undermine teaching and learning, yet we tend to use the same sort of incentives for all types of tasks. This leads to the next major issue to consider in rethinking grades: We have to determine the actual purpose of the grades we give and implement policies and practices to align to that purpose.

Choose a Purpose for Grades

When it comes to grades, we often assume that we all share an understanding of the purpose of grades and what they actually mean, but we don’t. A single grade for a course can represent a student’s achievement for a standard, his growth throughout a grading period, his completion of homework, his consistency in turning in homework on time, his participation, and even his punctuality. “We’ve aggregated so much into one little symbol,” Wormeli argues, “it’s no longer useful” (90). A student who has earned a B, for example, might have completed all of the major assessments of a course perfectly but failed to complete and turn in most of the homework. This B might reflect the student’s behavior more than his ability to meet learning standards. That single mark, at best, tells any reader of this student’s report card that he is “pretty good, but not the best” without providing any additional context. Teachers need to choose a purpose they can all support so the context is always clear, so the meaning of the grade is easily understood. Determining the purpose of grades at the school- or district-level can clarify what a grade means for all interested parties; it will also clarify the meaning of grades for all teachers.
Thomas R. Guskey identifies six purposes grades may have. The first three purposes connect to the measurement of students’ academic achievement:

- “[T]o communicate information about students’ achievement in school to parents and others” (Guskey 13, emphasis in original). With this purpose, grades communicate what students were expected to know and be able to do at specific points in the school year (Guskey 17). This first purpose is about academic achievement alone.

- “[T]o provide information to students for self-evaluation” (Guskey 13, emphasis in original). This purpose functions as feedback for students, so they can make informed decisions about how to improve their learning and demonstrate growth. Ideally, students would use their grades to track their progress in each course.

- “[T]o evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs” (Guskey 14, emphasis in original). This purpose provides information to adults involved in the school community, helping educators, administrators, and others evaluate the success of educational programs, instructional strategies, and curriculum (Guskey 14). Grades used for this purpose are important for data analysis; they help teachers and administrators understand how students respond to various aspects of the learning environment.

According to Wormeli, these first three purposes are useful because they “enable us to live up to the promise of schooling, helping teachers teach and students learn. We need to document, provide feedback, and guide our decisions on a regular basis in order for
students to achieve in our classes” (102-103). These purposes help teachers develop their professional judgment, reflect on their grading and instructional practices, and keep parents and students informed of academic progress. For Wormeli, these purposes are positive for all individuals involved in education.

The three purposes in the second category focus more on students’ progress, behaviors, and attitudes:

- “[T]o select, identify, or group students for certain educational paths or programs” (Guskey 13, emphasis in original). This purpose is useful for schools that need to know students’ grades for placement purposes (Guskey 13). Grades, Guskey explains, help teachers determine where students will be the most successful. High grades can indicate that a student would thrive with the additional challenge provided in gifted or honors courses; low grades can indicate that a student might benefit from special education services (Guskey 13). Grades can be the determining factor for placement in this purpose.

- “[T]o provide incentives for students to learn” (Guskey 14, emphasis in original). This purpose rewards students for learning. It uses grades to motivate students to put forth their best effort and to take their learning seriously. It uses Cullen et al.’s positive condition: If students do their work, they’re rewarded with good grades (278).

- “[To] provide evidence of students’ lack of effort or inappropriate responsibility” (Guskey 14, emphasis in original). This purpose is similar to the previous one, but instead of grades functioning as a reward, they function as a consequence. It uses
Cullen et al.’s negative condition: If students don’t do their work, they’re punished with a bad grade (278).

The purposes in the second category conflict with the purposes in the first category. Wormeli argues that these last three purposes “cross a line” because they lower grades’ accuracy and utility and “manipulate students,” emphasizing “compliance, not learning” (103). They tend to overemphasize behavior and underemphasize learning, which intensifies students’ grade orientations.

These last three purposes also force us to assume our role is to select talent, and in order to select talent, we have to “spread the scores” as much as possible (Guskey 59). That means we have to take students’ behavior into account along with their academic achievement. Once we add behavior into the mix, we turn education into a kind of game: If the students play by our rules, we’ll use grades to reward them; if they break the rules, we’ll use grades to punish them. We take control from the students. Such actions place far more emphasis on behavior than on learning. While students should receive feedback regarding their behavior, disciplinary systems are more appropriate to provide that feedback. Combining behavior and academic achievement into a single grade, as we do with the last three purposes, relies on the Motivation 2.0 system, which can greatly undermine student learning in exchange for compliance.

We have to carefully, deliberately choose one purpose for grades, and every teacher in a school or district needs to know and understand it. Combining any of the purposes dilutes what grades actually mean. Combining a purpose from the first category

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5 Motivation 2.0 is the motivational system that assumes contingent rewards nearly always work to get people to do what we want them to do (Pink 23). In school, this would mean that we assume grades function as the contingent reward; we use them to get students to do what we want them to do, from turning work in on time to writing essays with unique interpretations of historical events.
with a purpose from the second category (for example, grades would have the purpose of communicating academic achievement and incentivize students to learn) would not only dilute the meaning of grades but also send contradictory messages about what is important in the school or district. We have to pick one purpose to clearly communicate to teachers, parents, and students what is important to the school or district selecting it, and we can communicate that purpose even more clearly when we take the next step: separating academic achievement from grades.

**Separate Academic Achievement from Behavior**

Looking at the six purposes of grades defined by Guskey, we see that the first three focus on academic achievement and the last three focus on behavior. In order to understand how students are doing academically and behaviorally, we need to separate the two. Doing so can help us make choices about instruction and assessment as well as how to help students learn important social and professional skills. We can better serve our students by separating this information.

Let’s use the late-grade penalty as an example and assume the late-grade penalty is a ten percent deduction. If we combine the academic score with the late-grade penalty, the gradebook might look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Score (out of 100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paisley</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can know that Natalie didn’t have a late-grade penalty because her score is so high. However, it is possible that the other three students have late-grade penalties attached to
their scores. We can’t know for certain what these students have actually achieved toward academic standards when the behavior and the academic scores are combined. A late-grade penalty of 50 percent or more might be more revealing—if Quinn’s 88 were his original score, a late-grade penalty would be a 44—but the information isn’t separated, so we can’t easily know it.

We could try adding a notation. That would make score-analysis a bit easier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 2.2: Combined Achievement &amp; Behavior Grade with Notation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paisley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the additional notation, we can see who has late-grade penalties and who doesn’t.

We know that Quinn and Josh performed better than what their scores actually indicate; their lower scores are a consequence for turning in work after the due date.

The notations might make it easier for us to see why scores are lower, but now we have to add that information back in to know where students are academically. Since these scores are in the gradebook, we have to make separate notations somewhere (in our heads, on separate gradebook pages) to keep track of academic achievement. We’d have to add ten extra points for Quinn and Josh when we analyze the score data. That’s an extra step we shouldn’t have to take. We need to be able to quickly analyze where students are academically so we can make informed choices about how to help students learn; separating behavior from academic achievement is a great way to do that.

The separation of behavior from academic achievement also helps our students’ motivation. Late-grade penalties often have a negative impact on student motivation, especially if those consequences involve zeros. There is no research that proves assigning
zeros teaches students responsibility (Kohn qtd. in Guskey 93). As a matter of fact, zeros and similar penalties may show students that we don’t value the heuristic tasks\textsuperscript{6} involved in learning, which would contradict our goals if we choose one of the first three purposes. Wormeli argues that zeros and other behavior-related grade penalties “actually [distance students] further from us and the curriculum, requiring us to build an emotional bridge to bring [them] back to the same level of investment prior to receiving the grade” (103). The penalty does the opposite of what we want it to do, which matches the research Pink presents regarding the conventional wisdom about motivation. What we assume is true—students will try harder in order to avoid further punishment—is false. Giving a student a zero or late-grade penalty for turning in work after the due date emphasizes the algorithmic task\textsuperscript{7} over the heuristic one and may discourage the student from learning.

**Convey the Complexity of Performance**

Even when we do choose one purpose and separate academic achievement from behavior, a single grade for a course—even a single grade for an assessment—may not be as useful as we’d like it to be. This is the primary problem with the traditional grading system\textsuperscript{8}: All information is combined into a single symbol or number for each assessment. We might be able to see, at a glance, that most students did well on an assessment, but we don’t know specific areas of strength or weakness. Tombari and

\textsuperscript{6} A heuristic task requires an individual to try different strategies and come up with a creative solution (Pink 31). Developing a new app for a smartphone is a heuristic task. In school, writing an analytical essay interpreting *The Great Gatsby* is a heuristic task.

\textsuperscript{7} An algorithmic task is one that requires an individual “follow a set of established instructions down a single pathway to one conclusion” (Pink 31). These types of tasks are like assembly line tasks: A person works at one specific job all day long, and there is only one way to complete it effectively. In school, turning in an assignment on time and memorizing multiplication tables are algorithmic tasks.

\textsuperscript{8} This system uses one grade (usually A, B, C, D, or F) to indicate a student’s achievement in a course.
McRoberts argue that "one symbol can convey only one meaning" (Tombari and Borich qtd. in O'Connor 46, emphasis O'Connor's). We need even more separation in order to make accurate judgments about student achievement and learning, and the best way to do that is to provide multiple grades for each assessment, for each course.

Let's return to the gradebook example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paisley</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Separating the assignment into the five different standards (taken from the Common Core State Standards) provides much more information about student achievement and can, therefore, help students and teachers understand academic strengths and weaknesses (Guskey 77). For the teacher, this means an analysis of the scores can be used to determine where more instruction is needed for students individually and for classes as a whole. In this case, standard W.11-12.1.A should be addressed with all four students because that was not a high score for any of them—there is room for all of them to grow. Perhaps whole-class instruction is needed to help them improve with this standard.

Separating scores on assessments, in the gradebook, and on report cards requires more record keeping, which can be difficult and overwhelming. However, the reward of accurate, specific information for students, teachers, and parents is incredibly helpful when determining what students need in order to improve. Breaking down all of this information on rubrics, moreover, helps students see how they perform on individual assessments; breaking it down in the gradebook helps teachers assess student
performance over time and make instructional decisions; breaking it down on a report card helps parents get a clear understanding of how their students are performing. It is especially useful when it helps the parties communicate. Instead of a parent asking, “Why does my student have a B? What does she need to do to get an A?” the parent can ask, “My student is struggling with Standard 1. Can we talk about that standard and what my student should do in order to improve?” To be sure, a similar conversation can happen when discussing how a student can improve from a B to an A, but the teacher may have difficulty recalling the specific skills the student needs to work on if the information is not separated by standard. When all interested parties have the information conveyed by standard, the conversations become more targeted and productive, giving students clear learning goals and teachers clear direction for helping students. Clear separation for internal and external use benefits everyone involved in education, which makes it a worthwhile practice despite the extra work it requires.

**Use the Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE)**

Separating academic achievement from behavior and then separating academic achievement into standards can be overwhelming. We’re adding more grades to the gradebook, after all, and that might seem daunting at first. Guskey suggests that we grade product criteria only (reports, essays, tests, projects) (75). When we factor in other criteria, like student effort or growth, we dilute the meaning of the grade (Guskey 76). Guskey’s argument for grading product-criteria means that students function in what the business world call a Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE).
The ROWE provides people with a lot of autonomy: They choose when to come to work, how they get the work done, when they do it, and where they do it (Pink 72). A ROWE for students would be a little different (for example, students are required to attend school, so choosing when to come to school isn’t an option for them), but the overall concept would be the same. Students would choose how to complete their assignments, when to work on them (between the assign date and the due date), and, if possible, where they work on them (in the library, the computer lab, the classroom, at home). The schedule and the process don’t matter as much as the final product does, and the final product is the only evidence we use to determine a student’s grade. Students could be given guidance and instruction on how they could complete their assignments, though. For instance, we can still teach them how to outline, but they get to decide if they write one or not. The final decisions are left up to the individual student, and his goal is to prove he can complete the heuristic tasks described in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Because final products are the only evidence used to determine students’ grades, process criteria (formative assessments such as quizzes, rough drafts) do not count for a grade. However, these assignments can still be important for students and for teachers; the emphasis shifts from giving quantitative feedback to giving qualitative feedback. We can provide more specific guidance for students, telling them where we see their strengths and weaknesses in their work, offering them suggestions. For students, process criteria provide an opportunity to take risks, like trying a new attention-getter for an essay, without the risk of losing points. Students’ attention is drawn to the heuristic tasks
of learning with this kind of feedback; they can focus on what they’re doing rather than worry about how they’re doing.

Despite these advantages, the ROWE is not without its challenges. Focusing on product criteria alone can create a high-stakes learning environment, especially if we decide to design a course that assesses one final product. Marzano argues that we need to assess students enough times to find a valid trend; one product should never determine a student’s final grade (27). O’Connor recommends we include at least three assessments to identify a valid trend in student scores (178). With at least three assessments, the pressure to perform well is a little bit lower.

The ROWE doesn’t account for progress or process criteria, either, which can be problematic. Progress criteria assess how much students have gained from their learning experience (their growth) (Guskey 75). Process criteria include behavior—such as turning in work by the due date—and formative assessments—such as quizzes (Guskey 75). We may want to include this criteria, Guskey claims, because we want to be fair to students (76). However, including these other two criteria confounds what grades mean, and we lose the accuracy of grades that we need in order to make decisions about instruction and assessment (Guskey 76).9

The ROWE provides students with autonomy, with a sense of control over what they do and how they do it. With this learning environment, we tell students that we value their learning, their autonomy, and their ability to complete heuristic tasks over anything

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9 Progress and process criteria could be included on a rubric, even if they are not part of a student’s grade. However, we then run the risk of drawing students’ attention to how they’re doing (Kohn 30). Adding this type of criteria might also place more emphasis on certain tasks than we want, and the qualitative feedback we give students on progress and process criteria may be overshadowed by the quantitative feedback attached (Kohn 31).
else. We are able to guide students throughout the process of completing the product without completely appropriating their work and forcing them to write, complete a problem, or conduct an experiment exactly the way we would. They have the freedom to experiment without penalty and the freedom to succeed without interference. And when we make multiple product assessments a priority, they have multiple chances to show us what they’re capable of. The ROWE is not perfect, but it does allow us to emphasize grades as indicators of academic performance, maintain accurate, standard-specific gradebooks, and function as guides. ROWEs create beneficial learning environments for students and teachers, creating a positive learning environment for all.

**Use the Standards-Based Grading System**

The standards-based grading system functions well in conjunction with the first three purposes, multiple grades, and ROWEs. Brookhart describes this system as one in which a “grade sums up achievement on standards—there are often several grades per subject—with effort and behavior reported separately” (12). According to Guskey, letter grades are replaced with numbers, usually “4, 3, 2, or 1, indicating **exemplary**, **proficient**, **progressing**, or **struggling** performance by the student” (18, emphasis in original). In an English class, for instance, a student might receive separate grades for each strand of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS): Reading Literature, Reading for Information, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. The feedback with grades becomes more specific and helps teachers, parents, and students know areas of strength and weakness related to academic achievement.
For us, this system is beneficial for identifying the most important standards for each grade-level course. According to Ken O’Connor, we “have to be very clear about what goals [or standards] are important at what point in the school year” (48). Determining the standards helps us scaffold courses and create “greater consistency” than “traditional, largely private approaches to grading” (O’Connor 48). Once we select standards for each course, we have to plan out when we will assess the standards, making sure we assess each one at least three times in order to identify a valid trend in student academic achievement.

Because the product criteria are the only criteria counted for a grade, we have to implement policies that help us teach students important social and professional skills. The standards-based system isn’t designed to incorporate zeros for late or missing work because those policies place emphasis on behavior, not academics. Guskey proposes that we assign mandatory study sessions before school, after school, or during lunch because it shows students that their work is important and that we want them to demonstrate their skills regarding the standards for our courses (93, 105). He and Wormeli also suggest using an “I” for “incomplete” instead of the zero (Guskey 105; Wormeli 139). The incomplete communicates that a student still has work to finish before we can determine a grade. These strategies tell students that the heuristic tasks are important, and they help us maintain an appropriate balance between algorithmic and heuristic tasks.

The goal of standards-based grading is to show students that their academic achievement is important, more important than their behavior when it comes to

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10 Most parents often support these study sessions for a couple of reasons: The students have direct access to teacher support when completing the assignments, and the students complete their work so they can pass the class.
determining grades. Even though it may seem forgiving regarding behavior, students must show they can meet the standards before they move on to the next course. There is no “off the hook” with standards-based grading; students are held accountable, albeit in ways that differ from traditional grading systems. Standards-based grading allows us to choose one of the first three beneficial purposes for grading, separate academic achievement from behavior, convey the complex meaning of grades, and incorporate the ROWE. The standards-based system gives us and our students the benefits we need to emphasize authentic, high-quality learning.

Conclusion

We should work together to determine a common purpose for grades, and the emphasis on algorithmic and heuristic tasks need to align with the chosen purpose. This means that we will have to implement specific practices and policies that help students understand what they should focus on and value in our classrooms. Every choice we make, from the purpose to the policies to the record keeping, should tell our students what’s important in their education. Though there is no perfect grading system, we can make contextually appropriate choices grounded in research to help us choose grading systems perfect for our own schools (Guskey 109; Marzano 18).

Chapter 3 discusses how a rural high school English department can implement the standards-based grading system while also addressing the context of the high school and district overall. It includes recommendations for the school and district based on the research and theory discussed in these first two chapters. The recommendations place the focus on the heuristic tasks over the algorithmic ones, emphasizing autonomy and
learning over compliance. While it will address some of the challenges that come along with standards-based grading with the Common Core State Standards, the chapter will, ultimately, argue that the system is a good choice for the district and the school for it fits well within the context of the district, school, and department.
Chapter 3: Research and Theory in Context

We know that the way we incentivize students alters the way students perceive learning and its associated tasks. We know that we have to consider the role of incentives whenever we choose a purpose for grades and implement policies that help us meet that purpose. And we know that there is no research that definitively proves that one grading system is more beneficial than another (Guskey 109; Marzano 18). Everything we know has to be situated in the specific contexts in which we teach, and that might mean we can’t make the grading system or its policies work as perfectly as Guskey or Wormeli lead us to believe. In some cases, we have to compromise in order to make the grading system and its policies work well in schools’ and districts’ specific contexts.

In Ludgate Community Unit School District #2 (LCUSD #2)\(^\text{11}\), the compromise is especially important. Guskey, Marzano, O’Connor, and Wormeli make strong arguments for their grading systems and policies, but some of the ideas each aforementioned educator presents have to be altered to best align with the policies of the district and the context of the community it serves. Educators in LCUSD #2 believe that academic achievement should be measured separately from grades, and students can benefit from more autonomy in their learning. As a result, the district has decided to implement the standards-based grading system. As LCUSD #2 implementation, though, teachers will have to figure out how to align it with district and building policies and with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This chapter presents suggestions based on the research of motivation, the theories of grading, and my six years teaching in the district to help the Ludgate High School (LHS) English department make the shift to standards-based

\(^{11}\) The names of the district and the high school have been changed for purposes of confidentiality.
grading and address some of the conflicts that arise from integrating that system into a CCSS-aligned curriculum.

**Ludgate High School’s Context**

Ludgate High School is a rural public school in Illinois. According to the *Illinois Report Card*, there are approximately 1,000 students enrolled: 89% of whom are white, 3% black, 3% Hispanic, 3% bi- or multiracial, and 1% Asian. Over half (51.6%) of the student body comes from low-income households.

Ludgate High School is a professional learning community (PLC), and each department functions as a smaller professional learning community, meeting once a week. There are no department heads, so all major decisions are made through discussion, data analysis, and in some cases, majority vote. Curricula, assessment, and department policies are also created during PLC meetings.

In most core classes (math, English, science), there are 25–30 students per section, and beginning next year (the 2016–2017 school year), most core teachers will have an overload, meaning they will not have a class period to use for lesson preparation or grading.

Many LHS students do not have the support (parents working third shift, for example) or the resources (computers, printers, internet access) to complete much homework outside of school, and as a result, the faculty has shifted away from homework as much as possible; even assignments like essays and speeches are often worked on at school in order to help students succeed. In fact, many of the LHS policies exist in order for the faculty to help the students, not just to align with district policies. The shift from
the traditional grading system to the standards-based grading system will require teachers to continue following many of the policies they currently have now so that students can continue to succeed even if they don’t have what they need at home.

**District Policies**

Many of the policies that LHS follows stem from the policies applied to the entire school district. LCUSD #2 currently has an implied belief that grades should indicate a student’s academic achievement (a belief that the high school has fully adopted over the last several years). In order to better communicate student academic achievement to parents and students, the district administrators have implemented policies that every teacher in the district is expected to follow. These policies will likely continue with the transition to standards-based grading and be presented in the community forums the district will hold when it makes the public announcement about the transition to the new grading system in the next one or two years (in the 2016–2017 school year or the 2017–2018 school year):

- Teachers must update grades weekly using Skyward (the district’s online gradebook and tracking system).
- Per state mandate, teachers must assess students at least three times throughout a semester-long course for the purposes of evaluating student growth. This policy is evaluated and is worth 30% of a teacher’s overall evaluation. When the standards-based grading system is implemented, teachers will have to assess students on each selected course standard at least three times in a semester.
• Curriculum must align to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) if available for the subject area. (At LHS, the curriculum is aligned through the development of essential outcomes for each course.)

Ludgate High School Policies

LHS has policies for every teacher in the building to follow. They build on the implied belief the district has: Grades should reflect students’ academic achievement. These policies, too, will likely continue with the transition to standards-based grading and be presented in the next one or two years in community forums about the transition to the new system:

• Currently, homework (such as practice math problems, writing process assignments [outlines, notes]) cannot be worth more than 10% of a student’s total semester grade. When the district implements standards-based grading, homework assignments will no longer directly factor into a student’s academic grade, but they could have an impact on a student’s behavioral score on the report card. (Homework and other process criteria are discussed in The Assessment Plan on page 54.)

• Currently, assessments (chapter tests, essays, presentations, projects) must be worth 90% of a student’s total semester grade. When the district implements the standards-based system, these assessments will be the only evidence (100%) used to measure a student’s academic achievement. (Details regarding this change are discussed in The Assessment Plan on page 54.)
**The Purpose of Grades in LCUSD #2**

In January 2016, LCUSD #2 adopted the following purpose for grades that will appear on all report cards within the next three to five years: “This personalized learning report communicates student performance. It identifies levels of progress with regard to
learning and behavioral expectations, areas of strength, and areas where additional time and effort are needed.” The district is attempting to communicate Guskey’s first purpose: To communicate student achievement to students, parents, and others (Guskey 13). The language the district adopted, however, is vague; it is difficult for educators to understand and will likely be more difficult for students and parents to interpret. It seems to imply, for example, that there are four separate aspects of student performance to consider: learning, behavior, strength, and “additional time and effort.” What is actually meant is that there are two separate aspects to consider: learning and behavior. Higher scores (3 and 4) indicate strength, and lower scores (1 and 2) indicate more time and effort are needed. I recommend that the district write a clearer purpose, one that adopts some of Guskey’s more precise language, because it would be much more beneficial to the district. When everyone understands what the purpose means, there is a much better chance that everyone can understand the policies and practices that follow.

In order to clarify the purpose of grades for all interested parties, I recommend LCUSD #2 consider the following purpose statement: “This report card communicates (1) student achievement toward learning standards and (2) student performance toward district-wide behavioral goals.” This purpose statement more clearly communicates that grades indicate how well students have mastered the standards assessed in each course. Furthermore, it states that students’ academic achievement is separate from students’ behavior, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, is best practice and can help teachers motivate students in more positive ways (Guskey 76; Wormeli 103). The proposed purpose statement aligns with the policies the district has implemented over the last
several years and, perhaps more importantly, is clear, concise, and accessible to all interested parties.

**English III as the Starting Point**

As the LHS English department transitions to the standards-based grading system with the new district purpose, they will need to determine which course best serves as the starting point to develop scaffolded expectations and assessments. I recommend that English III be the starting point. It is the highest-level course that all students take, regardless of enrollment in English III or English III Honors. The grade-level 12 courses aren’t the best starting points because of the vastly different paths students can take: English IV and dual-credit Composition. (English IV covers a wide variety of writing and reading genres, and it has two goals: Prepare students for work and prepare them for college. Dual-credit Composition prepares students for college, and it has one major focus: Prepare students to write at the college level.) All LHS students enroll in English III or English III Honors, completing the same common assessments, reading the same major texts, and learning the same standards. The English III teachers use the same rubric as well, which allows them to analyze student data across the entire grade level.

Moreover, the course served as the starting point the last time the department rewrote the curriculum to align with the CCSS (the 2010–2011 school year). The department examined the CCSS for grade-levels 11 and 12 and scaffolded down from English III. A realignment to adjust to standards-based grading may be easier by following the same method as last time because the foundation already exists across grade levels 9, 10, and 11. The department will not have to start over with curriculum alignment, but will be able
to refine or revise the current curriculum in order to make the transition to the standards-based grading system more manageable during the first few years.

**The Essential Outcomes for English III**

The implementation of the grading system and alignment with the purpose become complicated when combined with the CCSS. In the CCSS, there are thirty-one standards for English Language Arts. However, standards-based grading experts suggest that teachers choose three to five standards to assess in a given subject area (Guskey & Bailey qtd. in Muñoz and Guskey 66). I recommend teachers continue to teach all of the standards in the CCSS, but the limitation of assessed standards is necessary for two reasons. The first is related to the report card: Parents, students, and teachers need access to student academic performance, so the report card needs to be accessible to all interested parties. Parents and students may be overwhelmed by numbers if each student's grade in a single course were broken down into thirty-one standards. Limiting the number of standards makes the report card more readable for everyone. The second reason the district needs to adhere to what the experts suggest is related to assessment: Standards-based grading requires teachers to assess students' mastery of the selected standards at least three times throughout a course—using a "clearly defined rubric" (Guskey 17)—to identify valid trends in achievement (Marzano 28, 29, 82; O'Connor 48, 178). The district has, due to a statewide mandate, implemented this three-assessment expectation on teacher evaluations as a means of aligning with the grading

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12 Some of the standards are broken down even further, such as the first CCSS Writing standard, which has its own five additional standards.
experts’ opinions and as a means of holding teachers accountable for student growth.\textsuperscript{13} It is not possible for teachers to assess all thirty-one standards at least three times in a single course, nor is it possible to create a rubric that covers all of the CCSS standards. Examining the current essential outcomes for English III reveals the department’s need for more careful selection of the standards to assess.

\textbf{Current Essential Outcomes for English III:}

The LHS English department already limits the number of CCSS standards incorporated into the curriculum to 15: five in reading (both Literature and Informational Text), eight in Writing, one in Speaking and Listening, and one in Language.

\textit{Reading: Literature}

1. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.7: Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist) (“Reading: Literature: Grade 11–12”).

2. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.10: By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR\textsuperscript{14} text

\textsuperscript{13} It is worth noting that the research on motivation suggests this state mandate could have a negative impact on teachers and, therefore, students. The reward of the good teacher evaluation and the punishment of a poor teacher evaluation may very well motivate teachers in the wrong way. Pink argues, “The problem with making an extrinsic reward the only destination that matters is that some people will choose the quickest route there, even if it means taking the low road” (47). In this case, the only destination is maintaining proficiency in teacher evaluation, and that means teachers may not record accurate student data, or teachers may grade students harshly on the first assessment, but grade them more generously on the second and third assessments, which would not give students accurate, valuable feedback that they need in order to learn.

\textsuperscript{14} CCR is an abbreviation for College and Career Readiness.
complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range ("Reading: Literature: Grade 11–12").

**Reading: Informational Text**

3. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem ("Reading: Informational Text: Grade 11–12").

4. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.8: Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses) ("Reading: Informational Text: Grade 11–12").

5. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.10: By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range ("Reading: Informational Text: Grade 11–12").

**Writing**

6. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence ("Writing: Grade 11–12").
7. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

8. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grades 11-12) (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

9. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.6: Use technology, including the internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

10. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

11. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8: Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).
12. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

13. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

**Speaking and Listening**

14. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.3: Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used (“Speaking and Listening: Grade 11–12”).

**Language**

15. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking (“Language: Grade 11–12”).

These standards guide the curriculum and connect to the assessments teachers currently use. Some of the above standards, though, are taught but never assessed, and others are not easily translated onto a rubric. I recommend these standards, as well as the other CCSS ELA standards not articulated above, remain part of the curriculum, and students should learn them, but LHS English teachers should not include all of them as
the essential outcomes because they do not assess them with a rubric at least three times in a semester. Some of these standards, like CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.10, the second standard under the “Reading: Literature” heading, reflect what teachers have students do—read texts appropriate to grade-level 11—but these standards don’t translate to a rubric, so LHS English teachers should not list it, or other standards similar to it, as an essential outcome.

The essential outcomes LHS English teachers do include should help them transition to the standards-based grading system. These assessed standards are standards that students receive both qualitative and quantitative feedback for. They build on the skills taught in English I and English II, they are related to the standards the department already has, and they prepare students for success in English IV and Composition. (The current essential outcomes for English I, II, and IV and Composition can be found in Appendix A.)

**Recommended Essential Outcomes for English III:**

I recommend the first five standards below be the standards for the gradebook and the report card. All five of the standards are assessed with the same rubric multiple times throughout a grading period and reflect skills that students learn throughout all four years of English.

**Reading: Literature**

1. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from
the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain (“Reading: Literature: Grade 11–12”).

**Writing**

2. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A: Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

3. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.C: Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationship between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

4. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.E: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

**Language**

5. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing (“Language: Grade 11–12”).

Essential outcome 5, the Language standard, is different from the original Language standard (essential outcome 15\(^{15}\)) for one specific reason: CCSS.ELA-

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\(^{15}\) “CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking” (“Language: Grade 11–12”).
Literacy.L.11-12.2 can be assessed without adding a lot of teacher bias into the rubric category descriptions. (The educator and student-friendly rubrics can be found in Appendix C and Appendix D.) The standard the department currently uses is too general and does not offer specific guidance for teachers. This standard could be interpreted in a variety of ways, with each teacher weighting errors differently. For example, one teacher may consider an incorrect use of the word *whom* a major error and assess the student’s skill on CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.1 as a score 2 while a different teacher may overlook that same error and assess the same student’s skill on the standard as a score 3 or 4. The use of CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2 does not, though, completely eliminate teacher bias: Teachers will, for instance, have to discuss what different levels of mastery look like in student writing. However, the standard does target specific areas of student writing—capitalization, punctuation, and spelling—which gives teachers a clearer goal for discussing what mastery of the standard looks like and can make the assessment data more reliable. In turn, mastery of the standard is more manageable for students: They aren’t expected to know every grammar rule ever written, but they are expected to use their resources (like spellcheck) and proofread their work to improve the readability of their texts. This recommended change benefits everyone looking at students’ grades and data related to the standard.

English III teachers *assess* students’ abilities in meeting the above standards, but it is recommended they incorporate the other CCSS ELA standards. For instance, a writing assignment about *The Crucible* incorporates all five of the new essential outcomes, but it also shows that the teacher has incorporated CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.10: “By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories,
dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR\textsuperscript{16} text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range” (“Reading: Literature: Grade 11–12”). This standard can be shared with students and other interested parties, such as administrators, to show that the standards are incorporated into the curriculum. However, this standard—and others like it—don’t influence students’ grades.

These five standards listed above put the English III course at the maximum number typically included on a standards-based report card (Guskey & Bailey qtd. in Muñoz and Guskey 66), but I recommend the department consider adding two more from the Speaking and Listening standards:

\textit{Speaking and Listening}

6. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.A: Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas (“Speaking & Listening: Grade 11–12”).

7. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives (“Speaking & Listening: Grade 11–12”).

\textsuperscript{16} CCR is an abbreviation for College and Career Readiness.
After LHS building administrators attended a conference with Rick Wormeli, they concluded that seven or eight standards might be the target for teachers to assess. This works out incredibly well for the English department since literature circles are a priority in all four grade levels, and rubrics can be created to assess these standards. Currently, students are assessed on these standards twice in one semester in English, once each semester in English II, once each semester in English III Honors, and three times in one semester in English IV and Composition. Though these skills are assessed in literature circles, they can be assessed in other settings, too. Once students learn the skills and see the rubric expectations, they can apply them for any class discussion as long as they are given a specific due date to prepare their notes.

These seven standards give teachers a starting point, helping them transition from the current grading system to the new one. It is possible that they will select different standards as they learn how to use the standards-based grading system, how students respond to it, how teachers instruct students, and how well the rubrics work to assess the standards. The district anticipates a three- to five-year adjustment period.

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17 Literature circles are usually 3–6 weeks long. Students meet in small groups to discuss a novel they are reading for class, with each student preparing specific materials for each meeting.

18 English I teachers have been able to assess students twice thanks to the help of teacher candidates from the local university. These candidates sat with literature circle groups, providing them with qualitative and quantitative feedback to help students improve their skills. Inviting the university’s teacher candidates to participate in literature circles in English II and English III is one way LHS English teachers can help students get more feedback and determine trends in student learning. Literature circles can also be recorded with students’ cellphone voice memo applications or with video cameras.

19 It is an option in the curriculum, and all English II teachers have access to it; not all English II teachers incorporate literature circles.
The Assessment Plan

Once the department determines its essential outcomes for each course, using the English III outcomes as the starting point to build from, the teachers can work together to communicate the assessment plan. The current plan presents the methods of assessment:

1. Product criteria (summative assessments such as essays, speeches, chapter tests): 90%
2. Process criteria (formative assessments such as quizzes, notes, writing process assignments): 10%
3. Other process and/or progress criteria (ACT preparation, optional assignments): 0%

The plan creates a grading orientation in teachers and students, for it places the emphasis on point accumulation instead of skill mastery (O’Connor 48). In order for teachers and students to be more learning oriented, it is recommended that teachers present the standards as the assessment plan, and the standards need to be rewritten in student-friendly “I can” language to meet LHS expectations. In the standards-based grading system, the assessment plan would not have percentages or points attached to each standard because the report is on a 1–4 scale rather than an average of all of the standards together. The scale makes all standards worth equal weight for a student’s grade, so the district, high school, and department will have to work together to determine what score qualifies as passing for each standard as well as how many standards the student will have to “pass” in order to advance to the next course. (The recommended grading plan is included in Appendix B.)
The standards that teachers share in class tell students what they are expected to know and be able to do by the end of a semester. The standards communicate the importance of mastering the heuristic tasks of the CCSS, and students will see these standards repeatedly on their assessments, both as process criteria (formative assessments) and product criteria (summative assessments), throughout the semester.

Process Criteria (Formative Assessments):

Per LCUSD #2 policy, process criteria will not be considered part of a student’s academic grade, and will not, therefore, have any impact on a student’s scores for the essential standards of a course. But because the CCSS require students to master complex skills and because students may have only three or four chances to demonstrate mastery toward the standards, it is important that students see process criteria as part of the LHS English department’s assessment plan and complete process criteria for practice and for qualitative feedback. I recommend the following expectations for process criteria for the benefit of students’ learning and teachers’ instruction:

1. Name the standards assessed on the process criteria so students know what they’re practicing.

2. Clearly explain the purpose of the assignment so students know why they’re practicing. Students need to understand how their in-class work or homework is directly related to the essential outcomes of the class and the next product criteria assessment (Pink 150).

3. Provide qualitative feedback only. Quantitative feedback could make students more grade oriented and draw their attention to how they’re doing instead of what
they’re doing (Kohn 30). Furthermore, any qualitative feedback given on their work would be largely ignored if provided alongside the quantitative (Kohn 31).

4. Provide an opportunity to complete process criteria at least once a week. This is not only a district policy, but good practice for teachers. Students don’t need a quantitative grade every week, but teachers do need to know how well students are learning. Checking student progress at least once weekly can help teachers make important instructional decisions to help students learn.

5. If a student completes the work, record a check mark in the gradebook. If the student does not complete the work, write the MISS code in the gradebook to indicate the assignment is missing.

Adhering to these expectations can help LHS English teachers evaluate the effectiveness of lessons, assess student progress toward mastering the essential outcomes and completing product criteria, and determine what students need to learn next. If a process criteria assignment does not benefit teachers or students and is used, for example, as a compliance measure (such as a reading quiz to check only if students read the assigned material), it should not be assigned. If it is used to help teachers determine student levels of mastery and make instructional decisions, it should be used. For example, a reading quiz that asks students to include an important quote from the most recent reading assignment and explain its meaning and significance would be useful: It requires students to demonstrate their mastery of recommended essential outcome 120, and teachers can learn how well students are progressing toward meeting that outcome.

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20 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain (“Reading: Literature”).
Process criteria assignments may also encourage students to take risks. Instead of responding to a teacher-selected quote, for instance, the students get to consider what they believe is significant to the text and share their personal interpretations. If their interpretations reveal misreading, teachers’ feedback can get students back on track; if the interpretations reveal unique, valid perspectives, teachers’ feedback can encourage students to develop their ideas more deeply and, possibly, track the progression of those ideas throughout the rest of the reading assignment. Such redirection and encouragement may increase students’ learning orientation, particularly if their own interpretations are validated; students are often frustrated if teachers insist there is only one correct interpretation of a novel. If they are encouraged to consider and develop their own perspectives, they may be more motivated to read because their interpretations are respected and validated through teachers’ qualitative feedback.

Reading quizzes and similar assignments can be completed in class, and that is the recommended standard practice. When students complete this kind of work while in class, teachers can provide interventions for students who need them, include other resources if necessary, push students to go further if they seem to excel with the assignment, and give students even more timely feedback. This feedback can be instantaneous if the teacher walks around the room to check students’ work as they complete it, and written feedback can be provided as early as the next day if it is collected. Teachers can then write lesson plans based on what they see in student work.

Sometimes, though, process criteria may need to be completed at home. Since process criteria can have an impact on LHS students’ scores for behavior on the report card, students have the extrinsic motivator of the report card score to consider (though at
the time of this writing, the actual scoring for behavior has yet to be determined). The process criteria have an extrinsic value as well as an intrinsic value in this case, which is important and effective if LHS teachers want students to complete the work (Cullen et al. 278). If students do not complete the work, though, LHS teachers can make a choice regarding the next steps to take: Teachers can require students to attend tutorial to complete the missing work, or teachers can let the student skip the assignment and use a MISS code in the gradebook to indicate the student did not complete the assignment. (The benefits of these alternatives to using zeros or late-grade penalties are discussed in Chapter 2.) I recommend teachers use the latter option, allowing students to make the decision to do the work or not and accept the consequences (or not) of skipping the practice. Should a student perform poorly on a product criteria assignment, the teacher can sit down with him or her and look at how much practice the student did or did not complete and have a discussion about the importance of practicing if necessary.

Overall, process criteria aligned to the course’s CCSS help students learn, and they help teachers teach. These criteria give students opportunities to hone their skills and they give teachers the information needed to create more targeted instruction. Although the criteria have no impact on students’ grades, they help everyone in the classroom be more learning oriented and add to the overall educational process, making such criteria an important aspect of LHS English teachers’ assessment plan.

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21 The effect of the negative condition (“If you do not hand in this assignment, you will lose points”), was effective to motivate students to turn in their work, with a 25% to 88% completion rate in Cullen et al.’s study (Cullen et al. 278).

22 Some students may choose to skip homework process criteria not because they’re lazy, but because they really do have the skills they need to complete product criteria successfully.
Product Criteria (Summative Assessments)

Teachers also need to share the product criteria (summative assessments) students need to complete in order to demonstrate mastery of each course’s essential outcomes, especially since this aspect of the grading plan actually determines students’ academic scores. The district requires teachers to assess students on each standard at least three times in a semester, aligning with what grading experts argue (Marzano 27; O’Connor 178). These assessments should be similar not only because teachers need valid, consistent data, but also because students need multiple chances to demonstrate mastery. Offering three similar assessments allows students to take the feedback they receive and apply it to their next assessment, giving them multiple opportunities to show growth.

The department must consider all of the aforementioned factors when choosing a method of summative assessment. O’Connor argues that “[m]atching method [of assessment] with target requires that the assessor [teacher] choose a method of assessment that is capable of effectively and efficiently providing the needed information” (176). The method of assessment, furthermore, must do what it intends to do (O’Connor 177). In the case of the CCSS, students must complete heuristic tasks that do not have one correct answer or one correct strategy; the standards require students to apply their knowledge to new situations. They are not, for example, supposed to show basic recall with the CCSS. They must interpret what they read and defend their interpretations with strong, relevant textual evidence. Students need to complete performance assessments that require them to demonstrate mastery of the CCSS (O’Connor 177). For LHS English courses, I recommend that teachers use essays to assess students’ skills. Other forms of assessment can’t provide LHS teachers with the
information they need to identify trends in student growth because of the skills students have to master. Though written-response tests, for instance, could work in some situations (O’Connor 177), they may not be appropriate to assess students’ mastery of cohesive writing. Written-response tests ask students to answer questions or complete tasks, often treating each standard separately, and in the case of some standards, the skills may be assessed separately. On a written-response test of the recommended essential outcomes for English III, for example, students might write a thesis statement in response to a question or directive, then explain the significance of the thesis in response to a second question or a directive, then explain how the significance of the thesis is different from alternate or opposing claims in response to a third question or directive. This type of test undermines the cohesion students need to master in their writing and may hinder students from fully mastering the assessed CCSS of English III. If a written-response test were combined with two essays, the data from the test may provide inconsistent data because the writing task is completed in a different manner.

A multiple choice or selected-response test would also create inconsistencies in the data because students would demonstrate mastery through recall and identification, not through application and synthesis. A student could, perhaps, identify a strong thesis statement from a list of thesis statements but be unable to write one. As with the written-response assessment, student data may be invalid and inconsistent because the students are demonstrating their mastery in significantly different ways. Since the students need to demonstrate mastery of writing and reading skills, they must actually complete the tasks themselves. It isn’t enough for students to identify strong thesis statements; it isn’t enough that students write thesis statements outside of the context of an introduction or
complete essay. Students need to learn how to create extended responses and write within a larger context; they need to demonstrate their skill mastery through the essay performance assessment.

English III Honors can make this transition easily, as the curriculum already includes three essays per semester. (See Figure 3.1: Current Product Criteria.) English III (non-honors) can make the transition easily for the fall semester, adding one more essay. (See Figure 3.2: Recommended Product Criteria.) The transition in the spring will be more difficult because teachers will need to drop some assessments in exchange for the recommended ones. Multiple-choice tests that focus more on students’ comprehension, for example, may align with the essential outcomes the department originally had, but teachers don’t use rubrics to grade these assessments. They also add emphasis to the algorithmic tasks of memorization and feed into students’ grade orientations because students can gain or lose a lot of points toward their semester grades. They don’t provide teachers with much-needed information about progress toward mastering the heuristic tasks outlined in the CCSS, either. Other assessments, like the argumentative speech and the poster project, are graded with a rubric, but students are assessed once, so teachers do not gather enough data to identify valid trends in student growth, and students don’t get multiple opportunities to demonstrate their mastery. The argumentative speech could be maintained in the curriculum if there is time for it—developing public speaking skills is important—but it would become a process criterion (formative assessment) that does not influence students’ grades. Making the transition to essays in the spring semester is an important step to take to align English III with district expectations, teacher evaluation, and teachers’ data gathering to evaluate student growth.
### Figure 3.1: Current Product Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1. *The Crucible* and *The Majestic* compare/contrast literary analysis  
2. Term paper: Informational research | 1. Argumentative Speech  
2. *Dead Poets Society* and selected poems compare/contrast literary analysis  
3. *The Great Gatsby* poster project |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English III Honors</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1. *The Things They Carried* analysis of two chapters  
2. *The Things They Carried* analysis of entire book  
3. *The Crucible* and *The Majestic* compare/contrast essay  
4. Term paper: literary analysis of one of the following novels:  
  * Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen  
  * The Plague* by Albert Camus  
  * The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz  
  * 1984* by George Orwell  
  * A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole  
  * The Color Purple* by Alice Walker | 1. Argumentative speech  
2. *Miracle in the Andes* literary analysis  
3. *The Great Gatsby* literary analysis  
4. *Dead Poets Society* and selected poem compare/contrast literary analysis |
**Figure 3.2: Recommended Product Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English III</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall Semester</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spring Semester</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. *The Things They Carried* literary analysis  
  - One essay that analyzes two chapters of the book OR  
  - One essay that analyzes the entire book  
  2. *The Great Gatsby* literary analysis  
  3. Argumentative research essay | 1. *The Crucible* and *The Majestic* compare/contrast literary analysis  
  2. *Miracle in the Andes* and aspects of naturalism compare/contrast literary analysis  
  3. *Dead Poets Society* and transcendentalist values compare/contrast literary analysis |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English III Honors</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall Semester</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spring Semester</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. Chapter analysis of *The Things They Carried*  
  2. Literary analysis of *The Things They Carried* in its entirety  
  3. *The Great Gatsby* literary analysis  
  4. Literature circle novel literary analysis:  
    - *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen  
    - *The Plague* by Albert Camus  
    - *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz  
    - *1984* by George Orwell  
    - *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole  
    - *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker | 1. *The Crucible* and *The Majestic*  
  2. *Miracle in the Andes* and one of the following texts:  
    - “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson  
    - An excerpt from “Nature” by Ralph Waldo Emerson  
    - “To Build a Fire” by Jack London  
    - “Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night” by Dylan Thomas  
  3. *Dead Poets Society* and one of the following texts:  
    - “She Walks in Beauty” by Lord Byron  
    - An excerpt from “Self-Reliance” by Ralph Waldo Emerson  
    - “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost  
    - “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” by Robert Herrick  
    - “Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day?” by William Shakespeare  
    - “Ulysses” by Alfred Lord Tennyson  
    - “O Captain! My Captain!” by Walt Whitman  
    - An excerpt from “Song of Myself” by Walt Whitman |
I recommend the assessments included in Figure 3.2 as the only evidence that teachers use to determine grades because they are product criteria that align with the selected standards for the course (Guskey 75). The subjects or topics of the essays can be changed if needed, but the assessment proposal here is meant to help teachers “test the waters” of working the CCSS-aligned curriculum into the standards-based grading system. In my proposed revision, I have placed the compare/contrast assessments into the same semester as a means of creating consistency for students and giving teachers similar assessments for measuring student growth. Their placement in the spring semester scaffolds the complexity from the fall semester in which students focus on learning how to write a strong literary analysis of one text. The English III research essay is included for now as a stepping stone to a different assessment. It can work for at least the first year of standards-based grading because the assignment focuses on the argumentative skills of the CCSS and does align with the essential outcomes included above. For consistency’s sake, though, I recommend English III teachers consider changing the assessment from a research-based assignment to another literary analysis. Doing so may give teachers more reliable data to evaluate student growth and allow students to apply the feedback from previous assessments to the final assessment of the semester. Literary analysis is, after all, different from research writing, and the data teachers collect that first year may not give them accurate information about students’ skills since the last assessment is a different genre from the first two.

The CCSS and its emphasis on heuristic tasks require students to complete more rigorous work than they may have done in the past; likewise, the use of essays as the product criteria to assess the standards requires teachers to do more work than they may
have done in the past. With all but one English teacher on overload next year, and with approximately 30 students in each section, the increased work load is no trivial matter. It is vital, then, that teachers work together to create a calendar that spaces out the essays appropriately. I recommend that teachers give themselves approximately two weeks to grade collected essays. Due dates should be spread out over the course of a semester (approximately every four to six weeks), so teachers can provide instruction to help students improve on the next essay, and so students have time to review the feedback they receive. This adjustment to essays is a necessary one, however, for it is the best way for teachers to gather valid information about student mastery of the complex skills in the CCSS.

Rubrics

According to Guskey, students’ performance in a standards-based system should be assessed on a “clearly defined rubric (17). LHS teachers have been using rubrics for several years, refining them as teachers learn more about grading and assessment in professional development. The rubrics LHS teachers use reflect student levels of performance on standards, and have proven useful in increasing interrater reliability. They also reflect the standards-based grading system already: Grades are determined on a 1–4 scale; LHS teachers’ rubrics use a 1–4 scale. These rubrics also reflect the idea that a 1 or 2 reflects a student is struggling toward mastery or has only mastered the simplest aspect(s) of a standard while a 4 reflects mastery of the entire standard.

Currently, LHS teachers average students’ scores and scale them to determine grades. With the move to standards-based grading, students’ scores for each standard
would be reported separately; teachers would not average scores together to determine a single grade. The separate scores will indicate mastery more clearly, helping parents, students, and teachers more clearly identify areas of student strength and weakness (as was discussed in Chapter 2).

Because a rubric articulates grades to students, it is likely it will feed into students’ grade orientations, showing students the reward of performing well and the consequence of performing poorly in completion of the heuristic tasks of the CCSS. With the shift to a rubric developed specifically from the CCSS, though, the learning orientation may be stronger in students and teachers because of the focus on skills instead of point accumulation. The conversations with students may not be about how many points students need to earn to pass; instead, those conversations may be more about the skills students need to master. The focus can be on what students learn.

There are three potential rubrics the English department could use: a collapsed analytic rubric, an expanded analytic rubric, and a holistic rubric. All three have shared benefits. On each rubric, the presentation of the tasks focuses on student learning. Each rubric category represents one of the essential outcomes for English III. For each rubric, the standard itself is represented as a score 4 on each rubric, which Wormeli argues is best practice (46). Each rubric also explains the heuristic tasks outlined in the CCSS on a 1–4 scale, placing the emphasis on skill mastery while also aligning to the standards-based system. Teachers won’t be assessing one right answer to a question; they won’t be looking for one type of transition word. They will be assessing students on how well they perform the overall tasks and how students apply their knowledge of literature to their interpretations of it. (For example, students might apply their knowledge that *The Great*
*Gatsby* takes place in 1922 to make an interpretation about the role of wealth in our society during that period. The algorismic tasks, like memorization of important facts and details, have importance because they help students complete the heuristic tasks, but they are not considered more important than the heuristic ones.

Each rubric also has its own unique benefits and challenges, which LHS teachers will need to consider as they go into the 2016–2017 school year.

**The Collapsed Analytic Rubric**

The collapsed analytic rubric gives students one score on each standard. (See Appendix C and Appendix D for the complete versions of the educator and student versions.) The entire standard is represented as a score 4. Scores 3, 2, and 1 represent portions of each standard, with the skills becoming simpler as the score decreases, as indicated in Figure 3.3 below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator Rubric</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A</strong></td>
<td>Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s)</td>
<td>• Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s)</td>
<td>• Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s)</td>
<td>• Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence</td>
<td>• Create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence</td>
<td>• Establish the significance of the claim(s)</td>
<td>• Establish the significance of the claim(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish the significance of the claim(s)</td>
<td>• Establish the significance of the claim(s)</td>
<td>• Distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims</td>
<td>• Distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Rubric</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A</strong></td>
<td>I can write a thesis statement that explains the argument of my essay.</td>
<td>• I can write a thesis statement that explains the argument of my essay.</td>
<td>• I can write a thesis statement that explains the argument of my essay.</td>
<td>• I can write a thesis statement that explains the argument of my essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.</td>
<td>• I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.</td>
<td>• I can explain why my argument is important to the discussion of the topic.</td>
<td>• I can explain why my argument is important to the discussion of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can explain how my essay is different from other essays about the same topic.</td>
<td>• I can explain how my essay is different from other essays about the same topic.</td>
<td>• I can explain how my essay is different from other essays about the same topic.</td>
<td>• I can explain how my essay is different from other essays about the same topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.</td>
<td>• I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.</td>
<td>• I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.</td>
<td>• I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can explain why my argument is important to the discussion of the topic.</td>
<td>• I can explain why my argument is important to the discussion of the topic.</td>
<td>• I can explain why my argument is important to the discussion of the topic.</td>
<td>• I can explain why my argument is important to the discussion of the topic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Benefits:**

This rubric follows grading experts’ opinions. Marzano argues that a 1–4 scale should reflect simpler content at the low end and more complex content at the high end.
(45), which this rubric does. Each rubric category names the specific CCSS standard and explains each aspect of the standard for students, with the entire standard articulated as a score 4.

The rubric is also manageable. Product criteria will be assessed using the first five categories of the rubric. Both Guskey and Wormeli argue that teachers have to carefully craft the expectations for each score on rubrics because it’s easy for rubrics to become subjective and biased (36; 46). This rubric takes language directly from the CCSS, which limits the amount of teacher subjectivity and bias.

The limited number of categories could also reduce the amount of time teachers spend grading each essay. Teachers using this rubric consider how successful students were in mastering the tasks outlined in each standard and select the score that most closely reflects the number of skills mastered.

**Challenges:**

Wormeli claims that “there is no such thing as the perfect rubric” (46). Indeed, this rubric is not a perfect representation of the CCSS or of standards-based grading; it doesn’t even have a perfect representation of the 1–4 scale because some of the standards don’t break down that cleanly. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.E is a good example of the “imperfect” standard: “Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented” (“Writing: Grade 11–12”). As the rubric reflects, this standard identifies three skills:

1. Write a concluding statement or section.

2. Connect the statement or section to the argument.
3. Use the concluding statement to support the argument.

Adding any simpler task is below the standard itself, possibly adding teacher bias into the rubric. Standards-based grading seeks to clearly articulate expectations for students to learn related to the standards, so anything below would suggest a 0 would be the best score if the student can’t demonstrate mastery of the simplest skill.

It is clear that the CCSS includes multiple skills in each standard, and that puts the CCSS in conflict with standards-based grading. The complexity involved with combining the CCSS with standards-based grading can be examined clearly with CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A: “Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence” (“Writing: Grade 11–12”). This standard includes four skills:

1. Introduce a claim
2. Establish the significance of the claim
3. Differentiate the claim from alternate or opposing claims
4. Create a logical organization

In order to earn a score 4 for this standard, then, students must demonstrate mastery of all four complex skills. Introducing a claim is a complex skill by itself, but students demonstrating mastery of that skill, arguably the simplest one of the four, earn only a score 1.

The rubric’s design for the number of skills means it could be difficult for teachers to arrive at reliable, valid scores for students, especially since those skills could be broken down into their own categories for separate scores. The rubric does not take the
breadth and depth of the skills into account, either (Stiggins, qtd. in Wormeli 45). Teachers might, for instance, run into the problem of an unclear claim but a clear establishment of significance. What score does the student earn? It’s difficult to say. The unclear claim would indicate the student couldn’t earn a score 1, but the establishment of significance would indicate the student should earn a score 3. A score 2 might be a good compromised score, but that score, as it is articulated on the rubric, doesn’t indicate what actually occurred in the student’s writing. The feedback students receive from this rubric may not be accurate or reliable, and teachers may not be able to determine accurate scores based on the rubric’s overall setup.

**The Expanded Analytic Rubric**

LHS English teachers could consider using a rubric that is longer, one that breaks down each skill into its own category under its assigned standard. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.11-12.1.A, for example, could have four separate categories:

1. The claim (thesis statement)
2. Significance
3. Differentiation from alternate or opposing claims
4. Organization

The scores for each category could be averaged together to get a final score for the standard.

Figure 3.4 shows examples of the claim category from the educator and student rubrics (complete rubrics appear in Appendix E and Appendix F):
### Figure 3.4: Expanded Analytic Rubric

#### Educator Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.11-12.1.A</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claim</td>
<td>The writer introduces a claim.</td>
<td>The writer introduces a knowledgeable claim.</td>
<td>The writer introduces a precise, knowledgeable claim.</td>
<td>The writer introduces a precise, knowledgeable claim. The claim argues a unique perspective. 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Student Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.11-12.1.A</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>I can write a thesis statement.</td>
<td>I can write a thesis statement that reflects an interpretation of the texts.</td>
<td>I can write a thesis statement that reflects a specific interpretation of the text:</td>
<td>I can write a thesis statement that reflects a specific interpretation of the text:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I can explain the theme I interpret.
- I can identify the literary devices that prove the theme.

My thesis statement reflects a unique interpretation, one that is different from most of my peers'.

---

**Benefits:**

Like the previous rubric, it aligns to standards-based grading on a 1–4 scale, and the expectations would be clearly articulated for the students. This rubric also addresses the "breadth and depth of the target" (Stiggins qtd. in Wormeli 45), giving students and teachers a rubric that is easier to use for assessing achievement. Moreover, it allows the student to get a more reliable score. If he has a weak thesis statement, perhaps he earns a 1 for the thesis category; if he establishes the significance clearly, perhaps he earns a 4 for the significance category. The scores across the four categories would then be averaged to determine the student’s score toward the standard. Such a rubric would give

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23 The bolded information indicates an additional expectation that is not articulated in the CCSS.
much more specific feedback and help teachers make more reliable judgements about student achievement related to the standards.

Challenges:

This rubric might make students more grade oriented, for it turns the rubric into a game of numbers. It is not as focused on CCSS skill mastery; it’s more focused on the number of points needed to make a student “look” like he has proficient skills toward the standard. The meaning of each category becomes muddled because a student might never master writing a thesis statement—arguably the simplest skill of the first English III CCSS standard—but he could earn a score 3 because he does well on the other skills of the standard.

The rubric also implies that some standards have more importance than others. There are more points averaged together to determine the score for CCSS.ELA-Literacy.11-12.1.A (a total of sixteen) than there are for CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 (a total of eight), so students might perceive the introduction of an essay as the most important section. I recommend, though, that each standard be considered together in equal weight to emphasize that an essay should be cohesive and developed. This rubric’s overemphasis of some standards and underemphasis of others could send the wrong message to students about how complex writing works, possibly driving them to focus on one part or section of an essay while neglecting others.

This rubric is more subjective as well. The bolded information in the score 4 category indicates an addition to the standard assessed. The standard does not require students to articulate a unique perspective, but in order to clearly delineate the skill of
that standard into four categories, adding that additional detail seems necessary. There are several instances of these additions in the rubric, each of which requires the teacher to make a judgement call about what a score looks like when the standard does not describe the level of achievement. The teacher-made additions could lead to significant differences in how teachers score essays, and the meaning of the grade is less about mastering the standard and more about meeting the expectations of the teacher(s) who made the rubric.

The rubric would also take a lot of time to grade. Teachers would have to assess each aspect of every standard separately, then average all of the scores together. They would, therefore, calculate grades twice: once to assess each aspect of every standard, and once to average the scores together to determine the score for the overall standard. As a result, grades might have a diluted meaning, and the use of this rubric might encourage students to reflect on their scores more than reflect on their skills.

The Holistic Rubric:

This rubric is not a true holistic rubric by the traditional definition (all categories are put together and graded as a whole). It is holistic, though, in the sense that it puts all of the skills of each standard together, and students are given a rating on how well they achieved the overall standard. The holistic rubric (found in appendices G and H) may be the best starting point for English III. It is modeled after the one used in Composition, a course that approximately half of LHS students take. Figure 3.5 below includes a sample from the educator and student rubrics:
**Figure 3.5: Holistic Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator Rubric</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A (Introduction):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish the significance of the claim(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Rubric</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A (Introduction):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can write a thesis statement that explains the argument of my essay.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can explain how my essay is different from other essays about the same topic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can explain why my argument is important to the discussion of the topic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Benefits:**

The holistic rubric includes all of the standards for English III, and each standard is, like the other rubrics, rated on a 1–4 scale. It requires less time for teachers to grade student work using this rubric (Wormeli 46), which will allow them to get timely feedback to the approximately 180 students each LHS English teacher will have next year despite the lack of preparation periods during the school day.

The rubric also, despite how it might appear, limits subjectivity. Wormeli argues, "The more analytic and detailed the rubric, the more subjective the scores can be" (46). Guskey makes a similar argument about grading categories, citing Dwyer: “Setting more cutoffs in a distribution of scores (levels or categories) necessitates that more cases will be vulnerable to fluctuations across those category boundaries” (41). The more categories there are, the more likely teachers are to err. These errors stem from teachers’ biases and personal opinions about writing, and as a result, a score 3 for one teacher might be a score 2 for another. This rubric gives the standard to consider; then, teachers make a professional judgment based on the students’ writing. Teachers would circle the aspects
of the standard that are missing and include specific, qualitative feedback in the margins and at the end of each essay to help students improve for the next one.

Including the whole standard with a 1–4 rating will also make teachers far less biased because they aren't making arbitrary decisions about what constitutes a score. Teachers make a judgment about how the introduction functions as a whole. They make a judgment about how the transitions function as a whole. Instead of seeing the thesis as separate from the introduction, students may see the thesis as the culminating statement of the introduction. Instead of seeing transitions as a way to get from one paragraph to the next, this holistic rubric may help them see that transitions create cohesion for an entire essay.

This rubric could help LHS students be more learning oriented as well, especially in comparison to the extended analytic rubric. Wormeli argues that, with any rubric, teachers should show students the highest score category only: “When all that is provided to students is the detailed description of full mastery, they focus on those requirements—it’s the only vision they have” (48). With this more holistic rubric, students cannot, for example, read over the score 2 or score 3 categories and decide that’s good enough for their writing; they have only the highest score—in this case, the standard itself—to measure their performance. They cannot play the numbers game with the scores, either, figuring out how many points to accumulate in order to meet the standard. They have the standard itself, so the conversation with students is about what skills they need to master, not how many points they need to earn.
Challenges:

Using a holistic rubric like this one may cause teachers to feel like they’re making judgments based on how they “feel” about students’ writing. The rubric doesn’t articulate what constitutes a 1, 2, or 3, so students may argue that they don’t understand their scores. But this is a challenge that occurs with the categories of the other two rubrics, too. If students’ writing doesn’t perfectly match any of the score descriptions, teachers choose the score that they feel is the most appropriate for the students’ writing. The difference is that this rubric doesn’t have the lower scores articulated.

Teachers would also have to dedicate time to develop interrater reliability, too. Though the Composition teachers have reported strong reliability among themselves, they do not have any recorded quantitative data to support that claim. The rest of the department will have to test the rubric during one of their weekly department meetings and discuss any differences they have in student scores. Developing reliability may only take one meeting, but that is one meeting that teachers lose at grade level for data analysis and lesson planning.

The Next Steps:

Whatever rubric the English department chooses, teachers have to be open to revision at the end of each semester for the first few years. It is important that the department works together to determine how reliable the selected rubric is, how much information students receive, and how targeted instruction is. If teachers aren’t teaching to the standards, then the students won’t meet them, and the rubrics won’t be useful no
matter how much they are revised. I recommend the department use the rubric that best explains the standards assessed and guides teachers’ instruction.

Revisions

Revisions, like process criteria, are an important, albeit optional, part of the learning process at LHS. In all English classes, students are allowed to revise one product criteria assessment per quarter, and the revision score replaces the original score. I recommend that this policy continue, for it aligns with building policy and standards-based grading. The revision option, furthermore, alleviates some of the pressure students might feel, given that their success is determined based on three or four assessments that require them to demonstrate mastery of complex skills. Revisions can give teachers additional evidence as well, which can be especially important for students who don’t demonstrate consistency in their skills across products.

Another benefit of the optional revision is that it requires students to advocate for themselves and reflect on their own learning; they have go to their teachers and explain that they want to revise. I recommend that students lead the conferences, and they should arrive knowing what standards they need to work on, using the rubric to point out specific skills they need help with.

One challenge of the revision policy is its impact on students’ motivation. The grading orientation and learning orientation may be in a state of tension in students who revise—it’s important to achieve a certain score and pass the course, and it’s important to learn the skills so another revision isn’t needed—but teachers have to help students focus on developing the skills students need. If, however, the focus is on the score, if the
student seems to take the revision for granted, Wormeli argues, “[T]he greater gift may be to deny the redo [revision] option” (132). The revision option is a privilege, an opportunity for students to provide their teachers with evidence of mastery if it is missing; it is not a numbers game. I recommend the revision policy be implemented as a means of helping students learn, not as a means of drawing more attention to grades.

**Late Work**

I recommend that students who submit assignments after the due date attend a tutorial (Guskey 93, 105). As discussed in Chapter 2, assigning a tutorial will show the students that their work is important, and they must submit evidence of mastery in order to move on to the next course.

Instead of deducting the score for the standards for the assessment, I recommend using the LATE code. This code can help teachers, students, and parents track how often students turn in their assignments late. In Skyward, this is easy for teachers to see, as the assignments that are coded LATE show up in bold font in the gradebook. This record keeping allows LHS teachers to review their gradebooks to make decisions about what to report for that aspect of student behavior once the district designs a scoring system for it.

**Conclusion**

The Ludgate district’s choice to implement standards-based grading will significantly influence the policies that administrators and teachers implement and the types of assessments teachers use to determine grades. The standards-based grading system, with all its benefits and challenges, has a significant impact on what teachers do
in their classrooms, and therefore, on how students respond to and perceive learning. As the district’s purpose statement shows, the LCUSD #2 district leadership team is making decisions without taking the research of motivation or some of the relevant theory of standards-based grading into account. The district seems to be functioning as if adopting the standards-based grading system wholesale will get all students authentically engaged in learning and will allow teachers to measure student achievement perfectly. It won’t.

The schools throughout the district must contend with their rich contexts that will have an impact on the implementation of the new grading system, and I recommend that all interested parties—administrators, teachers, parents, students—be involved in the discussion to ensure that the purpose is clear, the policies logical and practical, and the achievement data valid and relevant. Adopting a new grading system, especially one that is unfamiliar to most parents and students, is a significant decision that should be made carefully, thoughtfully, and with the context of the district in mind.

LCUSD #2 has the potential to integrate this new system in a way that truly does benefit everyone involved, but the district needs to consider how the transition could alter the way students respond to learning and how it will change the ways teachers assess student achievement and track progress. I recommend the district leadership team write a clear purpose statement that tells teachers, parents, and students what grades (and, therefore, learning) mean. Once the purpose statement is clarified, LCUSD #2 teachers can make more informed decisions about what standards to assess in each course, then develop rubrics that limit subjectivity and bias by focusing specifically on what those selected standards describe as mastery. Based on those changes to the purpose statement, standards, and rubrics, I recommend that teachers in each building implement policies
that align with the purpose statement and help teachers show students that learning is more valuable than point accumulation. The district’s standards-based grading system may not be Guskey’s idealized version, but students can still benefit from it when the theory is applied to the district’s context.

Ideally, the contextually-appropriate implementation of this system will help students take more responsibility for their learning. In LCUSD #2 and LHS specifically, students’ autonomy is limited. They are required to attend tutorial when they don’t do their homework, even if they feel—and their assessment scores prove—that they don’t necessarily need the practice. Conversely, some students feel that they must complete the practice that they don’t need just to ensure they earn the A. In these situations, students may feel more grade oriented, like they must cede control to the external incentives provided by their teachers. Learning, then, feels more like a tour of duty than an authentic or valuable experience. With the implementation of the standards-based grading system and the policies recommended above, the students can enjoy more autonomy: They get to make choices about homework and revisions; they get to enjoy the rewards of work well done or cope with the consequences of work poorly done. LHS teachers can benefit as well, focusing on developing students’ skills through instruction and qualitative feedback. They can take time to analyze the data from student assessments to track growth and reflect on their teaching. They can better motivate students to learn.

Contextually appropriate choices matter, not only for LCUSD #2, but for any district looking to reform the grading system. Too often, teachers and administrators make decisions by using the conventional wisdom, which, as Pink, Kohn, Guskey, and Pollio and Beck reveal, is sometimes counter to the truth. These recommendations for
LCUSD #2 and the LHS English department take the research of motivation, the theory of standards-based grading, and my own six years of teaching in the district into account, and should these recommendations be applied, the transition to this new system will likely be viewed as “a step in the right direction” for student learning in the community. These recommendations may not work as well in another district, but they can be examples of what can work, of how research and theory can be applied to the rich context of educational settings. They can serve as an example of how a district can challenge the conventional wisdom in order to positively impact students’ education, of how one district in one community decided to address that proverbial elephant in the room.
Works Cited


Appendix A: Essential Outcomes for English I, II, and IV

The essential outcomes for these courses are based on current essential outcomes and informed the selection of the standards for English III. The standards are taken verbatim from the CCSS website.

English I

1. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text (“Reading: Literature: Grade 9–10”).

2. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text (“Reading: Literature: Grade 9–10”).

3. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme (“Reading: Literature: Grade 9–10”).

4. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.10: By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grade 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range (“Reading: Literature: Grade 9–10”).

5. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
6. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2: Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 9–10”).

7. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.9: Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 9–10”).

8. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.10: By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grade 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 9–10”).

9. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences (“Writing: Grade 9–10”).

10. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 […] (“Writing: Grade 9–10”).

11. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience (Editing
for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 9–10.) ("Writing: Grade 9–10").

12. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically ("Writing: Grade 9–10").

13. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research ("Writing: Grade 9–10").

14. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences ("Writing: Grade 9–10").

15. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task ("Speaking & Listening: Grade 9–10").

16. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate (See grades 9–10 Language standards 1 and 3 [..] for specific expectations.) ("Speaking & Listening: Grade 9–10").

17. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or
style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening (“Language: Grade 9–10”).

18. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 9–10 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies (“Language: Grade 9–10”).

19. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (“Language: Grade 9–10”).

**English II**

1. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone) (“Reading: Literature: Grade 9–10”).

2. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5: Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise (“Reading: Literature: Grade 9–10”).

3. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.6: Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature (“Reading: Literature: Grade 9–10”).
4. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms
source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic
from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare)
(“Reading: Literature: Grade 9–10”).

5. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3: Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or
series of ideas or event, including the order in which the points are made, how
they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between
them ("Reading: Informational Text: Grade 9–10").

6. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as
they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings;
analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone
(e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper)
(“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 9–10”).

7. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.5: Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims
are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions
of a text (e.g., a section or chapter) (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 9–10”).

8. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in
a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or
purpose (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 9–10”).

9. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine
and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately
through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content (“Writing:
Grade 9–10”).
10. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the
development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and
audience (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards
1–3 [...].) (“Writing: Grade 9–10”).

11. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by
planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on
addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience (Editing
for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to
and including grades 9–10) (“Writing: Grade 9–10”).

12. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6: Use technology, including the Internet, to
produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking
advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display
information flexibly and dynamically (“Writing: Grade 9–10”).

13. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational
texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (“Writing: Grade 9–10”).

14. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time
for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a
day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences (“Writing: Grade 9–
10”).

15. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2: Integrate multiple sources of information
presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally)
evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source (“Speaking & Listening:
Grade 9–10”).
16. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5: Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add to interest (“Speaking & Listening: Grade 9–10”).

17. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing (“Language: Grade 9–10”).

English IV and Composition

When the curriculum was first rewritten five years ago to align with the CCSS, the department decided to give English IV and Composition some “wiggle room” to select the Reading: Literature and Reading: Informational Texts standards to teach because senior students had a variety of English courses to choose from. They did not have to include all of the reading standards listed below. Last year, they and the building administration agreed to change the English IV course offerings. Instead of several options, all students would take one English IV class or Composition. This is the pilot year for the English IV program, and as of this writing, no new essential outcomes have been determined. The essential outcomes that appear below reflect the standards selected five years ago, before the implementation of one English IV class.

1. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4: Determine the meanings of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or
beautiful (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.) (“Reading: Literature: Grade 11–12”).

2. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5: Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact (“Reading: Literature: Grade 11–12”).

3. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6: Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement) (“Reading: Literature: Grade 11–12”).

4. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.7: Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.) (“Reading: Literature: Grade 11–12”).

5. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.9: Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics (“Reading: Literature: Grade 11–12”).

6. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.10: By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently (“Reading: Literature: Grade 11–12”).
7. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3: Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 11–12”).

8. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10) (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 11–12”).

9. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.5: Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 11–12”).

10. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 11–12”).

11. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 11–12”).

12. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.8: Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the
premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses) (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 11–12”).

13. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.10: By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently (“Reading: Informational Text: Grade 11–12”).

14. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

15. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8: Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

16. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).

17. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences (“Writing: Grade 11–12”).
18. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively (“Speaking & Listening: Grade 11–12”).

19. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.6: Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression (“Language: Grade 11–12”).
Appendix B: English III Assessment Plan

The following standards will be assessed in order to determine your level of mastery in English III.

1. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A:
   - I can write a thesis statement that explains the argument of my essay.
   - I can explain how my essay is different from other essays about the same topic.
   - I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.

2. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.C:
   - I can use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to:
     - Connect one paragraph to the next.
     - Connect each paragraph to the thesis.
     - Connect my main points to my thesis.
     - Connect my textual evidence to my main points and thesis.

3. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.E:
   - I can conclude my essay by restating my thesis.
   - I can restate my main points to remind readers what my essay was about.
   - I can explain what readers should now know from reading my essay.

4. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1:
   - I can cite multiple, relevant direct quotes and/or paraphrases to support my thesis.
   - I can explain what the text means and how it proves my thesis.

5. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2:
   - I can follow the rules of capitalization
- I can spell correctly
- I can follow the rules of punctuation

6. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.A:**

- I can come to discussion prepared (I have read and researched the material under study).
- I can discuss specific passages from the assigned reading and other research to help explain my ideas.
- I can point out specific passages from the assigned reading and other research to help my peers talk about the assigned reading and research.

7. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.C:**

- I can give everyone a chance to share their ideas about an assigned reading or topic.
- I can ask questions that help my peers talk about assigned readings.
- I can ask questions that help my peers support their opinions and explain examples they use.
- I can answer questions that my peers ask me.
- I can support my own opinions and explain the examples I use.
- I can summarize others ideas to help me understand what they’re saying.
- I can ask additional questions if I need help understanding my peers’ ideas.
- I can give supportive and encouraging responses to my peers, even if their opinions are different from mine.
# Appendix C: Educator Collapsed Analytic Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A</td>
<td>Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s)</td>
<td>Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s)</td>
<td>Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s)</td>
<td>Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence</td>
<td>Create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence</td>
<td>Establish the significance of the claim(s)</td>
<td>Establish the significance of the claim(s)</td>
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<td>Establish the significance of the claim(s)</td>
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<td>Distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.C</td>
<td>Use words to:</td>
<td>Use words, phrases, and clauses to:</td>
<td>Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Link the major sections of text</td>
<td>Link the major sections of text</td>
<td>Link the major sections of text</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Create cohesion</td>
<td>Create cohesion</td>
<td>Create cohesion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons</td>
<td>Clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons</td>
<td>Clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clarify the relationships between reasons and evidence</td>
<td>Clarify the relationships between reasons and evidence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clarify the relationships between claim(s) and counterclaims</td>
<td>Clarify the relationships between claim(s) and counterclaims</td>
<td>Clarify the relationships between claim(s) and counterclaims</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.E | Provide a concluding statement or section | • Provide a concluding section  
• Construct the concluding statement or section so that it clearly follows from the argument presented | • Provide a concluding section  
• Construct the concluding statement or section so that it clearly follows from the argument presented |
|---|---|---|---|
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 | Cite strong textual evidence | • Cite strong and thorough textual evidence  
• Cite evidence to support what the text says explicitly | • Cite strong and thorough textual evidence  
• Cite evidence to support what the text says explicitly  
• Cite evidence to support inferences drawn from the text  
• Explain uncertainties in the text |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2 | Demonstrate limited command of the conventions of:  
• Capitalization  
• Punctuation  
• Spelling | Demonstrate partial command of conventions of:  
• Capitalization  
• Punctuation  
• Spelling | Demonstrate command of conventions of:  
• Capitalization  
• Punctuation  
• Spelling |
| **Reading Literature** | **Language** | **Speaking & Listening** |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.A | Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study | • Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study  
• Refer to evidence from texts  
• Use evidence from texts and other research to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas  
• Propose full range of topic or issue conversations by posing and responding to questions  
• Clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions | • Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study  
• Refer to evidence from texts  
• Use evidence from texts and other research to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas  
• Propose full range of topic or issue conversations by posing and responding to questions  
• Clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.C | Ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue | • Ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue  
• Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions  
• Clarify or verify ideas and conclusions  
• Ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue  
• Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence  
• Clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions  
• Propose divergent and creative perspectives | • Ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue  
• Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence  
• Clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions  
• Propose divergent and creative perspectives |
## Appendix D: Student Collapsed Analytic Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A | I can write a thesis statement that explains the argument of my essay. | • I can write a thesis statement that explains the argument of my essay.  
• I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.  
• I can explain why my argument is important to the discussion of the topic. | • I can write a thesis statement that explains the argument of my essay.  
• I can explain how my essay is different from other essays about the same topic.  
• I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.  
• I can explain why my argument is important to the discussion of the topic. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.C</th>
<th>I can use transition words (like however and moreover) to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Connect one paragraph to the next.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Connect each paragraph to the thesis.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Show how my main points prove my thesis.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Show how my evidence (direct quotes, paraphrases) connect to my main points and thesis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>|  | • I can conclude my essay by restating my thesis. |
|  | • I can restate my main points to remind readers what my essay was about. |
|  | • I can explain what readers should now know from reading my essay. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1</th>
<th>I can cite examples (direct quotes, paraphrases) that support my thesis.</th>
<th>• I can cite multiple, relevant examples (direct quotes, paraphrases) that support my thesis.</th>
<th>• I can cite multiple, relevant examples (direct quotes, paraphrases) that support my thesis.</th>
<th>• I can cite multiple, relevant examples (direct quotes, paraphrases) that support my thesis.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>I can follow few of the rules related to capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Some of my errors may confuse readers.</td>
<td>I can follow the rules related to capitalization, punctuation, and spelling without causing readers much confusion if I make an error.</td>
<td>I can follow the rules related to capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. I make few errors.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.A</td>
<td>Speaking &amp; Listening</td>
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<td>I can come to discussion prepared (I have read and researched the material under study).</td>
<td>- I can come to discussion prepared (I have read and researched the material under study).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- I can discuss specific passages from the assigned reading to help explain my ideas.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- I can point out specific passages from the assigned reading and other research to help my peers talk about the assigned reading and research.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- I can discuss specific passages from the assigned reading and other research to help explain my ideas.</td>
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<td><strong>I can give everyone a chance to share their ideas about an assigned reading or topic.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I can ask questions that help my peers talk about assigned readings.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I can answer questions that help my peers support their opinions and explain examples they use.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I can support my own opinions and explain the examples I use.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I can summarize others ideas to help me understand what they’re saying.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I can ask additional questions if I need help understanding my peers’ ideas.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I can give supportive and encouraging responses to my peers, even if their opinions are different from mine.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.C**
Appendix E: Educator Expanded Analytic Rubric

Determine the Standards-based score for each standard by:
1) Add up the points accumulated for the standard.
2) Divide the number of points by the number of categories.
3) Record the answer to (2) in the gradebook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A: Introduction</td>
<td>The writer clearly establishes the significance of the claim.</td>
<td>The writer establishes the significance of the claim.</td>
<td>The writer clearly establishes the significance of the claim.</td>
<td>The writer clearly establishes the significance of the claim, using the significance to distinguish the claim from alternate or opposing claims.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate and Opposing Claims</td>
<td>The writer mentions alternate or opposing claims, but does not distinguish the claim from them.</td>
<td>The writer attempts to distinguish the claim from at least one alternate or opposing claim.</td>
<td>The writer clearly distinguishes the claim from one alternate or opposing claim.</td>
<td>The writer clearly distinguishes the claim from alternate or opposing claims.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The writer creates an organization that logically sequences claims.</td>
<td>The writer creates an organization that logically sequences claims and evidence.</td>
<td>The writer creates an organization that logically sequences claims, reasons, and evidence.</td>
<td>The writer creates an organization that logically sequences claims, reasons, and evidence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim</td>
<td>The writer introduces a claim.</td>
<td>The writer introduces a knowledgeable claim.</td>
<td>The writer introduces a precise, knowledgeable claim.</td>
<td>The writer introduces a precise, knowledgeable claim. The claim argues a unique perspective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 points possible; 4 categories

Standards-based score:

---

24 Bold text indicates an addition to the Common Core State Standard.
### Coherence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCSS.E.LA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.C: Cohesion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transitions between Paragraphs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writer uses words to link the major sections of the text and create cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writer uses words and phrases to link the major sections of the text and create cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writer uses words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text and create cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writer uses words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text and create cohesion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Transitions within Paragraphs**       |
| The writer uses words to clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims. |
| The writer uses words and phrases to clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims. |
| The writer uses words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims. |
| The writer uses words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims. |

8 points possible; 2 categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards-based score:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.E.LA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.E: Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writer provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the argument presented. The concluding section reestablishes the significance of the claim.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 points possible; 1 category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards-based score:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.E.LA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1: Reading Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writer cites strong and thorough textual evidence. The writer balances the use of evidence throughout the essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8 points possible; 2 categories</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2: Language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 points possible; 1 category</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.A: Individual Contribution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 points possible; 2 categories

**Standards-based score:**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.C: Group Contribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Questions</th>
<th>The group member responds to questions.</th>
<th>The group member poses and responds to questions that probe evidence.</th>
<th>The group member propels conversations by responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The group member ensures a hearing for a partial range of positions on a topic or issue, giving preference to perspectives that support the group member's own.</td>
<td>The group member ensures a hearing for a partial range of positions on a topic or issue. The group member may promote divergent and creative perspectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The group member clarifies ideas and conclusions of other group members.</td>
<td>The group member clarifies, verifies, and challenges ideas and conclusions as a means of propelling discussion further.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 points possible; 3 categories

**Standards-based score:**
# Appendix F: Student Expanded Analytic Rubric

**How your standards-based score is determined:**

1) Add up the points accumulated for the standard.
2) Divide the number of points by the number of categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Significance | I attempt explain why my perspective is important. | I can explain why my perspective is important. | I can explain, through specific examples, why my perspective is important | | I can explain, through specific examples, why my perspective is important. **I can use the importance of my claim to explain how it is different from alternate or opposing perspectives.**

| Alternate and Opposing Claims | I can identify different perspectives related to my thesis. I attempt to explain how those perspectives are different from mine. | I can identify different perspectives related to my thesis. I can explain how those one perspective is different from mine. | I can identify different perspectives related to my thesis, and I can explain how all of those perspectives are different from mine. | | |
| Organization | I can organize my main points in a logical way. | I can organize my main points and evidence in a logical way. | I can organize my main points, textual evidence, and commentary in a logical way. | I can organize my main points, textual evidence, commentary, and counterarguments in a logical way. | |

---

25 Bold text indicates an addition to the Common Core State Standard.
| Claim                                      | I can write a thesis statement. | I can write a thesis statement that reflects a specific interpretation of the text:  
|                                           |                                | • I can explain the theme I interpret.  
|                                           |                                | • I can identify the literary devices that prove the theme.  
|                                           |                                | **My thesis statement reflects a unique interpretation, one that is different from most of my peers.** |
| 16 points possible; 4 categories          | Standards-based score:         |                                                                                   |
| CCSS.E.LA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.C: Cohesion  |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |
| Transitions between Paragraphs            | I can use words (however, additionally) to connect one paragraph to the next.     | I can use words (however, additionally), phrases (in addition to, on the other hand, as a result), and clauses (not only but also, despite, although) to connect one paragraph to the next and to connect each paragraph to my thesis.  
|                                           | I can use words (however, additionally) and phrases (in addition to, on the other hand, as a result) to connect one paragraph to the next and to connect each paragraph to my thesis.  
|                                           | I can use a variety of words (however, additionally), phrases (in addition to, on the other hand, as a result), and clauses (not only but also, despite, although) to connect one paragraph to the next and to connect each paragraph to my thesis.  
<p>| | |
|                                           |                                                                                   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitions within Paragraphs</th>
<th>I can use words (however, additionally) to connect my ideas throughout each paragraph.</th>
<th>I can use words (however, additionally) and phrases (in addition to, on the other hand, as a result) to connect my ideas throughout each paragraph.</th>
<th>I can use a variety of words (however, additionally), phrases (in addition to, on the other hand, as a result), and clauses (not only/but also, despite, although) to connect my ideas throughout each paragraph.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 points possible; 2 categories</td>
<td>Standards-based score:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.E: Conclusion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>I can write a concluding paragraph.</th>
<th>I can write a concluding paragraph that includes a thesis restatement.</th>
<th>I can write a concluding statement that includes a thesis restatement and reviews the main points of my argument. I can reestablish the importance of my argument.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 points possible; 1 category</td>
<td>Standards-based score:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1: Reading Literature**

<p>| Evidence | I can cite direct quotes. | I can cite direct quotes to support my thesis. | I can cite multiple direct quotes, taken from throughout the text(s), to support my thesis. I can balance the use of quotes throughout my essay. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commentary</th>
<th>I attempt to explain each quote's literal meaning.</th>
<th>I can explain each quote's literal meaning.</th>
<th>I can explain each quote's literal meaning. I can also explain how the quote proves my thesis.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can also explain how the quote proves my thesis. When it's relevant, I can explain other possible interpretations of the quotes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 points possible; 2 categories</td>
<td>Standards-based score:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2: Language</td>
<td>I attempt to follow the rules of English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. The errors I make can confuse readers.</td>
<td>I can, for the most part, follow the rules of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Some of my errors may cause little confusion to readers.</td>
<td>I can follow the rules of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. The errors I make cause little confusion to readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>4 points possible; 1 category</td>
<td>Standards-based score:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.A: Individual Contribution</td>
<td>I did not complete my notes for discussion, but I have read the primary source (novel, story, poem) assigned for our discussion.</td>
<td>I have incomplete notes or completed the incorrect material for discussion. I have read the primary source (novel, story, poem) under study.</td>
<td>I have completed my assigned notes for discussion. I have read the primary source (novel, story, poem) under study. I may have read the secondary source(s), but I did not prepare notes from the secondary source(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>I have completed my assigned notes for discussion. I have read the primary source (novel, story, poem) and the secondary source(s) under study.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual Evidence</td>
<td>I can discuss the material from the primary source.</td>
<td>I can discuss the material from the primary source.</td>
<td>I can refer to specific passages from the primary source and discuss the material from the secondary source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 points possible; 2 categories</td>
<td>Standards-based score:</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.C: Group Contribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Questions</td>
<td>I respond to my group members' questions.</td>
<td>I respond to and pose questions that help me and my group keep our conversation going. My responses and questions invite my peers to reread passages and rethink conclusions drawn from our assigned reading.</td>
<td>I respond to and pose questions that help me and my group keep our conversation going. My responses and questions invite my peers to reread passages and rethink conclusions drawn from our assigned reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of Peers</td>
<td>I invite my peers to share their perspectives. I tend to respond more fully to peers who share my perspective.</td>
<td>I invite my peers to share their perspectives. I might attempt to get my peers to consider different perspectives.</td>
<td>I invite my peers to share their perspectives. I might attempt to get my peers to consider different perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I make sure all of my peers participate in the discussion, even if their perspectives are different from my own. I encourage my peers to share their perspectives and consider others’ perspectives.</td>
<td>I make sure all of my peers participate in the discussion, even if their perspectives are different from my own. I encourage my peers to share their perspectives and consider others’ perspectives.</td>
<td>I make sure all of my peers participate in the discussion, even if their perspectives are different from my own. I encourage my peers to share their perspectives and consider others’ perspectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Clarification of Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I restate my peers’ ideas and conclusions to increase my own understanding.</th>
<th>I restate my peers’ ideas and conclusions to increase my own and my peers’ understanding.</th>
<th>I restate my peers’ ideas and conclusions to increase my own and my peers’ understanding.</th>
<th>I restate my peers’ ideas and conclusions to increase my own and my peers’ understanding. I ask my peers to prove or defend their perspectives in order to increase my own and my peers’ understanding of the text(s). I restate and challenge ideas in order to keep the conversation going and to increase our understanding of the text(s).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**12 points possible; 3 categories**

**Standards-based score:**
Appendix G: Educator Holistic Rubric

- Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s)
- Create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence
- Establish the significance of the claim(s)
- Distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.C (Transitions): 1  2  3  4
Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to:
- Link the major sections of text
- Create cohesion
- Clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons
- Clarify the relationships between reasons and evidence
- Clarify the relationships between claim(s) and counterclaims

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.E (Conclusion): 1  2  3  4
- Provide a concluding section
- Construct the concluding statement or section so that it clearly follows from the argument presented
- Use the concluding statement or section to support the argument presented

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 (Evidence & Commentary): 1  2  3  4
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence
- Cite evidence to support what the text says explicitly
- Cite evidence to support inferences drawn from the text
- Explain uncertainties in the text

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2 (Mechanics): 1  2  3  4
Demonstrate command of conventions of:
- Capitalization
- Punctuation
- Spelling
Literature Circle Participation

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.A (Individual Contribution): 1  2  3  4
  • Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study
  • Refer to evidence from texts and other research
  • Use evidence from texts and other research to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.C (Group Contribution): 1  2  3  4
  • Ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue
  • Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence
  • Clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions
  • Promote divergent and creative perspectives
Appendix H: Student-Friendly Holistic Rubric

Name: ____________________________

- I can write a thesis statement that explains the argument of my essay.
- I can explain how my essay is different from other essays about the same topic.
- I can tell readers how I have organized the information in my essay.
- I can explain why my argument is important to the discussion of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.C (Transitions): 1 2 3 4
I can use a variety of transition words (like however and moreover), phrases (like in addition to, on the other hand, as a result), and clauses (like not only/but also, despite, although) to:
- Connect one paragraph to the next.
- Connect each paragraph to the thesis.
- Show how my main points prove my thesis.
- Show how my evidence (direct quotes, paraphrases) connect to my main points and thesis.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.E (Conclusion): 1 2 3 4
- I can conclude my essay by restating my thesis.
- I can restate my main points to remind readers what my essay was about.
- I can explain what readers should now know from reading my essay.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 (Evidence & Commentary): 1 2 3 4
- I can cite multiple, relevant examples (direct quotes, paraphrases) that support my thesis.
- I can cite examples that support what the text says.
- I can cite examples that support what I infer from the text.
- I can explain my interpretation of the examples and connect them to my thesis.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2 (Mechanics): 1 2 3 4
I can follow the rules related to capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. I make few errors.
Literature Circle Participation

Name: __________________________

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.A (Individual Contribution): 1 2 3 4
- I can come to discussion prepared (I have read and researched the material under study).
- I can discuss specific passages from the assigned reading and other research to help explain my ideas.
- I can point out specific passages from the assigned reading and other research to help my peers talk about the assigned reading and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.C (Group Contribution): 1 2 3 4
- I can give everyone a chance to share their ideas about an assigned reading or topic.
- I can ask questions that help my peers talk about assigned readings.
- I can ask questions that help my peers support their opinions and explain examples they use.
- I can answer questions that my peers ask me.
- I can support my own opinions and explain the examples I use.
- I can summarize others’ ideas to help me understand what they’re saying.
- I can ask additional questions if I need help understanding my peers’ ideas.
- I can give supportive and encouraging responses to my peers, even if their opinions are different from mine.