



Twelve Steps to Beautiful Work

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Here are twelve progressive layers of scaffolding that teachers might employ to help students achieve high quality—and beauty—in their work.

1. **Assignment.** “Make a poster showing what you have learned about ancient Greece.”
What kind of work might you expect from students? What else would they need?
2. **Components.** “Your poster must be 2 ft. by 3 ft. It must represent culture, politics, religion, or architecture. It must include an example of how that aspect of ancient Greece affects our culture today. There must be a title and captions for each illustration/photo explaining why it is important. There must be a map of ancient Greece.”
How might this poster be higher quality than the first? Would describing the components be enough?
3. **Characteristics of a quality product.** “Your poster must be organized, balanced, creative, and pleasing to the eye. It must use color, space and borders effectively.”
How would this help increase the quality? What else would be needed?
4. **Models.** Use samples of exemplary student work to show what quality looks like. What does “organized” look like? Balance? How can color enhance meaning? What is effective use of space?
5. **Design rubric.** Describe different levels of quality. Look at student work and professional models to name the attributes of weak and strong work. Identify 4, 3, 2, and 1 levels.
6. **Mini-lessons and workshops.** Teach skills needed to complete the product. Offer lessons on organization, relevant content, balance and color, word choice, sentence fluency, etc.
7. **Self-assessment.** Help students assume responsibility for their own learning. They can assess themselves on the rubric.
8. **Feedback from others.** Students can learn how to give effective feedback, based on the rubric, that is kind, helpful, and specific.
9. **Multiple drafts.** Students focus revision on one aspect at a time. They get feedback after each revision.
10. **Conference with teacher.** Students get feedback from the teacher before producing final drafts.
11. **Exhibition.** Publicly display work to peers, to the community, to experts in the field.
12. **Reflection.** What did I do well? Where did I meet the learning targets? Where did I fall short? What do I need to work on to reach them next time?