

# Skilled Communication

Are students required to communicate their own ideas regarding a concept or issue? Must their communication be supported with evidence and designed with a particular audience in mind?

## Overview

Communication is at the heart of all human interaction. In the 21st century, developing technologies have created new opportunities for communication that is spoken, written, visual or multimodal; in print or digital forms; and with broader reach and fewer barriers than ever before. In contemporary communication the active process of communication is often seen as being as important as the end product. Nevertheless, digital capture and publication of even informal communications mean that those products persist longer and disseminate farther than ever before. As a result, the need for effective communication is no longer confined to language classes and journalism careers. It is important for students in all areas of academic study, and in future roles that range from office worker to lawyer to scientist, to be able to communicate clearly and persuasively with a variety of audiences and subjects.

This rubric examines whether students are asked to produce extended or multi-modal communication, and whether the communication must be substantiated, with a logical explanation or examples or evidence that supports a central thesis. At higher levels of the rubric, students must craft their communication for a particular audience.

21st century communication can take many different forms. For example, as part of a learning activity students may have a discussion with a peer over Skype. In this rubric, we don't focus on informal classroom talk, whether face-to-face or electronic. Instead, we focus on activities that require students to articulate their ideas in a permanent form: a presentation, a podcast, a written document, an email, etc. A performance (for example, a skit or oral debate) would also be considered in this rubric. We recognize that less formal conversational media are also very important aspects of communication. But effective uses of Skype will have an outcome related to the learning goals of the activity: do students produce a summary of what they learned through Skype, or build that learning into the final product they are creating? This rubric evaluates the skilled communication requirements of the products or outcomes of the students' work.

# Big Ideas

**Extended communication** is required when student must produce communication that represents a set of connected ideas, not a single simple thought. In written work, extended communication is the equivalent of one or more complete paragraphs rather than a sentence or phrase. In electronic or visual media, extended communication might take the form of a sequence of video, a podcast, or a page of a presentation that connects or illustrates several ideas.

A single text message or tweet is NOT extended communication. If students are engaged in electronic communication, this is ONLY considered extended communication if it produces an outcome that requires students to connect the ideas they discussed (for example, producing documentation of what they learned or next steps for resolving an issue that arose). The duration of an electronic chat is not considered in evaluating extended communication.

<b>DOES THIS LEARNING ACTIVITY REQUIRE EXTENDED COMMUNICATION?</b>	
<b>YES:</b>	<b>NO:</b>
Students host a webinar where they present on different topics about their city to peers in their sister-city and then answer follow-up questions.	Students participate in a webinar where they listen to presentations by peers from their sister-city and then ask follow-up questions.
Students write an extended proof to demonstrate the solution to a geometry problem.	Students solve a geometry problem, but do not write any proof.
Students write a letter to the editor in response to a recent news article of their choice.	Students post a one-sentence comment in response to a recent news article of their choice.
Students hold a Skype conversation with peers from another school to create a plan for the performance they will put on together about the novel they read.	Students hold a Skype conversation with peers from another school to talk about the novel they read.

Communication is **multi-modal** when it includes more than one type of communication mode or tool used to communicate a coherent message. For example, students might create a presentation that integrates video and text, or embed a photograph into a blog post. The communication is considered multi-modal only if the elements work together to produce a stronger message than any one element alone.

If the learning activity offers students the opportunity to choose the tool or tools they will use to communicate, we consider it to be a multi-modal communication opportunity.

<b>IS THIS COMMUNICATION MULTI-MODAL?</b>	
<b>YES:</b>	<b>NO:</b>
<p><b>Students create a print, radio, or television advertisement for their new invention.</b> The learning activity allows students to choose what type of media to use.</p>	<p><b>Students create a radio advertisement for their new invention.</b> The learning activity does not offer students any choice regarding the type of media, nor does it imply the use of multiple media.</p>
<p><b>Students write lab reports about their science lab on density of matter, including narrative text and visual evidence of what the students saw in their experiment (such as drawings or screen shots of real-time data displays).</b> The learning activity requires multiple modes of media that work together for a more complete description of the experiment.</p>	<p><b>Students write lab reports about their science lab on density of matter, including only narrative text.</b> The learning activity requires only one mode of media.</p>
<p><b>Students produce blog posts on a hurricane for their journalism class, including a written description of the conditions and additional audio or visual media.</b> The learning activity requires multiple modes of media to add depth to the students' descriptions.</p>	<p><b>Students produce a podcast on a hurricane for their journalism class, including a written script and the final audio podcast.</b> The story is the same whether written out (in the script) or spoken (in the podcast); multiple media are not used to enhance the content of the communication.</p>

Communication **requires supporting evidence** when students must explain their ideas or support their thesis with facts or examples.

For this rubric, a “thesis” is a claim, hypothesis, or conclusion. Students must have a thesis when they are asked to state a point of view, make a prediction, or draw a conclusion from a set of facts or a chain of logic. The communication requires evidence if students must describe their reasoning or provide supporting facts or examples. The evidence should be sufficient to support the claim that the student is making.

<b>DOES THIS LEARNING ACTIVITY REQUIRE SUPPORTIVE EVIDENCE?</b>	
<b>YES:</b>	<b>NO:</b>
<p><b>Students must write an essay about why global warming is a problem.</b> This learning activity asks students to state and defend a claim about global warming.</p>	<p><b>Students must write an essay about global warming.</b> Students can complete this activity with a set of facts; they do not have to state and support a claim, hypothesis, or conclusion.</p>
<p><b>Students must describe their derivation of a mathematical equation.</b> The learning activity asks students to explain the logic that brought them to a conclusion about the equation.</p>	<p><b>Students must derive a mathematical equation.</b> Students can compute the equation without explaining their logic.</p>
<p><b>Students must write a blog post about the main themes from <i>Alice in Wonderland</i>, with examples from the story to illustrate their point.</b> Students are required to support their proposed themes with examples.</p>	<p><b>Students must write a blog post listing the main themes of <i>Alice in Wonderland</i>.</b> Students are not required to justify their themes with evidence from the story.</p>
<p><b>Students must write a journal entry from the perspective of a slave. They must state a perspective or a point of view about their imagined life, and describe their day with historical accuracy to support that perspective.</b> The learning activity requires students to use historical details as evidence to support their perspective.</p>	<p><b>Students must write a journal entry from the perspective of a slave. They must describe their day with historical accuracy.</b> The learning activity does not require students to state or support a perspective.</p>
<p><b>Students use Microsoft Community Clips to video themselves solving a mathematical problem, including both the steps they took and their reasoning.</b> The learning activity requires students to explain both their process and their thinking.</p>	<p><b>Students use Microsoft Community Clips to video themselves solving a mathematical problem, stating the steps they took.</b> The learning activity simply requires students to narrate their process.</p>

Students are required to **design their communication for a particular audience** when they must ensure that their communication is appropriate to the specific readers, listeners, viewers, or others with whom they are communicating. It is not sufficient for students to be communicating to a general audience on the internet. They must have in mind a specific group with specific needs in order to shape their communication appropriately.

When they are communicating with a particular audience, students must select the tools, content, or style that they use to reach the audience. They might be required to consider what tools the audience has access to or uses on a regular basis; the relevant information they must present in order for the audience to understand their thesis; or the formality or informality of the language they choose in order to be appropriate to the audience.

To qualify for this idea the learning activity might specify a particular audience, or students might be allowed to select their own audience. It is ideal, but not essential, if the communication will actually be seen by that audience. The requirement is that the students must develop their communication with that audience in mind. For example, students might develop some type of presentation to teach younger students about how to divide fractions. They will have to decide what medium to use to reach those students (for example, a podcast), and what type of language and content the students would understand and relate to. This satisfies the requirement even if the podcast is never used by younger students.

Many teachers find that it is useful to specify an audience of a different age or background than the students themselves in order to highlight the need to think about the audience for a communication and what they will and will not understand and find interesting.

**ARE STUDENTS REQUIRED TO DESIGN THEIR COMMUNICATION FOR A PARTICULAR AUDIENCE?**

<b>YES:</b>	<b>NO:</b>
<p><b>Students must create a video about their school, using appropriate imagery and evidence, to welcome the incoming students in the coming school year.</b> Students must design the video to help the incoming students feel welcome and enthusiastic about attending.</p>	<p><b>Students must create a video about their school, using appropriate imagery and evidence.</b> There is no specified audience or purpose for the video.</p>
<p><b>Students must write a letter to a company, suggesting improvements to a product.</b> Students must consider the arguments and perspectives that will be most compelling to the company.</p>	<p><b>Students must write an essay about their ideas for improving a particular product.</b> The students do not need to consider any particular audience.</p>
<p><b>Students must design a “rocks and minerals” exhibit for the town library. The learning activity requires students to communicate a message through the exhibit, which must include rock &amp; mineral samples, different media presenting information to capture visitor interest, and take-home pamphlets for exhibit visitors.</b> Students must design their communications to be appropriate to the museum audience.</p>	<p><b>Students must do a “rocks and minerals” science project. The learning activity requires students to communicate a central finding, include rock &amp; mineral samples, narrative text and/or audio information.</b> Students will submit the project to the teacher and do not need to consider any particular audience.</p>

# Skilled Communication: Rubric

- 1
  - Students are NOT required to produce extended or multi-modal communication.
  
- 2
  - Students ARE required to produce **extended communication** or **multi-modal communication**
  - BUT they are NOT required to **provide supporting evidence** OR design their work for a **particular audience**.
  
- 3
  - Students ARE required to produce **extended communication** or **multi-modal communication**
  - AND they ARE required to **provide supporting evidence**: they must explain their ideas or support a thesis with facts or examples  
OR
  - They ARE required to design their communication for a **particular audience**  
  
BUT not both.
  
- 4
  - Students ARE required to produce **extended communication** or **multi-modal communication**
  - AND they ARE required to **provide supporting evidence**
  - AND they ARE required to **design their communication for a particular audience**.

# Skilled Communication: Decision

