

# Student Product Assessment Form (SPAF)

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## Rationale Underlying This Assessment Form

The purpose of this form is to guide your judgment in the qualitative assessment of various types of products developed by students in enrichment programs. In using the instrument, three major considerations should always be kept in mind. First, the evaluation of more complex and creative types of products is always a function of human judgment. We do not think in terms of percentiles or standard scores when we evaluate paintings, architectural designs, or the usefulness of a labor-saving device. We must consider these products in terms of our own values and certain characteristics that indicate the quality, aesthetics, utility, and function of the overall contribution. In other words, we must trust our own judgment and learn to rely upon our guided subjective opinions when making assessments about complex products.

A second consideration relates to the individual worth of the product as a function of the student's age/grade level and experiential background. For example, a research project that reflects an advanced-level investigation and subsequent product by a first grader might not be considered an equally advanced level of involvement on the part of a sixth grader. Similarly, the work of a youngster from a disadvantaged background must be considered in light of the student's overall educational experiences, opportunities, and availability of advanced-level resource persons, materials, and equipment.

The third consideration relates to the most important purpose of any evaluation—student growth and improvement. This assessment instrument should be used to guide students toward excellence and therefore we strongly believe that it should be shared and discussed with students before the product is started. In other words, we believe the instrument should be reviewed with students during the early planning stages of the product. Students should have the opportunity to know and fully understand on what basis their final products will be assessed.

## Instructions for Using the Assessment Form

Although most of the items included in the form relate directly to characteristics of the final product, it will be helpful if you also have access to any planning devices that have been used in the development of the product. Such planning devices might consist of logs, contracts, management plans, proposals, or any other record-keeping system. A planning device can help you to determine if prestated objectives have been met by comparing statements of objectives from the planning device with the final product. If such a planning device has not been utilized or is unavailable, you may want to request that the student complete a form that will provide you with the necessary background information. It is recommended that some type of planning device accompany all products that are submitted for rating. If it can be arranged, you may also want to interview the student who completed the product.

In using the Student Product Assessment Form, it will sometimes be necessary for you to do some detective work! For example, in determining the diversity of resources, you may need to examine footnotes, bibliographies, or references and materials listed on the planning device. You may also want to have the student complete a self-evaluation form relating to the completed product. This form may help to assess task commitment and student interest.

The Student Product Assessment Form can be used in a variety of ways. Individual teachers, resource persons, or subject matter specialists can evaluate products independently or collectively as members of a team. When two or more persons evaluate the same product independently, the average rating for each scale item can be calculated and entered on the Summary Form. When used in a research setting or formal evaluation situation, it is recommended that products be independently evaluated by three raters. One of these ratings should be completed by the teacher under whose direction the product was developed. A second form should be completed by a person who has familiarity with the subject matter area of the product. For example, a high school science teacher might be asked to rate the work of an elementary grade student who has completed a science-related product. The third rater might be someone who is independent of the school system or program in which the work was carried out.

## Item Format

At first glance, the items on the assessment form may seem to be long and complicated, but they are actually quite concise. Each item represents a single characteristic that is designed to focus your attention. The items are divided into the following three related parts:

1. **The Key Concept.** This concept is always present first and is printed in large type. It should serve to focus your attention on the main idea or characteristic being evaluated.
2. **The Item Description.** Following the Key Concept are one or more descriptive statements about how the characteristic might be reflected in the student's product. These statements are listed under the Key Concept.
3. **Examples.** In order to help clarify the meanings of the items, an actual example of students' work is provided. The examples are intended to elaborate upon the meaning of both the Key Concept and the Item Description. The examples are presented following each item description.

*Important Note:* The last item (No. 9) deals with an overall assessment of the product. In this case we have chosen a somewhat different format and examples have not been provided. When completing the ratings for Item No. 9, you should consider the product as a whole (globally) rather than evaluating its separate components in an analytic fashion.

Some of the items may appear to be unusually long or "detailish" for a rating scale but our purpose here is to improve the clarity and thus interrater reliability for the respective items. After you have used the scales a few times, you will probably only need to read the Key Concepts and Item Descriptions in order to refresh your memory about the meaning of an item. Research has shown interrater reliability is improved when items are more descriptive and when brief examples are provided in order to help clarify any misunderstanding that may exist on the parts of different raters.

## Nonapplicable Items

Because of the difficulty of developing a single instrument that will be universally applicable to all types of products, there will occasionally be instances when some of the items do not apply to specific products. For example, in a creative writing project (poem, play, story) either the Level of Resources (No. 3) or Diversity of Resources (No. 4) might not apply if the student is writing directly from his or her own experiences. It should be emphasized however, that the nonapplicable category should be used very rarely in most rating situations.

## How to Rate Student Products

1. Fill out the information requested at the top of the Summary Sheet that accompanies the Student Product Assessment Form. A separate Summary Sheet should be filled out for each product that is evaluated.
2. Review the nine items on the Student Product Assessment Form. This review will help to give you a "mindset" for the things you will be looking for as you examine each product.
3. Examine the product by first doing a "quick overview" of the entire piece of work. Then do a careful and detailed examination of the product. Check (√) pages or places that you might want to reexamine and jot down brief notes and comments about any strengths, weaknesses, or questions that occur as you review the product.
4. Turn to the first item on the Student Product Assessment Form. Read the Key Concept, Item Description, and Example. Enter the number that best represents your assessment in the "Rating" column on the Summary Sheet. Enter only whole numbers. In other words, do not enter ratings of 3 1/2 or 2 1/4. On those rare occasions when you feel an item does not apply, please check the N/A column on the Summary Sheet. Please note that we have only included an N/A response option for Item 9a on the Overall Assessment.
5. Turn to the second item and repeat the above process. If you feel you cannot render a judgment immediately, skip the item and return to it at a later time. Upon completion of the assessment process, you should have entered a number (or a check in the N/A column) for all items on the Summary Sheet.
6. Any comments you would like to make about the product can be entered at the bottom of the Summary Sheet.

# Student Product Assessment Form Summary Sheet

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 District: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Product (Title and/or Brief Description): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Weeks Students Worked on Product: \_\_\_\_\_

Factors	Rating*	Not Applicable
1. Early Statement of Purpose		
2. Problem Focusing		
3. Level of Resources		
4. Diversity of Resources		
5. Appropriateness of Resources		
6. Logic, Sequence, and Transition		
7. Action Orientation		
8. Audience		
9. Overall Assessment		
9A. Originality of the Idea		
9B. Achieved Objectives Stated in the Plan		
9C. Advanced Familiarity With the Subject		
9D. Quality Beyond Age/Grade Level		
9E. Care, Attention to Detail, etc.		
9F. Time, Effort, Energy		
9G. Original Contribution		

Comments:

Person completing this form: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Rating Scales:**

Factors 1–8:  
 5 = To a great extent  
 3 = Somewhat  
 1 = To a limited extent

Factors 9A–9G:  
 5 = Outstanding  
 4 = Above average  
 3 = Average  
 2 = Below average  
 1 = Poor

# Student Product Assessment Form

1. **Early Statement of Purpose.** Is the purpose (theme, thesis, research question) readily apparent in the early stages of the student's product? In other words, did the student define the topic or problem in such a manner that a clear understanding about the nature of the product emerges shortly after a review of the material?

For example, in a research project dealing with skunks of northwestern Connecticut completed by a first-grade student, the overall purpose and scope of the product were readily apparent after reading the introductory paragraphs.

5                       4                       3                       2                       1                       N/A  
To a great extent                      Somewhat                      To a limited extent

2. **Problem Focusing.** Did the student focus or clearly define the topic so that it represents a relatively specific problem within a larger area of study?

For example, a study of "Drama in Elizabethan England" would be more focused than "A Study of Drama."

5                       4                       3                       2                       1                       N/A  
To a great extent                      Somewhat                      To a limited extent

3. **Level of Resources.** Is there evidence that the student used resource materials or equipment that are more advanced, technical, or complex than materials ordinarily used by students at this age/grade level?

For example, a sixth-grade student utilized a nearby university library to locate information about the history of clowns in the 12th through 16th century in the major European countries.

5                       4                       3                       2                       1                       N/A  
To a great extent                      Somewhat                      To a limited extent

4. **Diversity of Resources.** Has the student made an effort to use several different types of resource materials in the development of the product? Has the student used any of the following information sources in addition to the standard use of encyclopedias: textbooks, record/statistic books, biographies, how-to books, periodicals, films and filmstrips, letters, phone calls, personal interviews, surveys or polls, catalogs, and/or others?

For example, a fourth-grade student interested in the weapons and vehicles used in World War II read several adult-level books on this subject which included biographies, autobiographies, periodicals, and record books. He also conducted oral history interviews with local veterans of World War II, previewed films and film strips about the period, and collected letters from elderly citizens sent to them from their sons stationed overseas.

5                       4                       3                       2                       1                       N/A  
To a great extent                      Somewhat                      To a limited extent

5. **Appropriateness of Resources.** Did the student select appropriate reference materials, resource persons, or equipment for the topic or area of study?

For example, a student who was interested in why so much food is thrown away in the school cafeteria had to contact state officials to learn about state requirements and regulations which govern what must and can be served in public school cafeterias. With the aid of her teacher, she also had to locate resource books on how to design, conduct, and analyze a survey.

5                       4                       3                       2                       1                       N/A  
To a great extent                      Somewhat                      To a limited extent

6. **Logic, Sequence, and Transition.** Does the product reflect a logical sequence of steps or events that ordinarily would be followed when carrying out an investigation in this area of study? Are the ideas presented clearly and logically and is there a smooth transition from one idea or subtopic to another?

For example, a student decided to investigate whether or not a section of his city needs a new fire station with a salaried staff rather than the present volunteer staff. First the student needed to research different methods of investigative reporting such as appropriate interview skills. Next the student conducted interviews with both salaried and volunteer fire station staff. He then needed to learn about methods of survey design and reporting in order to analyze local resident opposition or support for the new fire station. After other logical steps in his research were completed, his accumulated findings led him to interviews with the mayor and the board of safety in the city and then to several construction companies that specialized in bids on such buildings. His final product was an editorial in the local newspaper which reflected his research and conclusions.

5                       4                       3                       2                       1                       N/A  
To a great extent                      Somewhat                      To a limited extent

7. **Action Orientation.** Is it clear that the major goal of this study was for purposes other than merely reporting on or reproducing existing information, ideas, or knowledge? In other words, the student's purpose is clearly directed toward some kind of action (e.g., teaching ways to improve bicycle safety, presenting a lecture on salt pond life); some type of literary or artistic product (e.g., poem, painting, costume design); a scientific device or research study (e.g., building a robot, measuring plant growth as a function of controlled heat, light and moisture); or some type of leadership or managerial endeavor (e.g., editing a newspaper, producing/directing a movie).

For example, a student decided to study the history of his city. After an extensive investigation, the student realized that other history books had been written about the city. He found, instead, that no one had ever isolated specific spots of historical significance in the city which were easily located and accessible. He began this task and decided to focus his research on producing an original historical walking tour of the city.

5                       4                       3                       2                       1                       N/A  
To a great extent                      Somewhat                      To a limited extent

8. **Audience.** Is an appropriate audience specified or readily apparent in the product or Management Plan?

For example, the student who researched the history of his city to produce an original walking tour presented his tour to the city council and the mayor. They, in turn, adopted it as the official walking tour of the city. It was reproduced in the city newspaper and distributed by the local historical society, library, and given out to registered guests in the city's hotels and motels.

5                       4                       3                       2                       1                       N/A  
 To a great extent                      Somewhat                      To a limited extent

9. **Overall Assessment.** Considering the product as a whole, provide a general rating for each of the following factors and mark the space provided to the right of the item:

**Scale**

5 = Outstanding                      4 = Above Average  
 3 = Average                      2 = Below Average  
 1 = Poor

- 9A. Originality of the idea. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9B. Achieved objectives stated in plan. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9C. Reflects advanced familiarity with the subject matter for a youngster of this age/grade level. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9D. Reflects a level of quality beyond what is normally expected of a student of this age and grade. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9E. Reflects care, attention to detail, and overall pride on the part of the student. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9F. Reflects a commitment of time, effort, and energy. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9G. Reflects an original contribution for a youngster of this age/grade level. \_\_\_\_\_