

Pedagogy:

A COMPARISON OF RICH LEARNING TASKS AND TRADITIONAL TASKS

by *Linda Mowatt*

This chart appears in *Teaching With Rich Learning Tasks: A Handbook*, 2003 written by Gary Flewelling with William Higginson and is reprinted here with the authors' permission. The book has caused me much reflection about tasks my students are asked to do in my classroom. Chapters include an examination of what makes a task relevant, why relevance is such a critical issue, and tools to judge the richness of any learning task. The authors suggest ten essential conditions for learning that need to be in place in a classroom before students can meaningfully and productively engage in learning.

The sample learning tasks used in this handbook are mathematical in nature. Don't be concerned if you are 'non-mathematical'. You should have little trouble understanding the examples, seeing the cross disciplinary pedagogical messages contained within them, and conjuring up equivalent learning tasks with which you are more familiar.

This chart is posted above my desk to continually nudge me towards designing more meaningful activities which will engage my students.

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RICH TASKS	MORE TRADITIONAL TASKS
1. prepare for success outside of school	1. prepare for success in school
2. address relatively many learning outcomes	2. address relatively few learning outcomes
3. address discipline and cross-curricular learning outcomes	3. address primarily learning outcomes of the discipline
4. provide an opportunity to use broad range of skills in an integrated, often creative fashion, to a purpose	4. isolate on the use of relatively few skills
5. are authentic	5. are more artificial
6. are in context	6. are usually out of context
7. encourage a balanced use of actions	7. encourage an unbalanced use of actions
8. are more like writing a story	8. are more like writing a sentence
9. emphasize problem solving	9. emphasize procedures
10. encourage more thinking, reflecting, and use of imagination	10. encourage more recollection and practice
11. allow for demonstration of a wide range of performance	11. allow for demonstration of a narrow range of performance
12. need performance assessment strategies	12. need traditional assessment strategies
13. provide enrichment within the task	13. usually require enrichment to be added after the task
14. encourage the use of wide variety of teaching and learning strategies	14. permit the use of fewer teaching and learning strategies
15. encourage greater engagement of students and teachers in task	15. keep students and teachers distanced from the task
16. not a new/untried idea	16. a much-applied idea

