

10 Critical Qualities of Student Work

by Phillip Schlechty

- **Content and Substance**

Work should engage all students regardless of social or economic background and help them attain rich and profound knowledge.

- **Organization and Knowledge**

Information and knowledge should be arranged in clear, accessible ways, and in ways that let students use the knowledge and information to address tasks that are important to them.

- **Product Focus**

Work that engages students almost always focuses on a product or performance of significance to them.

- **Clear and Compelling Standards**

Students prefer knowing exactly what is expected of them, and how those expectations relate to something they care about.

- **Protection from Adverse Consequences for Initial Failures**

Students should be able to try tasks without fear of embarrassment, punishment, or implications that they're inadequate.

- **Affirmation of the Significance of Performance**

Students are more highly motivated when their parents, teachers, fellow classmates, and other "significant others" make it known that the student's work is important (ex.: portfolio assessment).

- **Affiliation**

Work should permit, encourage, and support opportunities for students to work interdependently with others.

- **Novelty and Variety**

Students should be continually exposed to new and different ways of doing things.

- **Choice**

When students have some degree of control over what they are doing, they are more likely to feel committed to doing it.

- **Authenticity**

When students are given tasks that are meaningless, contrived, and inconsequential, they are less likely to take them seriously and be engaged by them. If the task carries real consequences, it's likely that engagement will increase.

Schlechy, Phillip. *Inventing Better Schools*. San Francisco; Jossey-Bass Publishing, 1997.