Instructions for Classroom Dynamic Criteria Mapping

Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM) is a process by which you and your students can discover what you, the instructor, value in student work. DCM yields a more empirically grounded, more detailed, and more useful account of your values than traditional rubrics can. The process is a streamlined form of grounded theory (as summarized by Strauss and Corbin in *Basics of Qualitative Research*, Sage 1998).

Here is a brief set of instructions by which you can try classroom DCM.

1. **Read** *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing* by Bob Broad (Utah State University Press, 2003). The book offers historical and theoretical background on DCM, a detailed example of DCM in action, and more specific instructions on how to undertake the process at both the classroom and programmatic levels.

2. **Collect data.** Once you have handed back to your students two or three substantial sets of responses to their work, ask your students to gather together those responses and bring them to class on the appointed day. Ask students to prepare by noting specific comments you made, in response to specific aspects of their work, that show something(s) you value. Note: you show what you value *both* in those qualities whose presence you praise and in those qualities whose absence you lament.

   On the appointed day, ask students to work together to generate a long list of qualities, features, or elements of their work that you have shown you value. Ask for illustrations or quotations that demonstrate each value they identify. Ask for passages or excerpts from their work that demonstrate those values.

3. **Analyze the data.** After you and your students have created a large "pile" of evaluative statements and indicators, it is time to analyze the data to create a representation ("map") of your values. The key is not to rush this process, to allow the generalizations to build slowly and organically, from the most specific level to the most general. The most straightforward way to begin is to ask yourselves whether certain statements of value belong together. You can then begin to compose clusters of values and figure out how they relate to other clusters. You might notice that some values are in tension with others, or lie along a spectrum. You might notice that some values are related sequentially or thematically.

   It is very helpful to cross-reference the various criteria you are mapping with the specific examples of student work that demonstrate (or fail to demonstrate) the qualities you value. The examples and samples from students' projects help to

clarify and inform the more abstract statements of what you value (criteria).

4. **Create the map.** In collaboration with your students, find a way to represent the final analysis of your data, the criteria you discovered that you value and the relationships among them. Such maps sometimes take the form of diagrams, charts, graphs, or other visual representations. Sometimes the best you can generate is a list of criteria, and even just a list is quite valuable.

5. **Publish and use the map.** Reproduce the map, and find ways to work it into your processes of assigning, responding to, and evaluating student work. Don't feel that every assignment needs to draw on every criterion on the map. In fact, no single project will invoke every criterion; in any given situation, only certain parts of the map will be relevant.

6. **Revise the map.** From time to time, repeat the process to update the map, add detail and nuance, and make it more accurate and useful.