Figure VC4.6 Video Case 4—Protocol for Developing a Specific Checklist/Rubric for Writing Assignments in *Your* Content Area

NOTE: This protocol can be used for all academic areas, including science, math, social studies, and English.

1. Every team/department member brings two examples of student writing from the same assignment (e.g., science lab report, explanation of mathematical thinking, essay).

2. Each teacher examines her or his own work and decides, "What do I really care about in this piece of work? What's a 'deal breaker,' and what do I not really care about?" Make a list of what is important to you in students' writing.

3. Share the list of writing characteristics developed independently with the rest of the team, and look for similarities and differences. Which characteristics are on most lists? Note any ideas that are only stated by one person. (Gaining consensus isn't necessary—only clarity and consistency.)

4. Based on these ideas, revise your list.

5. Each teacher reviews the student work brought to the meeting to find positive examples of the writing characteristics she or he wants to include in the checklist/rubric. Highlight these on the student work and include as exemplars in specific checklist elements (e.g., a compelling piece of evidence for an argument in a history essay, a detailed conclusion in a lab report that clearly supports or disproves the hypothesis). The more examples teachers provide, the easier it will be for teachers to develop explicit criteria that are clear to students.

6. Determine the big ideas for student writing in your department. For example, in a meeting following the one in the video, the teachers decided to frame the checklist/rubric with the following questions:
   - Can students write?
   - Can students think?
   - Can students interpret evidence?

   What are the implications of these questions for the checklist?

7. Based on the writing characteristics that were highlighted, develop a checklist/rubric with specific elements for your next assignment. If you are developing a rubric, use the positive examples you've already looked at and examine some less positive examples to create the levels of the rubric.

8. On your next writing assignment, try out the revised checklist/rubric, and bring it to a team meeting. Use it to examine student work and revise where necessary. Then go back to your class and try it again.