

MAA MathFest 2009: SIGMAA-QL

Creating a Rubric for Graphing

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I start my "Introduction to Quantitative Reasoning" class by giving students some frequency data on a variety of topics. We form groups of 3-4 people and each group receives a data set. The data sets come from our text book and consider the total sales (in billions of dollars) of the top eight retail companies in the US, the number of platinum albums of the top ten musical groups (with the most platinum albums) in the US, the areas (in millions of square miles) of the world's major land masses or the religious preferences (measured as a percent of the sample) of first-year college students. I ask each group to create a graph of the data set and draw it on an overhead transparency. Together we look at the graphs and critique them. As a class we develop a list of guidelines, or a rubric, for graphing data. Creating this rubric allows us to establish some shared terminology and we use the group rubric for grading graphs throughout the entire semester. This activity is a good way to start a class and emphasizes that good written communication skills are crucial for success in this class.