TRAINING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL PEER RESPONSE IN WRITING CLASSES

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Peer review steps

1. Rationale: students experience linguistic, cognitive, and social benefits; supplements instructor feedback; some research suggests peer review can be as helpful as teacher feedback (Ruegg, 2015).

2. Model good peer review
   A. Begin with short assignments. Model with example work (not from students in the class).
   B. Develop a role play for your context with parts for the following roles: writer, a reviewer who focuses on content and organization, a reviewer who focuses on mechanics and grammar, and a reviewer who offers only praise (e.g. I think it's good).
   C. Role play example:
      1) Writer: Do you think the thesis statement is OK?
      2) Reader 1: If the rest of your essay follows the thesis statement, then it is OK. Let's see if your organization follows the thesis statement or not.
      3) Reader 2: Well, in the title, you should capitalize the words "of" and "in."
      4) Reader 3: I think it's fine.

3. Provide opportunities to practice (see back of handout)

4. Implement clear procedures
   A. Forming peer groups: ideal size 3-4; self-initiated, randomly assigned, assigned groups
   B. Clarifying expectations (e.g. roles of the writer and reviewers; teacher involvement).
   C. Read and comment on essay before the peer review discussion.

5. Building accountability
   A. Encourage the writer to carefully consider the peer feedback and decide which comments to use and which to ignore.

Wrapping up: Have peer review groups sit together and read their final drafts to identify what has been changed and appreciate the final product.

Sources consulted

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ESL 117   **Peer Response Training**

Activities adapted from *Peer response in second language writing classrooms,* by Liu & Hansen, 2002.

To be effective, **peer response**, also known as **peer review** or peer **feedback**, involves:
- the ability to *identify what to comment on*
- knowing *what to look for* in an essay and *what to ignore*
- knowing *how to frame your comments effectively* so the writer can understand what you mean and have an idea of how to revise.

The following tasks will help you better understand what to focus on and how to respond.

Part 1: What should I comment on? What you comment on for draft one will be different for draft two. In this class, peer review for essays one and two is conducted for draft one.

Directions: Categorize the following items into "things to look for" and "things to ignore" when you read your peers' essays. Add 1-2 more ideas to each column if possible.

spelling	insufficient introduction of evidence	punctuation	lack of connecting explanation after evidence
verb tense	title	relevance of evidence	order of main ideas
thesis statement	too many quotes		

Most important things to comment on	**Least important things to comment on**

Part 2: What makes comments effective? Effective peer review comments are:

Quality	Bad example	Improved example
Specific	What?? →	The topic and focus in your thesis statement are not very clear to me.
Clear	Change your thesis. →	You could express the topic more clearly and clarify supporting point number two more.
Tactful (polite)	Your thesis is bad. →	Your thesis could be clearer. What do you mean by X?

Directions: Look at the less effective comments and re-write them to be more effective. Three examples have been done for you.

Less effective	More effective
This is wrong.	▪ *I'm not quite sure what you mean.* ▪ *I did not quite understand your point here. Could you please rephrase the sentence?*
This thesis statement is bad.	▪ *I'm not quite sure what your focus is.* ▪ *It's difficult to identify your position here. Could you try to make it clearer?* ▪ *Your supporting point #2 seems a little short and unclear. Could you explain it more clearly?*
This idea is in the wrong place.	▪ *This is a separate idea, but it might be related to another main point. Does it fit in the second paragraph somehow?*
This paragraph is perfect.	
This evidence isn't good.	
I thought this was supposed to be a 4-5 page essay. Why is it so short?	
I don't think your 4th paragraph has a main point. I didn't understand anything you were trying to say.	