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Lesson Plan

Handout 1: Peer Review Strategies

MATERIALS NEEDED

Students: a text to be revised

Paper and pens

LEARNING GOALS

At the close of the workshop, students will be able to:

- Understand how giving feedback to others can help students develop efficient revision strategies
- Identify the kinds of feedback they need to make a plan for revision
- Respond productively to another student's request for help on a written assignment

OVERVIEW

In this workshop, students will learn about peer review—why and how to give and elicit feedback—via three primary activities:

- Facilitator leads a larger discussion about what peer review is and its benefits for both the writer *and* the reader.
- As a group, students consider several strategies for peer review and select one to practice with a partner.
- Students peer review their drafts and reflect on their experience.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction

Frame this workshop as an opportunity to practice giving and responding to feedback, and to improve a draft of a paper with a peer's help. Students will also develop revision strategies they can use with a partner or on their own in the future.

Make sure all students have brought in drafts of papers, covers letters, or other written materials for today's workshop. (If the group is small, ask students to go around the room and describe what they are working on.)

Say: Today, everyone will need at least one hard copy of writing they might revise with the help of a peer. Since our workshop today is focused on independent writing and revising, it may feel a little different from other Writing Center workshops you have attended in the past. Of the center's more than twenty workshops, many are focused on introducing new concepts or skills. Others, such as today's workshop, are focused on helping you apply these skills to revise or develop a specific writing project.

Emphasize that this workshop introduces students to peer review strategies and gives them time to apply at least one strategy. **Preview the steps for today:**

- Discuss why peer review is useful
- Go over several strategies to help you decide which one to use
- Spend time working on your chosen strategy with a partner

Say: Our aim today is to give you time to write and revise, and to create a space where you feel comfortable trying something new.

Part One: Why Peer Review?

1. **Begin by framing the conversation about “peer review.”** When you have a completed draft but are unsure about an aspect of it, or have been looking at it for so long that you feel you need someone else's perspective—“another pair of eyes”—it can be useful to find a friend or classmate to help you to prepare to revise your work. **State out loud that:**
 - A second reader can help you:
 - Address any questions and concerns
 - Determine if your main argument is clearly stated
 - Learn if any parts of your paper are confusing, unclear, or in need of further explanation
 - Preview what a final reader's response might be
 - When you read a classmate's paper with a critical eye, there are benefits for you as well. Evaluating someone else's paper allows you to:
 - Improve your ability to revise strategically—on your own and to help others
 - Develop your critical reading skills

- Practice narrowing your focus to just a few issues, a skill you can use in revising your own papers in the future
2. **Emphasize that peer review is *not* simply an exercise in proofreading.**
 - Tell students that peer review has three steps, and **record them on the board:**
 - **Observation**—reading the paper with the aims of understanding its main purpose, describing its structure, noticing what kinds of evidence it uses, and noting any sections you’d like to discuss with the writer.
 - **Evaluation**—determining which parts of the paper might need revision (and which sections were strong), based on the writer’s priorities, your own understanding, or a rubric.
 - **Reporting**—asking the writer clarify questions and then giving feedback (both aloud and in writing) that politely makes suggestion towards revision.
 3. **Acknowledge that some students may find the idea of giving feedback intimidating.**
 - State that students may not be confident in their abilities to give useful feedback for a variety of reasons: they’ve never done it before, they haven’t done much writing in their courses recently, or they know they have plenty of room to grow as writers.
 - Emphasize that everyone in this room is well-equipped to give feedback: the goal here is to give your partner a preview of a final reader’s response. Everyone in the room can be helpful in this role.
 - Stress that *giving* feedback can help you to improve your confidence, and to think critically about the writing process. It’s often the most helpful step in this exercise.
 - *Note to facilitator:* Be sensitive to the emotional components of peer review and the dynamics between native and non-native speakers. There is no need to exaggerate student’s concerns, but address them further if you sense it would be helpful.
 - Keep these dynamics in mind as the exercise progresses. As needed, emphasize the importance of polite feedback, or circulate to model appropriate feedback and provide encouragement.
 4. **Segue to Part Two.** Tell students that next, we’ll go over three peer review strategies together.

Part Two: Peer Review Strategies

1. **Pass out Handout 1: “Peer Review Strategies.”** Explain to students that their job is to select one of the following strategies and implement it with a partner. **As a group, read through the strategies**, pausing after each to discuss when and why it might be useful. Elicit questions.
 - Note that Strategy #1 might be useful if you:
 - Want more general feedback
 - Have a sense of what you need to change, but want to get someone else’s unbiased perspective

- Elicit the understanding that Strategy #2 is appropriate if you already have specific questions or concerns.
 - Strategy #3 can be helpful if you have a prompt, assignment, or rubric, and you want to make sure you are closely following the guidelines and meeting your final reader's expectations.
2. Ask students to discuss with their partner which strategy they will employ. (If two partners want to use different strategies, that should be fine).

Part Three: Peer Review Activity (40 min)

1. Encourage students to take notes as they read and review, and to save time at the end to give their partner both written and verbal feedback.
 - *Note to facilitator:* circulate and help students to pair up. If there is an odd number of students, create one group of three. Be available for questions as they arise, and feel free to try out a peer review strategy of your own (partner with a student if necessary). Give students time markers half-way through the activity, and remind them to leave at least 15 minutes for feedback.
 - Depending on group size and the speed at which the students work, use your best judgment to structure the time for peer review. Some options:
 - Students may spend the entire time in one peer-review session.
 - In a small group, you may ask students to give their feedback out loud in front of the entire group rather than one-on-one. This can help model appropriate ways to communicate feedback.
 - If you have extra time for the activity, or if students are working quickly, have them pair with a second peer and try another strategy.
2. **Have students reflect on the work they did, and what next steps they will take to continue to revise their essays, based on the feedback they got from their peers in today's session.**
3. **Solicit questions.** Wrap Up.

PEER REVIEW STRATEGIES

1. TO OFFER BROAD FEEDBACK

Exchange drafts with a partner and implement the following 3-step process for each other's work. Take notes on a separate sheet of paper, working to answer these questions:

1. *Observe*: What did you notice about the paper? What was most memorable? Did you notice any patterns in the writer's work? If so, what? What was the writer's purpose, or what question was s/he trying to answer?
2. *Evaluate*: Did the writer accomplish their goal? Why or why not?
3. *Prescribe*: What would you suggest that the writer revise in order to better reach their goal? Is there anywhere in the paper where they did this more successfully? If so, could this be used as a model to improve other sections? If you decided that the writer did accomplish their goal, is there anything that you think would make the paper even stronger? Was there any part that made you curious to know more?
4. **Write a short letter to your partner summarizing your observations, evaluations, and recommendations.**
5. Share responses.

2. TO RESPOND TO A WRITER'S SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. Look over the below list of questions, and circle the two or three questions you would most like for your peer reviewer to focus on, as they read your work.
2. Exchange drafts with a partner.
Read your partner's draft with the purpose of answering his/her selected questions about his/her own work. Take plenty of notes as you read.
3. **Write a short letter to your partner summarizing your observations, evaluations, and recommendations.**
4. Share responses.

Potential questions I want my partner to answer about my paper:

- What is the main idea of this paper?
- Is my argument clear, and if not, where could I clarify?
- Did my language at any point confuse you? Where?
- What were two strengths you observed about my paper? Two weaknesses?
- Where do you think I could expand my ideas?
- Are there any words or sentences that seemed vague?
- What remaining questions are you left with after reading?
- Do I provide enough evidence to back up my claims, and if not, where could I incorporate more evidence?
- Were there places in the paper where you were intrigued but wanted to know more?
- What sources are being used and do you understand the purpose of these sources? Are there places where I should incorporate additional sources?
- What happens/is explained in the paper as you see it? Can you summarize this for me?

3. TO SEE IF A PAPER FOLLOWS GUIDELINES

1. Take out your paper, as well as any other information you have about your final reader's expectations: your assignment, prompt, paper guidelines from your syllabus, or a rubric your instructor has provided. Exchange your paper and guidelines with your partner.
2. Read the guidelines for your partner's paper. Take note of what is important for the paper and its audience: the explicit and implicit expectations.
*If there are no guidelines or rubric, look at the sample rubric, underlining questions and categories that seem especially important for the genre of this assignment (i.e. thesis for an argumentative paper, audience for a business memo).
3. Read your partner's paper, taking plenty of notes.
4. **Write a letter addressing what kind of revisions could help the paper more fully address the guidelines.**
5. Share responses.

SAMPLE RUBRIC

Question	Response & Recommendation for Revision
<p>Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the paper include everything the reader needs to know? • Does it show an awareness of who the audience is? • Is the language and tone appropriate for the audience? • Are sources cited appropriately for the discipline? 	<p><i>Ex: Sandra's tone in her cover letter is professional. However, she might want to provide more background information about her business major and say when she graduates because the job ad is for juniors.</i></p>
<p>Argument</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the introduction clearly present the writer's goal? • Is there a thesis? Is it clear? • Is the paper easy to follow? • Are there topic sentences? • Could organization be improved? • Is evidence used to support its claims? • Does the conclusion reiterate and build on the argument? 	<p><i>Ex: There is a thesis in the intro, but I didn't see how some of the paragraphs helped to prove it. Dan could use clearer topic sentences, or maybe move some of what he says in the conclusion into the first few pages.</i></p>
<p>Clarity & Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any places where meaning was unclear to you? • Are there vague words or sentences? • Are sentences mostly long, or short? • Does the writer use transition words? • Do you notice any errors? 	
<hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • 	