

## **Conducting Advice-Centered Peer-Review**

Adapted from John Bean's Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. (223-225)

### **How and when to exchange drafts?**

A teacher must decide the process for exchanging drafts. Some teachers prefer that writers read their drafts out loud to the peer reviewers—the experience of hearing one's language read aloud helps writers discover problem areas. Other teachers ask students to bring copies of their drafts for peer reviewers. Still others have students exchange copies of drafts prior to class in order to make class time more efficient. Again, no single way seems best.

### **What are Advice-centered reviews?**

Advice-centered reviews are more product oriented and more directive [than response-centered reviews]: peer-reviewers collaborate to give advice to the writer. This method works best when students have internalized criteria for an assignment through norming sessions or teacher-provided scoring guides. What follows is a recommended process for an advice-centered peer-review.

This is a product-oriented approach in which the reviewer provides concrete feedback about how the draft could better meet the demands of the assignment. For this strategy to be effective, students must have internalized the criteria for the assignment through norming sessions or teacher-provided scoring guides.

### **How to conduct an advice-centered review?**

1. Divide the class into pairs, and have each pair exchange drafts with another pair.

2. The two students in each pair collaborate to compose a jointly written review of the two drafts they have received. I ask pairs to use a checklist like the following:
  - a. Write out the question, problem, or issues that this draft addresses.
  - b. Write out the writer's complete thesis statement.  
(Note: If you have trouble with a and b, concentrate on helping the writer clarify the problem and thesis.)
  - c. Note with a wavy line in the margins all places where you get confused as a reader.
  - d. Write out your assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the writer's ideas. Assuming that the teacher is interested primarily in the quality of thinking in a paper, how will the teacher respond to the ideas in this draft? Where do you disagree with the writer?
  - e. Reread the draft, looking for quality of support. Does the writer offer sufficient details to support the argument (data, statistics, quotations, textual references, personal examples)? Does the writer need to do more research?
  - f. Write out at least two things that you think are particularly strong about this draft.
  - g. Make three or four directive statements recommending specific changes the writer should make in the next draft.
  
3. The pairs then return the drafts to the original writers, along with the collaboratively written reviews. If time remains, the two pairs can meet jointly to discuss their reviews.

I usually ask writers to supply copies of their drafts to their peer reviewers the night before class so that the reviewers can read the drafts carefully and come to the review session with critiques already in mind. Because the reviews are collaboratively written by two students, they are

usually well considered and thoughtful. Of course, the writer should take the reviews as advisory only and make his or her own decision about how much of the advice to pursue.

### **Out-of-Class Peer Reviews**

A variation on the above approach can be used for out-of-class peer reviews, thus preserving class time for other matters.

1. Divide the class into pairs, and have each pair exchange drafts with another pair.
2. Each pair meets outside of class to write their collaborative reviews, based on the checksheet, and they return the reviews the next day in class.

The advantage for writers in this out-of-class method is that the reviewers can spend longer than an hour on task. The advantage for the teacher is that no class time is needed.

### **Some General Principles for Conducting Peer Reviews**

- Do not expect students to give each other very good advice about sentence structure or style. For some reason, they are not good at seeing stylistic problems in other people's drafts, and they tend to make impressionistic comments ("This doesn't flow . . ." "This sounds funny . . .").
- Train students to engage each other at the level of ideas.
- Train students to back up comments with specific examples from the draft; stress the importance of precision when giving advice.