**Removing the Fear and Creating Meaningful Participation in Online Peer Review**

**Abstract:**  
In the online ENG 081 Basic Writing Skills, students participate in peer review.  However, in my first attempt, I found that students purposely skipped the assignment, even stating that they were skipping because they were "too nervous," or "didn't trust what their classmates would say and just wanted my feedback instead." In Spring 2014, my goal was to increase participation and to help students to have a positive experience. I added two discussion board posts. For essay #1, each student identified 3 strengths for a piece of "real-world writing" posted by a classmate (but NOT written by him/her). For essay #2, each student identified 1 improvement for a piece of "real-world writing." For essay #3, I assigned partners to review one another's brainstorming. This time, the entire class submitted the assignment for peer review (12), all but one student completed a review, nine of the ten reflected positively (see results below),and four requested to do more peer review in the future.

**Reflection:**  
The discussion board posts provided the students with practice on critiquing something that was submitted by another student. Because the material was not written by a student, it did not hurt anyone’s feelings when the material was reviewed. I thought that this would create more comfort in the students as reviewers and “reviewees.” Interestingly, in the journal reflections after the peer review, only two students reported being nervous to be reviewed, while half of the students still reported being nervous to be a reviewer. Nevertheless, the fact that the entire class submitted an item to be peer reviewed was a significant improvement over previous semesters when less than half of the class would submit their work for peer review. Further, the fact that all but one student completed the review, despite possible nervousness, was a success. Finally, since nine of the ten students responded so positively to the entire experience, I am convinced that the addition of the two smaller assignments created the foundation for an overall more successful peer review experience.  
 **Results:**After completing the peer review of a partner’s prewriting, students were provided with the journal prompt to reflect on their experience. I have color-coded the responses to identify major themes in the responses.

Yellow highlights: positive response to be being reviewed

Grey highlights: nervous/challenges with being reviewed

Blue highlights: nervous/challenges with being a reviewer

Pink highlights: enjoyed being a reviewer

* 12 of 12 students submitted a sample for peer review
* 11 of 12 students completed the peer review
* 10 of 12 students completed the journal reflection
* 9 of 10 responded positively to the overall experience
* 2 of 10 stated they were nervous to be reviewed
* 5 of 10 specifically commented that the experience was helpful
* 5 of 10 commented on being nervous to be a reviewer
* 5 of 10 commented on enjoying the role of reviewer
* 4 of 10 specifically commented that they would like to do peer review again

**Instructions: Write a reflection journal on the peer review experience. Make sure that you address both what it was like to be a reviewer AND to have your ideas reviewed by someone else.**

**Student Journal Responses**

1. I had a great experience from the peer review. As a reviewer I learned a different style of brainstorming.  Also it provided me an insight of what my peer was going to write about.  It was also hard because I did not want to point out any flaws that they may have.  I know that no matter what their paper was going to be a interesting one to read.  On the other had to be reviewed was an insight of things I might have to work on.  It provided me positive feedback to ideas that I may not have been able to think of.  It really helped me improve my paper and some better writing style. Overall I would do this again.
2. My reflection on the peer review experience was a little tough for me.  You don't want to offend anybody or make them feel their work was done poorly so I found myself being very careful when reviewing the work and making notes.  After I read the prewriting and jotted down a few notes it wasn't as bad as I played it in my head.  On the other hand, having my prewriting reviewed by my peer also made me a little nervous.  I didn't want my peer to think my prewriting was not good enough or didn't have enough information.  So, it was a little intimidating to put all my thoughts on paper because I was constantly thinking "this has to be perfect because a classmate will be reviewing this.  Almost gave me writer's block but I was able to get some thoughts down on paper.
3. In my experience in reviewing and being reviewed has it's good and bad qualities. I will be totally honest, I didn't like to have someone else review my work. I have always been very critical of myself, including in what I write and how it comes out. I have learned in the past nine months since starting college, that I have to accept some type of criticism-good criticism not bad.  Now I can have a fellow classmate review my work and I can now accept any direction or ideas that I may use in having to complete a satisfying paper. In reviewing someone else's work it is both enlightening and hard to determine where to give guidance or some type of idea to help them out. I do try my very best because I am there too.   I have noticed in my journaling for my writing class that good things do come out in pen in hand- or rather key stroke to computer.
4. I thought the peer review was helpful, however I don't think I did a good job as a reviewer.  I honestly thought that she had good ideas to work with, so I wasn't really sure what to suggest for her to do.  After seeing her review of my prewriting I had a better idea of what I should have done and said as the reviewer.  I think that she did a great job and with her notes on my prewriting.  Her suggestions were helpful and I actually used a couple of her ideas.
5. Peer review was a great experience because I got to see the way my peer began their pre-writing. It is helpful to see how someone else structures a paragraph during the pre-writing phase. It was also nice being able to give XXXX ideas on how to possibly improve his work. I did not receive any peer review for my work.
6. It was a good experience for me to have my ideas review by someone else. It was very helpful the information and ideas of someone else. As a human we get tunnel vision and sometimes it help if someone from the outside looks at your work. On the other hand I was nervous about reviewing some other persons ideas. I dint want them to think that I wanted to change anything of what they thought. The whole experience wasn't that bad. I wouldn't mind if we did it again.
7. My peer review experience wasn’t too helpful in the sense that the feedback I received on my compare/contrast list was short and didn’t offer any ideas/input on what was my strongest example, what I could develop further, or what other ideas I could of add to my essay prewriting/list. But my peer review did say that I did a great job with being organized, and that the list had good clarity. As for being a reviewer, I liked that I got to offer ideas on what could be added to their pre writing, and hopefully my positive critiquing will help them in their steps to completing their final draft! Overall a good experience.
8. Last week for our assignment we had to edit someone’s prewriting and also have ours editing. I liked having mine edited because I want to make my paragraph the best it can be and having someone give me feedback, makes my paragraph that much stronger. I also liked editing their prewriting because I wanted to give them ideas to help strengthen their prewriting. Overall it was a great experience and I hope I have the chance to do this again this semester.
9. It was interesting for me to do this assignment. At the beginning I can complete it, because I can not find right way to do it. But when I did it was so rewarded. It was interesting to analyze the way my classmate write and pay attention each sentence to make good suggestions. And with my corrections help to improve her paragraph. I took in consideration the suggestions made by my reviewer. And she also gave me some ideas.
10. I really enjoyed being the reviewer I think it's good to hear your peers opinion and thoughts. I feel its easier to take constructive criticism from your classmates. I wasn't as nervous as I usually am when waiting for the instructors response.