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Reflective Peer Review: A Metacognitive Approach

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Reflective Peer Review



A Metacognitive Approach

Why Peer Review?



❧ Traditional peer review has benefits and complications in the classroom:

Benefits:

- ❧ Engages students in communicating with one another (community building)
- ❧ Teaches constructive criticism
- ❧ Builds students' agency in their own learning process
- ❧ Engages deep learning through content and context



Complications:

- ❧ Traditional peer review is predicated on *evaluation*
- ❧ Evaluation can be daunting, especially for students in pre-disciplinary courses and/or those new to college: “Where do I start?” “How can I tell someone else what to do when I’m not sure what I’m doing?”
- ❧ Evaluation sometimes creates anxiety, which breaks down the conversation
- ❧ Often asks students to privilege product over process

Rhet/Comp Responses



✧ Kathleen Blake Yancey: *Reflection in the Writing Classroom* (1998)

Yancey explains that reflection-in-action carries specific characteristics; it is: "embedded in a single composing event, [and] tends to be oriented to a single text, its focus squarely on the writer-reader-text relationship" (26).

Downs and Robertson



Rhetoric and epistemology are threshold concepts embedded in the teaching of writing; specifically, when students understand the fundamentals of human interaction and persuasion in combination with the ways that their experiences and prior learning influence their own process of creating knowledge, those students are interacting with a holistic process of receiving and giving knowledge. (Downs and Robertson in Adler-Kassner and Wardle 117-118)

Effective Peer Review

Is...

- ❧ Based in *evaluation* and *reflection*
- ❧ Asks students to think as readers and as writers
- ❧ Guided (meaning there is a specific, narrowed framework or plan for the review)
- ❧ Assignment (context) specific

Reflective Peer Review...



- ❧ A practical means of harnessing students' prior knowledge and experiences
- ❧ A metacognitive approach
- ❧ Synthesizes prior knowledge and experiences with knowledge of the assignment/text and rhetorical situation (like audience, purpose, etc.)
- ❧ Functions best when the goal for peer review is *highlighting process* rather than *correction*.
- ❧ Uses reflective questions in place of direct evaluation

Begins with *reflective questions*

- ❧ Reflective questioning is a method of peer review that focuses on metacognition.
- ❧ When we think of *metacognition* in the writing process, we're focusing on questions like "Why did you place that discussion point in this location of your writing? Or "Why did this point from your source influence your central argument; why was it important to you?"
- ❧ So, we're focusing on asking WHY your peer made specific writing choices, or has interpreted a text in certain ways.

How is this different from evaluation?

- ⌘ When we have previously engaged in peer review sessions, we've focused on constructively *critiquing* your peers' work: highlighting areas that were successful according to the assignment, and making recommendations for improvement in other areas — a process that is *evaluative* in nature.
- ⌘ In reflective questioning, we're not focusing on making specific improvements, *per se*. We're focusing on finding out what our peers' thought processes were as they composed their essays and/or interpreted something they read— WHY they made the choices that they did, and how the outside information interacted with their value structures and beliefs.

How do we use this?



- ❧ We use reflective questioning along with our traditional, critique-based peer review so that we can learn more about our peers' thought processes *within* the writing and reading processes.
- ❧ This allows us to look at our own thought processes and writing/reading choices, and compare them to those of our peers. For example, if you ask a peer *why* he or she made a specific writing choice, he or she has to think about that choice, and you can use his or her answer to also think about the writing choices that you make.

Example: Reflective Questions

- ❧ Why did you place this paragraph within this section of the paper? Why is it important in this location within the paper?
- ❧ What brought you to this conclusion about the reading? Why was this author's argument/support/discussion point important to you?
- ❧ How does this author's point relate to your own experiences, beliefs/values, etc.?

Works Cited



- ❧ Downs, Douglas, and Liane Robertson. "Threshold Concepts in First-Year Composition." *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*, Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle, Utah State University Press, 2015, 105-121.
- ❧ Yancey, Kathleen Blake. *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*. Utah State University Press, 1998.

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