Assessing Projects: Encouraging Self-Direction and Collaboration
Peer Feedback

Encouraging Peer Feedback

When providing feedback to peers, students are learning about learning by reflecting on the activities of other students. Students are forced to think analytically about their peers' performance and, in turn, they are able to extend that thinking to their own performance. Peer feedback encourages a greater sense of involvement and responsibility and helps students define what excellence looks like.

It is very important to set clear criteria for students when they provide feedback to their peers. They need to know what to look for in their peer's work. One way to ensure students understand this type of assessment is to give them a practice session with it. In this way, students can experience the process and become familiar with the procedure and what is expected of them before they conduct their first review.

One way to start is to provide two completed student samples, one at a very high level and one at a low level, so students can compare the strengths and weaknesses of each. Discuss the criteria with the class, passing out the checklist, rubric, or question prompts. In small groups students then apply the criteria to the student samples. This method allows for a rich discussion while students try to come to consensus about the criteria as it relates to each sample. When the small groups have finished, each group shares their thinking and feedback on the samples with the whole class so that all can benefit from the insights of others.

When students are learning how to give constructive feedback to their peers, teacher-made checklists and rubrics can give them the guidance they need.

Once students have more experience, however, they can develop the checklists and rubrics for peer feedback themselves. The *Assessing Projects* application has many examples of peer feedback checklists and rubrics.