

## WHAT IS PEER ASSESSMENT?

Peer assessment is simply a matter of students giving informed feedback to one another on an assignment. Effective peer assessment is related to clear standards and is supported by a constructive process of critique. Peer assessment is a valuable tool because feedback from peers can be delivered with more immediacy and in greater volume than teacher feedback. Peer assessment should happen during the learning process, on works-in-progress, and be followed by opportunities for students to use the feedback they received to revise their work.

## WHAT IS NOT PEER ASSESSMENT?

Peer assessment is not a process by which peers determine grades for one another. Although some teachers have had success with peer grading, turning peer assessment into peer evaluation is risky and may lead to negative attitudes toward the peer assessment process. In general, peers provide feedback; teachers provide grades.

## HOW CAN I USE PEER ASSESSMENT WITH MY STUDENTS?

- > [Getting Started: Guidelines for Creating Effective Peer Assessment](#)
- > [Getting Started: Using the Ladder of Feedback](#)
- > [Example: What Does Peer Assessment Look Like?](#)
- > [Additional Resources](#)



## GETTING STARTED

# GUIDELINES FOR CREATING EFFECTIVE PEER ASSESSMENT<sup>1</sup>

## 1. DETERMINE THE CRITERIA ON WHICH THE ASSIGNMENT WILL BE ASSESSED (WHAT COUNTS).

This can be done by the teacher alone, or preferably by co-constructing a checklist or rubric with students.

## 2. THE TEACHER GROUPS STUDENTS INTO SMALL PEER FEEDBACK GROUPS.

Two to four students can be grouped based on ability level.

## 3. THE TEACHER MODELS EFFECTIVE PEER FEEDBACK FOR STUDENTS.

The teacher may take an assignment and use the Ladder of Feedback protocol (see [page 3](#)) to ask clarifying questions, state what she values about the assignment, list what concerns her about it, and ultimately make suggestions (not mandates) that may be used to improve the assignment.<sup>2</sup>

## 4. STUDENTS RECEIVE A CHECKLIST OR DOCUMENT THAT REMINDS THEM HOW TO DELIVER EFFECTIVE PEER FEEDBACK.

The Ladder of Feedback is a good choice of a checklist for students to use as a quick reference.

## 5. THE TEACHER CLARIFIES THE ASSIGNMENT FOR THE STUDENTS.

Clarification includes performance to be peer assessed and the timeline for that assessment.

## 6. THE TEACHER ACTIVELY MONITORS THE PROGRESS OF THE PEER FEEDBACK GROUPS.

Students will need a lot of support when they are first introduced to peer assessment, and less as they become accustomed to it.

## 7. THE TEACHER MONITORS THE QUALITY OF FEEDBACK.

The teacher ensures that her students are using the constructive feedback protocol (possibly the Ladder of Feedback).

## 8. PEER FEEDBACK IS CHECKED FOR RELIABILITY.

The teacher may compare her feedback on an assignment with a student's feedback to check for alignment and provide further support and instruction if needed.

## 9. THE TEACHER PROVIDES FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR PEER ASSESSMENT.

## 10. AFTER STUDENTS HAVE GENERATED EFFECTIVE PEER FEEDBACK, IT SHOULD BE USED TO GUIDE STUDENT REVISIONS OF WORKS-IN-PROGRESS.



guide

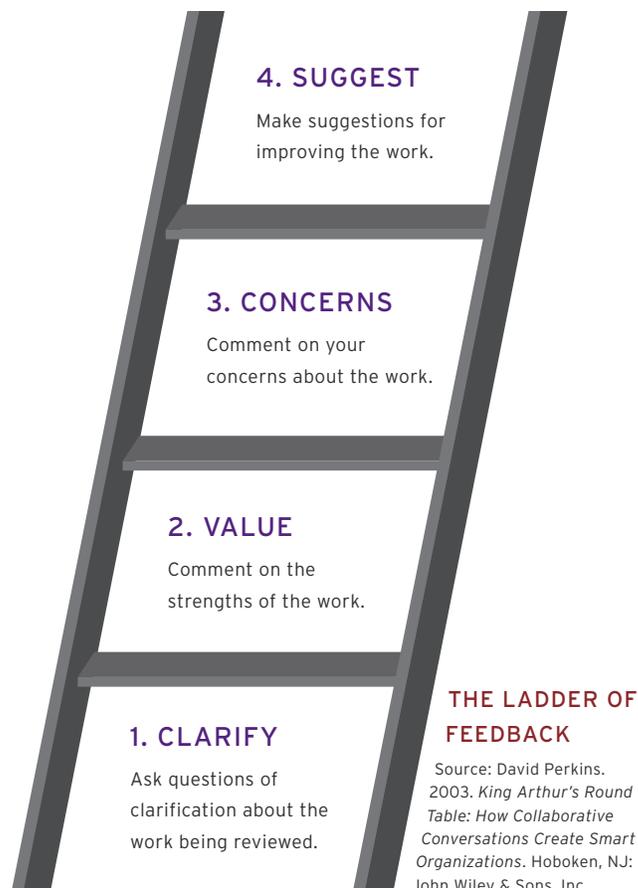
## GETTING STARTED

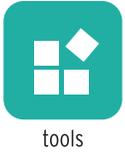
# USING THE LADDER OF FEEDBACK<sup>3</sup>

The Ladder of Feedback is a good tool to help promote effective peer feedback between students. It involves four steps. It is sometimes helpful to have one group member “police” the ladder to make sure the rungs are climbed in order.

After a student shares a work-in-progress with peers, his peers will:

1. **Ask clarifying questions** they have about the work. Some ideas may seem unclear, or information may be missing. This step helps peers gather relevant information before they give feedback.
2. **State what they value**, or comment on the strengths of the work. Expressing appreciation for ideas is fundamental to the process of constructive feedback. Stressing the positive points of the work sets a supportive tone during the feedback session, and helps people to identify strengths in their work they might not have recognized otherwise.
3. **Raise any concerns** they may have about the work. During this step, honest thoughts and concerns are raised in a constructive, non-threatening way. “What I wonder about is . . .” and “Have you considered . . .” are examples of how concerns may be framed.
4. **Make suggestions** about how the work could be improved. Give suggestions, based on problems identified in the concerns step, that can help the student use the feedback to revise his work and make improvements. There is no guarantee the learner will use the suggestions, nor need there be a guarantee. Suggestions are just that—suggestions, not mandates.



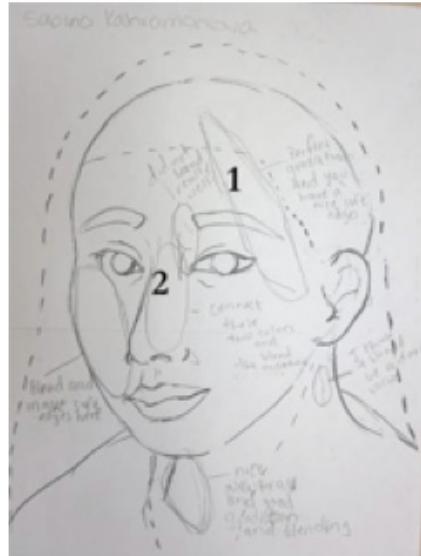


EXAMPLE

## WHAT DOES PEER ASSESSMENT LOOK LIKE?

Peer assessment of artwork using the Ladder of Feedback: shared by Jason Rondinelli and Emily Maddy, middle school visual arts teachers.

1. "Perfect gradation, and you have a nice soft edge."
2. "Connect these two colors and blend them together."



The teacher provided the pencil-drawn template on the right to students. After asking and answering questions of clarification verbally, students put numbers on the template (rather than writing on their peer's painting), and wrote comments related to each number. In the example above, comment 1 is a value statement (step 2 of the Ladder of Feedback), and comment 2 is a combination of a concern and a suggestion statement (steps 3 and 4 of the Ladder of Feedback). The teacher added the white circles on the student's painting on the left for illustrative purposes only.



resource

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- > Video of student peer assessment, including examples, teacher perspectives, and student reactions will be available summer 2013 at [studentsatthecenter.org](http://studentsatthecenter.org)
- > Heidi Andrade, Joanna Hefferen, & Maria Palma. Forthcoming. "Formative Assessment in the Visual Arts." *Art Education Journal*.
- > For more on student-centered assessment, see [Assessing Learning: The Students at the Center Series](#) (Heidi Andrade, Kristen Huff, & Georgia Brooke, 2012).<sup>4</sup>

### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See Keith Topping. 2010. "Peers as a Source of Formative Assessment." In Heidi Andrade & Gregory Cizek, eds. *Handbook of Formative Assessment*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- <sup>2</sup> See David Perkins. 2003. *King Arthur's Round Table: How Collaborative Conversations Create Smart Organizations*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- <sup>3</sup> See Perkins (2003).
- <sup>4</sup> See Heidi Andrade, Kristen Huff, & Georgia Brooke. 2012. *Assessing Learning: The Students at the Center Series*. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future. Available at: <http://studentsatthecenter.org/topics/assessing-learning>

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Students at the Center synthesizes and adapts for practice current research on key components of student-centered approaches to learning. Our goal is to strengthen the ability of practitioners and policymakers to engage each student in acquiring the skills, knowledge, and expertise needed for success in college and a career. The companion volume Anytime, [Anywhere: Student Centered Learning for Schools and Teachers](#) (2013) is now available from Harvard Education Press. This Jobs for the Future project is supported generously by funds from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.



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