Defined Academy

LAUNCHPAD ACTIVITY
Critique & Revision

OVERVIEW OF THE TEACHING PRACTICE

Critique and revision is a practice you might already be using. It's basically a process for giving and getting feedback, to help students revise their work-in-progress and improve its quality. In project-based learning, engaging in critique and revision regularly is important not only for improving the quality of the products students create, but also for building a collaborative and productive classroom culture.

Feedback can come from a teacher or another adult, but in this activity we'll focus on a process for critique and revision that students can use with their peers.

Learning how to use critique and revision will help prepare students for the world beyond school. They're getting an authentic opportunity to become problem solvers and decision makers.

Here are some key things to know about critique and revision:

- For critique and revision to succeed, time needs to be built into lesson and project plans. Students should be given multiple opportunities for critique and revision during a unit or project, until the final product is completed.
- Critiques are specific and focus on one piece of work at a time.
- Students will need a clear understanding of what feedback looks like and sounds like. Discuss and model how to give good feedback.

EXPLANATION OF THE ACTIVITY

TITLE: Likes, Questions, Ideas
GRADES: K-12
TIME: 10-20 minutes

PURPOSE: To improve the quality of student work and generate ideas for revision or additions.

This is an activity in which a student or a team of students presents a piece of work-in-progress (or a plan to do or create something) to peers, then gets feedback on it. It may be used by students in any grade level, with modifications.

For younger students:

- The teacher may lead the activity
- Students refer to a simpler, shorter list of features/criteria to look for
- The time for each step is reduced

For older students:

- Students can facilitate themselves with minimal oversight by the teacher
- Students refer to a more complex list of features/criteria to look for
- More time may be allowed for each step

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Steps:

1. Prepare for the activity.
    - Decide in advance what piece of work is going to be discussed, allowing time for students to be ready. Students can present any kind of work-in-progress for peer critique. It could be a rough draft of a piece of writing; their first attempt at drawing something; a sketch of something they're going to construct; a plan for how they're going to do something. If it's a written document, be sure it's not too much to read in a few minutes (longer pieces would require a different critique process).

    - Decide in advance how the work will be shared and make copies if necessary. You may need to make paper copies of a document or artifact, or they may be shared digitally. Some work could be displayed by presenting it on a screen.

2. Discuss what to look for when critiquing the work.

    Students will need guidance on what specific feedback to give. The students presenting their work may ask for specific feedback. If you have a rubric or for a piece of work, go over it as a class--and you and students may decide that instead of the whole rubric they will only be focusing on one or two rows. Or you could just decide on "two or three things to look for " more informally.

3. Explain/model the process to be used.
    - Go over the steps of the activity as a class. You may want to show students a chart like the example below; be sure to have decided in advance how long each step will take and indicate the correct number of minutes for each step and the total time. If students have already used this critique process, a quick reminder may be all that's needed. If it is the first time they are using the process, take time to explain the steps and model what they need to do.
    - Consider having 2 teams of students model the process "fishbowl" style while the rest of the class observes.
    - Explain why the presenter(s) stays silent in step 3 and why their peers do not speak to them directly: because it reduces defensive reactions and allows the presenter to quietly reflect, rather than feel they have to respond to every idea or question.

4. Review the norms/agreements about how to give feedback.
    - If this is the first time students are doing peer critique, explain why norms are important: to make everyone feel safe, not hurt feelings, and make sure the feedback is helpful.
    - Ask students to brainstorm what makes feedback effective/helpful. Write their suggestions on the board or a poster and reach agreement on a list of 3-5. Or, you could suggest norms; a common list is "Be kind, Be specific, Be helpful," in the words of Ron Berger of EL Education.

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5. Organize students or teams into feedback groups. (Note: you may want to decide this in advance.)

- You could put 2 or 3 teams together as a feedback group. Have students sit around a table or in a circle so they can all see each other.
- Explain that you will be the timekeeper and announce the beginning and end of each step (unless students are old enough and experienced enough to do it themselves).

6. Conduct the activity (15-25 min. total)

- Presenter(s) shares and explains a piece of work (or a plan to do/create something):
  - Context/information about the work
  - What feedback they would like (could be on a specific issue or just general)
    (3-5 min.)

- Peers ask *clarifying* questions that can be answered quickly ("Who is the audience for your presentation?")
  (2-3 min)

- Peers examine the work silently, referring to the rubric or criteria and keeping the presenter's request for feedback in mind.
  (4-8 min., depending on the work to be examined)

- Peers give feedback while presenter silently listens (peers talk among themselves, NOT directly to the presenter, who may take notes but does not speak during this step):
  - What they like about the work ("I like how they…")
  - Questions they have about the work that cause the presenter to reflect ("I wonder if…")
  - Ideas they have for the work ("Maybe they could…")
    (3-6 min.)

- Presenter(s) thanks the group and reflects on what they heard (they should talk about only the feedback that was especially helpful, not respond to everything that was offered)
  - How they might improve their work
  - What ideas they would like to try
    (2-4 min.)

- Debrief the experience by asking students to reflect on and discuss:
  - What type of feedback was most helpful?
  - What type of feedback was not as helpful?
  - How well did we follow our norms/agreements about giving feedback?

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NOTES

- If students put their feedback in writing, check it before giving it to the presenters to be sure it followed the norms/agreements (and avoid hurt feelings)
- Allow students time to review their notes from the activity and make plans for revising their work.
- Check in with students the next time they are working on project tasks to remind them to incorporate the feedback they got.

Sample Chart/Handout

"Likes, Questions, Ideas" Steps		
1	Presenter(s) shares and explains the work: ● Context ● Feedback they would like	___ min.
2	Peers ask *clarifying* questions	___ min.
3	Peers examine the work silently ● Refer to the rubric or criteria ● Keep the presenter's request for feedback in mind	___ min.
4	Peers give feedback while presenter silently listens ● Likes ● Questions ● Ideas	___ min.
5	Presenter(s) thanks the group and reflects on what they heard ● How they might improve their work ● Ideas they would like to try	___ min.
	TOTAL TIME	___ min.

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