PACIFIC VIEW

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Two Year College Association-Pacific Northwest Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2021

Contents

From the Chair

Julie Swedin, Yakima Valley College

From the Outgoing Chair:

In my previous column (that now seems so long ago), I asked us to think optimistically about this new decade. As we embarked on the '20s, reminiscent of the prior 1920s, an age marked by the symbolic flappers, I asked us to contemplate how we want this coming decade to be defined by future generations. 2020 may have left many of us with waning optimism in the midst of such an unprecedented and tumultuous time. Now, though, as I write my final column as the outgoing TYCA-PNW Chair, it seems we have turned an important corner, and we are enthusiastic to leave 2020 behind us. With our world slowly opening back up, and the possibility of returning to our classrooms and campuses in the somewhat near future, the "20/20" analogy of having clarity of vision for ourselves and our students seems even more pressing and offers an opportunity for us, as TYCA-PNW, to remember our role as teacher-scholar-activists in a positive light.

This season marks the one-year anniversary of the pandemic and the ensuing political and societal unrest of our nation that left a heavy weight on our hearts and minds. Spurred on by the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Manuel Elis, and others by the hands of police, a light was cast on the societal injustices and inequities that have always existed. Our colleges rose to the challenge to support the pursuit of social justice in the midst of this time, empowering students and faculty to address and eliminate discrimination and prejudice through the opportunities our certificates and degree programs offer. We are part of the institutional and societal power structure, a position that gives us the ability to make a tremendous difference in the lives of our students.

Through the campus work that we do, such as creating new educational pathways for students, they are able to reimagine and fight for a world that is capable of breaking from

past cycles of inequity. No one could have imagined what 2020 would bring, but now 2021 is showing us not only the optimism we envisioned for the start of the decade, but resilience and flexibility to pivot our schedules and shift our mindsets as needed to persevere. Now more than ever, we have realized that each of us can be part of the changes addressing injustice that can occur for our students.

It's important that we make our position clear and indicate how we, as members of TYCA-PNW, intend to work toward antiracist policies in our classrooms, departments, and institutions, and that we stand in solidarity with those peacefully demonstrating and protesting around the world. We, as educators, play a critical role. As emphasized by NCTE's stance against racism posted in a blog on its website: "Injustices and acts of brutality are real. In fact, they are revolting. Racist acts keep recurring, and systems of oppression continue to exist, proving the need for systemic and structural change. That change can begin with protests, but ultimately it must happen through action. As educators, we are poised to lead the way through our teaching."

Leading the way through our teaching that counteracts racisms is crucial, but as NCTE articulates further in its statement, even more can be done:

> We cannot stop there. As literacy educators, our aim is to help students and communities to imagine a better, more humane world and to take the steps to achieve it. As advocated by NCTE's *Statement on Anti-Racism to*

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Support Teaching and Learning, we must be active, both collectively and individually, in "counteracting racism and other forms of bigotry in teaching materials, methods, and programs for the teaching and learning of English and the language arts.

Countless firsthand examples of students have shown me, as I imagine you all can attest to with your own experiences, just what students are capable of achieving through education. In transitioning from developmental to college-level courses, to ultimately graduating from college, many students have successfully moved forward and attained their goals for themselves and their families. By doing so, they offer us hope that this world can be more humane. We have been fortunate to be immersed in the classroom with students, making a difference in how they think and view the world around them.

Now we have the responsibility as teacher-scholar-activists to support our students in waging war against the pervasive evil of oppression and prejudice. By learning how to be critical thinkers and equity-minded within the classroom, students are able to become ethical community members, empowered by their college experience to take a stand against systemic and institutional racism outside of it. We are all in positions to influence the course of these matters not only *in* but *out* of the classroom as well.

We must continue advocating the success of our historically vulnerable students who may still be marginalized and underserved. As educators, we have the opportunity to take part in the transformational work on behalf of students, a goal that our colleges, NCTE, and TYCA-PNW have made their missions. I would like us to continue immersing ourselves even more in the ongoing momentum to bring about educational equity: recognizing and ultimately fostering the individual talent of each student.

Despite the surge of what we have lost, there has also been much we have gained. Students still persist in their educational endeavors, and we will persist as well. We have all shown our resilience and flexibility to adapt in innovative ways, which surely is worth celebrating. Teachers will continue to be there, adjusting to offer different learning models, such as hyflex or online classes, to make sure our students' access to higher education continues. This affords us, in turn, the chance to have a positive impact as educators and leaders on our campuses. Students' continued commitment allows us to inspire their growth as they seek to transform their own lives through education, which in turn motivates us to want to be better citizens of the world. Thus, I urge you to hold onto your optimism as you create intentional, thoughtful, and safe spaces for students to learn, think, and stand together "to imagine [and create] a better, more humane world."

Last, I recommend marking your calendars to attend two upcoming professional development opportunities that include the fast-approaching Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) Virtual National Conference on Wednesday, April 7, 2021 offered in conjunction with another event you won't want to miss: the 2021 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Virtual Annual Convention. These conferences will support and inspire each of us as we persevere with our efforts on behalf of students.

It has been a pleasure being a part of TYCA-PNW as your Chair. Farewell, and thank you for your dedication to our wonderful students. Wishing you all time this Spring to renew, rejuvenate, and prepare for the important work ahead of us,

Julie Swedin, Ed.D
TYCA-PNW Chair, Outgoing

TYCA-PNW Membership Information

Free for a Limited Time! Take Advantage!

TYCA-PNW membership is **free** for the 2020-2021 academic year, and registering will put you on the listserv to find out more about events like this one! If you would like to register, please complete this **TYCA-PNW Registration Form**. (Attendees do not need to be registered members to attend virtual conference events.)

Pacific View
Call for Submissions

Submissions for the following sections will be considered for the next issue:

- **Practical Matters**: specific classroom activities
- **Student Talk:** a student's perspective on learning
- **Professional Development:** ideas on developing self and/or others
- **Intersections:** thoughts on theory and/or philosophy of teaching
- **Creative Outlet:** a spot where colleagues can exhibit their creative side
- **Interactions:** addressing articles in the previous issue

Submissions can be short or long (but not dissertation long) and sent electronically to hkauffman@fvcc.edu or alminervini@lcsc.edu as an attached document (preferably Word). Be sure to include your school affiliation along with your name, address, phone, and email.

Please put TYCA or Pacific View in the subject line.

Because of the variety of genres, we will accept an abstract or full piece for review. Abstracts are not required, particularly for smaller pieces.

Abstract deadline for fall/winter 2021: October 1st. Full piece deadline: November 1st. We will notify abstract submissions of their status no later than October 15th. We respond quickly.

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The TYCA-PNW Conference went virtual over the fall.

If you missed the September 11 session, **"First-Year Composition Tips and Tricks Share,"** please find a compilation of what was shared at this series' first event below and on p. 5 of this newsletter.

TYCA-PNW Collected Tips, Tricks, and Recommendations

TECHNOLOGY

- Use Flipgrid, an educational video website in which students record and post their own videos.
- Powtoons (https://www.powtoon.com/), Screencast-o-matic, and Youtube are also useful video services.
- Use podcasts so that students can listen to lessons while away from their computer screen.

SCHEDULING & ORGANIZATION

- Have optional synchronous days.
- Create a spreadsheet with a list of students' names and date of last contact so that you can reach out to students if you don't hear from them in a while. This helps keep students in the class. Note the type of contact students seem most receptive to.
- Put notes/reminders in your calendar to contact students, even with general messages such as asking if they have comments.

ZOOM

- Email students in the weeks before class starts and invite them to a Zoom meeting so that they can test their tech ahead of time.
- Rename your Zoom office hour "Student Hour."
- Tell students they can leave their video off in Zoom meetings.

COMMUNICATION & FEEDBACK

- Provide students with the syllabus, a quick video introducing yourself, and textbook information before the quarter or semester begins. This reduces student anxiety. (Also, make sure you're getting paid for this "invisible" work.)
- Use Skype for phone calls with students
- Use an app, such as Google Voice, to text and call students from a personal phone without disclosing your phone number (https://voice.google.com/u/0/about).
- Use short Google forms to ask students for quick and anonymous feedback on what was helpful and distracting during synchronous lectures. Here is a link Kefaya Diab shared to a form she uses: https://forms.gle/HCCsLf5bKvd2sNwS8
- Use videos to provide comments on essays. Students say it's weird because they're not used to it, but they also say it's awesome. Keep in mind that some students don't have enough internet bandwidth for this, though.
- Use video conferences to provide feedback. Share your screen with the student so that you can look at the essay together. Students understand this feedback more than just written comments. This also ensures students actually receive the feedback, so it's not "wasted"

Cont. from p. 4—Tips, Tricks, and Recommendations

GAME-BASED LEARNING

- Create a "scavenger hunt" Canvas orientation assignment, such as having students find comments on assignments and test their tech.
- Put "Easter eggs" in the syllabus, such as "if you read this, send me your favorite YouTube video."
- "Choose your own adventure" assignments: Give students a choice of assignments/units. For example, create 15 different assignments using different genres of writing and tell students they must complete 10 of them. This allows students to choose genres that are more relevant to themselves.

GRADING & STREAMLINING

- Use a labor-based grading approach: As long as a student does the work of writing and revising, they get a grade.
- Simplify assignments for online content. For instance, instead of having 3 separate essay projects, extend 1 project and eliminate the 3rd. Eliminate all "busywork." Don't dumb down, but streamline.

ACCESSIBILITY

- For students in places with low bandwidth, use software to resize video files so that they are smaller.
- Record videos in Zoom, upload them to the cloud, and use the auto-transcribe feature to be ADA compliant. Be sure to save the Zoom recording to your computer because it may not remain in the cloud.
- Record videos in Zoom and edit in Panopto. It has better editing tools than Zoom, and the auto-captions are easy to add in the mp4 file. The WA state board has paid for everyone in the WA community & technical college system to have Panopto.
- Use Open Education Resources (OER). Here is a link to Sybil Priebe's OER folder: http://bit.ly/NDSCS-Open-Folder

COMMUNITY BUILDING

- Ask students for song recommendations and share a class Spotify list.
- Pin a discussion board for music, book, film, show recommendations.
- Follow #academictwitter and #fycchat on Twitter for suggestions from others.

RESEARCH & RHETORIC

- Create assignments that ask students to engage in primary research and get away from their screen, such as interviewing people.
- Use literature as a way to teach rhetorical awareness. For example, use Gothic horror (*Frankenstein, Dracula, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde)* and have students write letters from the perspective of characters.
- In technical writing classes/writing in the workplace classes, send students messages as their 'boss,' and have students decide how to best respond.

These tips and tricks were compiled at the September 11, 2020, session of the 2020 TYCA-PNW Virtual Conference.

Stay tuned for possible spring sessions! And if you have any ideas for spring workshop sessions, please contact Jamie Jones at JonesRhetComp@gmail.com

Just Your Typical Comp Class, Planning for the End Times

Bryce Kammers
Lewis-Clark State College

At Lewis-Clark State College we tout, "connecting learning to life." When the world is gracefully rotating around the sun, it's an easy feat. That is, as a composition instructor, I strive to keep pragmatic application central to class projects.

If you want to see a horde of panicked composition students, ask them to write a narrative-grounded belief essay capped at 500 words. Pupils will widen and hands will shoot into the air; "It can't be done," you will hear through labored breathing, or so I have learned in assigning the This I Believe essay to my first-year classes. Students love writing about themselves. The occasional case of writer's block aside, once they find a thread, you will likely have to wrench them away from the keyboard or risk damage to the computer.

And then comes the editorial bloodbath, the "killing of the darlings," as a colleague of mine often quips, reciting sage advice. This is where they must strike word after word, adjective after nominalization, until they have told the story with brevity. Of course, to the passionate author, it's not verbose; it's essential. But once they have pared it down, they are often left with something light and airy. Something that cuts to the core, the beauty of what it means to be human.

I adore This I Believe essays not because they are personal but because they are authentic. I let this mantra guide the entirety of my curriculum. I believe writing should be real.

When students finish the final drafts of their belief essays, they read them aloud to the class. They recreate the parameters put into place by public radio: They must tell a story, they must be positive, and they must sound natural.

It used to be that students could submit these to the organization's website for publishing consideration, but that seems to have gone away in the era of austerity. Still, with their efforts, students have crafted a message that promotes a positive worldview, following in the footsteps of some of their heroes, from Albert Einstein to John McCain. They feel heard and validated.

Later in the semester, argumentative essays are composed in response to motions from Intelligence Squared, an organization that presents relevant social and political debates from foreign policy to the cost of college. They select the motion, and as you might expect, we have had

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more debates about the utility of Tinder than U.S. foreign policy. When students complete their final drafts, they post a concise position on Intelligence Squared's moderated website, demonstrating responsible, socially-relevant discourse. "Please, just don't feed the trolls," I remind them.

In the informative unit, students craft news articles that investigate a college issue. Sure, there are the occasional complaints about available parking (which I assure you, there is plenty of at our small college) or the cost of college textbooks (again, a non-issue considering how many OERs we utilize), but often, students rise to the occasion, highlighting multicultural potlucks, board game club, or student government meetings. Students are tasked with speaking to semi-credible sources and presenting the world through varying angles of vision. Once finished, students will have composed copy that can be sent to *The Pathfinder*, our student newspaper, who are sometimes gracious enough to participate in our shenanigans and publish a piece or two.

I have experimented with other pragmatic assignments in the informative mode, from designing brochures, profiling occupations, and even compiling a cookbook, *College Craves*, filled with heirloom recipes and interviews from culinary orators—you know, grandmas; however, a new favorite among students has emerged: *A Guide for the End Times*.

Years ago, one of my students commented, "Your class is a survey of morbidity." If it was meant as a criticism, I didn't balk. Truth be told, I've since leaned into it over the years, especially now that colleagues must coax me from my bunker. The guide is full of process analyses told through the guise of surviving an apocalypse. Students can detail skills they view as essential or those they suspect are disappearing from the world. Though sometimes dark, this

project compiles an eclectic skill set for the end times: quilting, distilling, beekeeping, etc. I'm sure my students think I'm a few semesters away from standing under a freeway overpass with a sign that reads, "the end is near," but at least they'll be paying attention and learn some valuable skills along the way. A colleague of mine mentioned that the same tactic is being used by the CDC to teach children basic hazard preparedness. So, best case scenario, we have better writers in the world who also know to ration one gallon of water per person per day.

I have a text on my shelf that recommends having students compose their own obituaries in lieu of a first-person narrative, but like many things, I can't say it has aged well. After all, there is a point where the irony cannot possibly compete with the harsh environment we find ourselves in, with many isolated and scared. Instead, design assignments that build community. Challenge but empower. Whether assembling a newspaper, curating a cookbook, or gathering practical lessons for surviving the apocalypse, students will rise to the occasion, or so This I Believe. Either way, I'm heading back to the bunker.

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Beyond "Good Job!": How Online Peer Review Platforms Improved My Students' Writing and Made My Life Easier

Liza Long
College of Western Idaho

"Peering Through The Long Grass" by A Guy Taking Pictures is licensed under CC BY 2.0

"Good job!"

"Nice work!"

"I think you need a comma here."

Most instructors are familiar with these types of student comments during peer review. Nearly every composition instructor uses peer review in the classroom because we know that this activity is important. Brammer and Rees note that all experienced instructors recommend peer review to new instructors, yet both students and instructors are often unhappy with both the peer review process and the results. However, composition scholars have reached consensus that "the composing process is social, and peer review is an integral part of that process" (Brammer and Reese 72). In an online environment, promoting student engagement can be especially challenging.

What does peer review look like in your classroom? In my face-to-face classes, I used to put students in groups and ask them to print out multiple copies of their drafts, then use a rubric that I created to have them check their peers' work, with a vague, student-directed "workshop" style discussion after the rubrics were complete. In an online class, I used a peer review discussion board, asking students to post their drafts and complete those same instructor-created peer review templates on each other's work. But what were my students really learning through these peer review activities? Did peer review improve their writing? How could I make peer review a transferable skill?

One challenge I face with constructing meaningful peer review is that my students come from diverse backgrounds and reach my course with dramatically different previous academic experiences. I teach at the College of Western Idaho, the largest college in our state, with more than 24,000 students. Our two-year commuter college provides education to a wide variety of learners, from traditional students seeking a lower-cost option for their general education coursework to career and technical education students who are required to complete a written communication requirement. My English 102 Rhetoric and Composition classes, capped at 26 students, typically include a diverse mix from a variety of majors: traditional learners, adult learners, English language learners, and even dual credit high school students.

In 2017, on the recommendation of my colleague Meagan Newberry, I took a risk and tried out my first online peer review platform, Eli Review. I quickly learned that online platforms play an important role in facilitating more meaningful peer review experiences while also saving time for instructors. We are now feeling a new sense of urgency about online tools because the sudden shift to online learning precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic during the Spring 2020 term made many of us rethink our traditional approaches to instruction. Online peer review is one tool that all instructors should consider. In a study of online peer review, Hicks et al. noted online platforms can provide engaging and enriching peer review experiences, but that the way instructors frame online peer review assignments is critical to the quality of feedback that student peers provide, and that "chunking" writing assignments leads to higher-quality feedback. In this essay, I'll share my experience with two online peer review tools and explain how the iterative and constructive process of online peer review has transformed my students' writing while also promoting critical thinking skills that prepare them for the workplace—and saving me time in the process.

Two Peer Review Platforms: Eli Review and Peergrade

After a colleague's enthusiastic recommendation as noted above, I began using Eli Review, an online peer review platform, in 2017 for both my online and hybrid classes. I later adopted it for face-to-face classes as well, dedicating one classroom day each week to the peer review drafting and revising process. In 2019, I piloted a peer review platform called Peergrade, which is the platform I currently use. I currently use Peergrade in my English 101 Writing and Rhetoric I, English 102 Writing and Rhetoric II, and English 211 Literary Analysis (advanced writing requirement) courses. I use

the peer review tool differently in each course. For English 101, where we are focusing on using sources to support arguments in academic essays, I use Peergrade as an iterative writing and feedback tool to help students learn to craft paragraphs and draft thesis statements. In English 211, I use it for a more traditional peer review, asking students to assess each other's literary analysis essay drafts using the grading rubric. Peergrade is a major component of my English 102 course design, so I will focus on that course as I share what has worked for me.

Both Eli Review and Peergrade function in similar ways. Eli Review is available as a low-cost subscription to students and offers a stand-alone website. Students purchase the subscription at the campus bookstore or online. According to Eli Review's website, a three-month subscription to the service is $12.50 per student. I switched to Peergrade because we have an institutional license and it integrates with our LMS (Blackboard), which means that students can access the platform directly from our Blackboard class. At the College of Western Idaho, we do not currently pass the Peergrade license cost on to our students. For Peergrade, students are automatically enrolled. With Eli Review, they have to enroll in a course I create using their school email accounts. Both tools allow instructors to collect data on student engagement and performance. While I personally think that Eli Review is a slightly superior tool with a better graphical interface, data analytics, and user experience, the LMS integration and the lower cost for students made it easy to switch to Peergrade. Both platforms offer excellent client support and are responsive to instructor feedback.

Introducing the Online Peer Review Platform and Process

I introduce the online peer review platform on the first day of class. My students' first writing task for the platform is also my first week writing assessment:

> In 2-3 paragraphs, describe how much experience you have with peer review and academic writing, how you worked with peers (in pairs, groups, etc.), and how you interacted (reading essays out loud, group conversations, etc.). Describe in detail the kinds of feedback you received from your reviewers, but also the kind of feedback you gave to the people you reviewed. Did you find that the feedback you received was useful? If not, what would make feedback more useful to you as a writer?

When I am teaching hybrid or face-to-face classes, we respond to this prompt in class together using our college's laptop cart, giving students the opportunity to try the online peer review platform with my support. For online classes, I provide and record a brief tutorial throughout my LMS to walk students through the submission process. This prompt gives me the opportunity to create a baseline of peer review

experience and attitudes for the class. Hicks et al. note that this kind of background research into students' experiences with and cultural assumptions about peer review is an important first step in framing high-quality peer review tasks.

In our next class session (or the next week online), I introduce the peer review process and explain how it will work in our course. Teaching students what peer review is and how they are expected to do it is an evidence based practice. For example, Brammer and Reese note that students who receive instruction in how to peer review feel more confident in their abilities and have more positive experiences with the peer review process. After discussing my students' writing submissions and addressing any concerns they have about peer review, I ask them to share examples of where they encounter reviews in their daily lives. In fact, reviews and surveys are nearly ubiquitous. We can't even purchase a new pen on Amazon without being asked to review our shopping experience. Students quickly generate workplace examples of peer review: For example, their work is reviewed by supervisors, or if they themselves are supervisors, they may have to review others. Through this initial discussion, students establish the "why" of peer review. They also start thinking about the "what." Are we just looking for misplaced commas? Or are we ensuring that the meaning of the essay is clear to the reader? As instructors who have created peer review rubrics know, establishing criteria for a review is not an easy task.

Using the Peer Review Platform for Writing and Revising

Each week, my students have an assigned writing task. They complete the writing task by Sunday for face-to-face and hybrid courses, then complete their assigned peer reviews before our next on-ground class. In online classes, I set a midweek deadline for writing tasks and a Sunday deadline for review tasks. Both Eli Review and Peergrade allow the instructor to set parameters for reviews, including the number of reviews required, whether or not the reviews will be anonymous, and whether late work is allowed. In my classes, we decide together whether to use anonymous feedback. In peer review, students are asked to identify required traits in their peers' essays, then evaluate the essays on defined criteria. I also ask students to provide a final comment using the "Describe-Evaluate-Suggest" model of peer feedback as explained by Eli Review. While I do not comment on every assignment, I use some of these formative assignments to ensure that the students are on task and understand the goal of the essay we are working on. For an example of my exploratory research weekly tasks and rubrics, including a student-created essay draft rubric, see Appendix I.

Learning to rate each other's feedback has required norming exercises. Baker has noted that one area of concern for faculty is whether students are capable of giving high-quality

feedback. I ask students to rate each peer's final comment on the five-star helpfulness scale, based on how well it meets Eli Review's "Describe/Evaluate/Suggest" model for feedback:

> *Five stars = Will transform the writer's draft: all three parts are included, are specific, and the reviewer went above and beyond.*

> *Three stars = Solid, helpful, specific, and includes all three pieces.*

> *One star = May not include any aspects of the model or be too vague to be helpful.*

Initially, peer feedback scores tend to skew high. We look at anonymized examples to discuss the kinds of comments that are truly helpful. I also spotlight "feedback stars" with examples of high-quality feedback at the beginning of class when we debrief about the week's writing and review assignments.

The bulk of my students' course grade now comes from peer review. Rather than grading individual essay drafts, I assign 100 points to each essay's peer review tasks. Part of the grade depends on how students rate their peers' submissions, and another part of the grade depends on how their peers rate the quality of their feedback. Both Eli Review and Peergrade allow students to numerically assess each other's work and each other's feedback. As noted above, I expect that students will provide feedback that is helpful at a "three stars" level (out of five) to earn full credit for their reviews. Baker's study of a four-week peer review process supports this approach for high-quality feedback. See Appendix 2 for a rubric and examples of student feedback.

I do not provide an evaluative grade (other than complete/incomplete) for any of my students' essays until they submit their final portfolios at the end of the semester. One of my colleagues, Meagan Newberry, uses a similar peer review approach with a grading contract proposed by Asao Inoue in his book Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies. In Newberry's class, students who complete their writing and review tasks at the expected "three star" level earn a B in the course; for an A, students must complete an additional assignment.

How Students Responded to Online Platforms

I have seen improvement in student engagement and satisfaction as I have become more familiar with these online tools. In Fall 2016, the semester before I started using online peer review platforms, only 50% (12/24) students completed the end of course survey, with 100% expressing that they were "satisfied" (17%) or "very satisfied" (83%) with the course. Their comments tended to focus more on me as an instructor and less on their own writing process. In the first semester in which I taught the course using an online peer review platform, my student evaluations were less positive: I

had a 44% response rate for my end of course evaluations, and 90% of the students who completed the end-of-course survey expressed that they were "satisfied"(10%) or "very satisfied "(81%) with the course, and 9% rating their experience as "neutral."

In Spring 2018, after I had used online platforms for one year and refined the peer review feedback process, 60% (15/25) of my students completed the end of course survey, with 100% reporting that they were either "satisfied" (27%) or "very satisfied" (73%). Seven commenters specifically mentioned Eli Review as a reason that they enjoyed the course. In 2019, after I switched to the LMS-integrated PeerGrade platform, 67% (14/21) students completed their end of course survey, again with 100% reporting that they were "satisfied" (35%) or "very satisfied" (65%) with the course. While none of the students mentioned Peergrade in their comments, many of them commented on how their writing had improved. I think there's a possibility that students prefer the user experience of Eli Review to Peergrade, which may account for the lower numbers of "very satisfied" students as well as the fact that the online platform was not mentioned in student comments.

Spring 2020 was a special case for all of us, and I did not have high expectations for my course evaluations. While fewer students completed their end-of-course surveys, all three of my sections finished the year strong despite the challenges of COVID-19 and moving online. In one section, 13/22 students (59%) completed the end of course survey, with 100% reporting that they were very satisfied (53%) or satisfied (46%) with the course. Honestly, given the fact that none of these students had signed up for what became an online course, I am proud of this assessment. In their final comments, students noted that they had learned the revision process and that they were proud of their final portfolios and the work they had accomplished. Not a single student complained about the move from hybrid to online in their comments.

> Students learn to create their own assessment rubrics, enabling them to think more critically about their rhetorical process. This metacognition helps to reinforce the rhetorical situation for each essay that I teach.

What I Have Learned from My Students' Online Peer Review Experiences

While I was initially hesitant to try this new tool because I was concerned about the time involved in learning a new system, using online peer review platforms has transformed the way I teach my English 102 courses. These platforms provide structure and organization to support student writing, and they foster a collaborative classroom experience in hybrid and online courses. Here are some of my top takeaways after three years of using this type of peer review:

Using an online platform for peer review can provide engagement and accountability, allowing for more constructive feedback from classmates. When students write for an audience of their peers, they try harder. My students consistently report high levels of engagement with the course and each other. As Baker notes, "Research consistently demonstrates that engaging students in the feedback process improves the quality of students' final submissions" (180).

For hybrid or online classes, these platforms are especially valuable. For example, during the quick switch from hybrid to fully online courses precipitated by COVID-19 in the Spring 2020 term, our peer review platform provided continuity and a simple way for me to check that students were completing their regular assignments. Students told me that my courses felt "normal" to them, which was reassuring in a time when so many other areas of their lives were changing.

The peer review process supports student writing because it reinforces the iterative nature of the writing process. Students break essay tasks into chunks, then incorporate these chunks into the larger essay project (Baker; Hicks et al.).

The online peer feedback platform provides an easy way for me to give early feedback on formative assessments so that I can intervene and make writing center referrals for students who are struggling with course concepts like thesis statements, source use, or paragraph unity.

Students learn to create their own assessment rubrics, enabling them to think more critically about their rhetorical process. This metacognition helps to reinforce the rhetorical situation for each essay that I teach (see Appendix I: Week Four Peer Review, Student Created Rubric).

Ultimately, I have concluded based on my experiences that using the online platform's writing and review process has led to stronger student essays with less time spent on my part because students know that a large portion of their grade depends on their revisions, they feel free to take more creative risks with their work. They choose more difficult topics for their exploratory and persuasive essays, and they learn to embrace the idea that writing an academic essay is a process. Students have reported high levels of satisfaction with both Eli Review and Peergrade in every course where I have used these online platforms. Most importantly, these tools have saved me time as an instructor while also increasing students' perception of my engagement. Overall, I give online peer review platforms five out of five stars.

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Appendix I: Exploratory Research Essay Writing Tasks and Peer Review Rubrics

Week One Writing Task

Post your narrowed and focused research question for Essay One (Exploratory Research) here. Then write 2-3 paragraphs explaining why you chose this topic and what you expect to find in your research. Your instructor will provide you with feedback on this assignment.

Week One Peer Review Rubric

Trait Identification

- The research question is phrased as a single question. (Y/N)
- The research question is focused (not too broad, not too narrow) *Y/N
- The research question is objective (does not take sides). Y/N
- The research question is appropriate for a 6-8 page college essay. Y/N Please comment on your response.

Evaluation

- I would like to read a paper that answers this research question.
- Meh
- Sure
- Wow, this paper will change my life!

Please comment on any part of the research question that you think could be improved using the Describe-Evaluate-Suggest model. For example, is the question objective, or does it contain value statements (words that have positive or negative connotations)? Is the topic too broad or too narrow? If so, suggest a way to narrow or expand the topic. If you know of a good source for this question, feel free to share it! Your response must be at least 75 words in length.

Week Two Writing Task: Academic Article Summary and APA Style Reference

1. Choose one academic source you plan to use for your exploratory research essay.
2. Summarize the source in 5-6 sentences.
3. Use at least one template from Chapters 1-3 of They Say/I Say in your summary.
4. Include one direct quote from your source and cite the quote correctly in APA style.
5. Create the APA-style full reference for your source and place it at the bottom of your paragraph.
6. Check your paragraph for correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and academic style.

Week Two Peer Review Rubric

Trait Identification

- The summary used an appropriate academic source (not Wikipedia or a fake news site) Y/N
- The assignment summarized the article in 5-6 sentences. Y/N
- The summary used a They Say/I Say template from Chapters 1-3. If no, please suggest one. Y/N
- The summary included a direct quote with an APA style in-text source citation. Y/N
- The summary included an APA style full reference for the source at the end of the paragraph. Y/N
- After reading the summary paragraph, I understand the main ideas of the source. Y/N
- The summary paragraph displays the conventions of academic writing, including style, grammar, and correct punctuation/spelling. Y/N

Please make sure that you include a final comment that your peer would rate as at least three stars for helpfulness here. Remember to like your peers' feedback if you would rate it as three stars or higher.

Week Three Writing Task: Introduction (aka "Hook")

How do you get your audience's attention? The introductory paragraph is one of the most important parts of your essay. An effective hook catches the reader's interest in a specific, concrete way. Look at the introductory paragraphs in the essay section of They Say/I Say for some examples of effective hooks.

- **Outrageous statement or exaggeration:** In "Don't Blame the Eater" (p. 241), David Zinczenko invites the audience to consider a headline suitable for a Jay Leno monologue.
- **Question:** Zinczenko also uses a series of questions to get the reader's attention. "Whatever happened to personal responsibility?" Richard Muller similarly uses the questioning technique in combination with a strong statement in "Nuclear Waste" (p. 252).
- **Strong statement:** In "Hidden Intellectualism" (p. 244), Gerald Graff states, "Everyone knows some young person who is impressively 'street smart' but does poorly in school."
- **Anecdote:** In "The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream" (p. 260), Barbara Ehrenreich uses anecdote and vivid imagery to set the tone of her essay.
- **Vivid Imagery or unusual detail.** Flannery O'Connor starts off her short story "Everything that Rises Must Converge" (p. 272) with vivid imagery.

Other ways to start your essay include (with my examples):

- **A quotation:** In a 1965 sermon the day after nonviolent resisters faced police brutality in Selma, Alabama, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Deep down in our non-violent creed is the conviction there are some things so dear, some things so precious, some things so eternally true, that they're worth dying for."
- **A statistic or fact:** According to the National Institute of Mental Health, one in five children under the age of 18 lives with a severe and debilitating mental disorder.

Choose at least one of these techniques to write a draft of your introductory paragraph(s) for Essay One.

- Remember that the purpose of your essay is exploratory and the tone should be objective, so some of these techniques may be more appropriate than others.
- Avoid the second person pronoun you in your draft (you may use first and third person pronouns).
- Your hook should end with a thesis statement that answers your research question. For an example, see Michaela Cullington's essay, "Does Texting Affect Writing?" Her thesis statement comes at the end of paragraph three: "In fact, it seems likely that texting has no significant effect on student writing."

Week Three Peer Review Rubric

Trait Identification

- The introduction starts with a "hook" to catch the reader's interest. Y/N
- The introduction avoids the second person pronoun "you." Y/N
- The introduction is at least one paragraph in length. Y/N
- The introduction is specific and concrete. Y/N
- The introduction ends with a thesis statement that answers the research question. Y/N

Evaluation

- This introduction makes me want to learn more about the topic.
- Meh
- Sure!
- I cannot wait to read this essay!

This introduction uses the conventions of academic style, including good grammar, punctuation, spelling, and academic tone. Please provide a brief comment to explain your answer.

- Needs some work
- Solid style

- Wow! You're an academic style pro!

Please make sure that you include a final comment that your peer would rate as at least three stars for helpfulness here. Remember to like your peers' feedback if you would rate it as three stars or higher.

Week Four Writing Task: Exploratory Research Paper Rough Draft

Writing task is due Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Reviews are due by Thursday before class. The final revised essay is due to Blackboard on the following Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

Note: The reviews for this assignment are not anonymous. You should have only two papers to review. I have also assigned a self-assessment for your essay, which means you will have the chance to check your own work against our class-created rubric.

Week Four Peer Review: Student-Created Rubric

Trait Identification

The essay contains an effective hook and introduction.
The essay contains five or more sources.
The sources used are credible.
The paper uses APA citation style.
In text citations are mostly correct (author, date).
The entire essay supported the research question and answer (thesis statement).
The essay meets the length requirements.
The essay includes an introduction, thesis statement, and conclusion.
The essay is objective in tone (free from bias). If no, please comment.
The essay does not use the second person pronoun "you" (except in direct quotes).
The paper uses They Say/I Say templates.

Evaluations

The essay taught me something new.

- I didn't learn anything I didn't already know
- I already knew something about this topic, but I learned something new
- I hadn't heard anything about this topic, and I learned something new

Evaluate the essay's grammar and punctuation

- Needs a lot of work
- Has some issues
- Mostly effective

Evaluate how informative the essay is.

- Meh
- Gets persuasive or is slightly off topic
- I feel way more informed about this topic! Nice work!

The essay contains a good balance of sources and original ideas (They Say/I Say)

- Okay
- Good
- Great!

The paper is engaging and interesting

- Meh
- I was interested but it could be better
- I was so intrigued by this paper, I reread it!

How likely are you to recommend this essay to a friend? Please explain your response.

Appendix II: Peer Review Grading Rubric and Examples of Student Feedback

Essay One	Points	Comments
Week 1	25	
Week 2	25	
Week 3	25	
Week 4	25	
	100	Nice Work!

Possible Deductions for Each Week

-5 submission score below 70%

-5 reviewer score below 70%

-5 for each missing review

Examples of Student Feedback

- I completely agree that many problems lurk on the internet. I also agree that parents should take the responsibility to protect their kids from harm of all kinds including those found on the internet. I like the idea of educating kids and holding them accountable with the contract. *Your Rating: One Star*

- Have you thought about having the parents take turns volunteering between their classes? If enough parents participated and volunteered in the program you are suggesting, maybe they could cover most of the time slots and get a break on their fees. Also, CWI and other schools offer online and/or hybrid classes (like this one that we are in), which allow students more freedom in scheduling their school work. Maybe online classes could be part of the "plan of action" that you were talking about. *Your Rating: Three Stars*

- I think everybody wants to fix this "very expensive health insurance" problem. All of us wish we could live a healthy life. I believe that without our health we can't live happily. It would be so sad if we couldn't see a doctor because we don't have health insurance. What I hear you saying is that we need a universal healthcare system. Since the assignment asks us to first prove there's a significant problem, I'm wondering which you plan to focus on? Will it be an insurance company or medical costs? It might be that both are connected, but if you focus on either one the problem of your argument will be more clear and strong. I would suggest finding evidence that convinces the reader how much the cost differences are between employer insurance and private insurance in Idaho. If you don't have a job you don't have insurance? You can't get any healthcare at all? You might be able to get useful information on the website for The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/tabid/61/Default.aspx *Your Rating: Five Stars*

Teaching with Board Games: *Concept* in the Classroom

Kimberly Tolson
Lewis-Clark State College

Strategy board games took the United States by storm in the mid-90s. The wave of Eurogames like Settlers of Catan, Carcassonne, and Ticket to Ride improved upon classic designs by addressing some dated mechanics many Americans grew used to playing. These Eurogames reduced the downtime between players' turns, thus encouraging players to engage with the other players when it wasn't their turn. More importantly, these games embedded a built-in timer and reduced the amount of luck that was rampant in games like Monopoly, Parcheesi, and Sorry. Those gateway Eurogames paved the way for a new style of creative and unique games that anyone can find online or at their local gaming store today.

One of the greatest results of a newer style of gaming is that board games are not only enjoyable but educational as well. In "Using a Board Game to Reinforce Learning," Bona, et al. state, "Board games are used to review core concepts, disseminate new information creatively, and boost teamwork while making learning more enjoyable" (110). An abundance of research asserts that board games exercise and enhance critical thinking, problem solving, and cooperation. Even further, playing board games in the classroom teaches civility and reinforces a non-judgmental learning environment. Students learn to relax and feel comfortable knowing that they can explore new concepts without fear of making a mistake. Therefore, integrating board games into the classroom presents a unique opportunity to practice learned skills.

One such game that I use to teach classification and organization to my writing students is a board game called Concept. I've found it absolutely helps reinforce those basic techniques of structure as well as encourages creativity and cooperation. Concept is an abstract game where players work cooperatively to guess a clue giver's word or phrase. By placing stands and cubes near pictures on the game board, the clue giver guides the rest of the players to guess their word or phrase. They must remain organized in their thoughts so that their clues remain organized. The catch? The clue giver cannot speak at all or answer questions. The only thing they can do is add colored stands and cubes (See Image A), categorizing their secret word or phrase into smaller and smaller groups in order for the players to guess it.

Concept comes with one board that is filled with all sorts of images, numbers, colors, and shapes (See Image A). The board is laid out in the middle of the table and then the colored plastic stands need to be lined up beside the board, the matching

colored cubes clustered behind them. The clue giver draws a card from the stack and chooses one of the nine options (See Image B). For the major concept or category of the clue giver's word or phrase, the clue giver identifies it on the board using the large, green stand that resembles a question mark (See Image C). By narrowing down their word or phrase to a major concept, the clue giver helps the guessers get "in the ballpark."

> [P]laying board games in the classroom teaches civility and reinforces a non-judgmental learning environment. Students learn to relax and feel comfortable knowing that they can explore new concepts without fear of making a mistake.

I teach classification as a writing mode before introducing the game because it is vital for the clue giver to categorize their word or phrase into the major concept as well as the smaller, more specific details. I find that my students understand the game better when they have the big picture of what they are expected to do as well as a game plan of how to execute their clues. At this point, I remind students about the basic organization of an essay: thesis or main point followed by supporting points and then examples and details. The thesis is represented by the large, green question mark stand. Then the supporting points are represented by four colored exclamation point stands (blue, red, yellow, and black). The examples and details are represented by matching colored cubes but should only be placed on the board if they match the color of the exclamation point stand (essentially the cubes are in the same category as the larger concept).

For example, if I choose the word "giraffe," I would place the large, green stand on the image with various animals pictured. By doing that, I signal to the other players that my word is probably an animal and not in any other obvious category like "movie" or "person" or "building." After I identify my major concept using the green stand, I would place a yellow stand, for instance, on the mouth image and then a yellow cube on the leaf image. With this play, I am attempting to show that this animal eats plants by categorizing the mouth as a larger topic and identifying the food that goes into the mouth as the subtopic: plants. Next, I would place a red stand, for instance, on the yellow image and then all the red cubes on the brown

image to symbolize that the base color of my animal is yellow with lots of brown spots. Hopefully, by this point, the players have guessed "giraffe," but if they haven't, I keep giving clues in real time while they shout out guesses. I might use the black stand, for instance, to reflect how long a giraffe's neck is by placing it on the "up and down" arrow to show the height of my animal. Then I might stack any remaining black cubes, one on top of the other, near the black stand to reflect a more specific attribute of my animal: the neck.

Sometimes it takes several rounds for students to "get the hang of it," using trial and error to figure out how to give more effective and creative clues. In "Bringing Play Back into the Classroom," Mary Bendixen-Noe asserts that "play is indeed an important element of learning" (14). Furthermore, a big part of play includes failure. While many students fear making mistakes in their academic work, I find that games grant permission to fail. I try to de-stigmatize mistakes by encouraging everyone to blurt out ideas and build on the current momentum, which at times might seem off topic. I play alongside everyone, coaching players and the clue giver so that students feel comfortable talking out loud, asserting their thoughts, and changing their minds.

While we play, I remind students of the importance of using the large, green question mark stand for the major concept and then strategically placing the other colored exclamation point stands for supporting ideas/points that give us equal but helpful hints about the clue giver's word or phrase. Lastly, I usually have to remind students that cubes can't just be thrown out without rhyme or reason: They have to connect back to a larger point and fit into the big picture. Sometimes students want to put random cubes on every clue without connecting them to any larger, supporting ideas. I encourage them to think from the top down, essentially teaching how to organize an academic essay through game play. Every choice they make requires thoughtful structure and organization. However, we don't always get the right answer in our first try. And I remind them that that's okay, too. It's more about the process of learning how to categorize and understand someone's chosen organizational structure.

The best part about using Concept in the classroom is that it is essentially a team game. The moment one clue hits the board, the players begin guessing. The guessing happens in real time until the players guess the secret word or phrase. Each guess builds off the previous one, encouraging the guessers to listen to one another's guesses. Also, the clue giver has to listen carefully to the guesses to judge if they are leading their team closer or further away from the answer. If they think the players have misinterpreted a clue, the clue giver can just remove that clue from the board to represent, "Hey, forget about that." For example, a clue giver with the secret word "Aquaman" could move an exclamation point stand from the royalty image (intended to represent a leader of the people) to the weapon image (intended to reflect the trident that Aquaman carries) or remove the stand from the board altogether. Players understand not to pursue removed or replaced clues any further.

Teaching Concept in my English classroom is one of the few games that does not require language or spelling to play, which makes it less intimidating to students, as well. The bolder students who want to be clue giver first allow other students who need to see an example before giving it a try to watch and learn. Overall, whether students find themselves on the clue giving or the guessing side of the game, Concept allows students a chance to apply their knowledge of classification and organization in a comfortable and engaging atmosphere. Also, there are no "losers," so students relax somewhat when they realize they are all on the same team. Most importantly, "through play, [students] develop a more positive attitude toward the learning process" (Bendixen-Noe 13). I can't think of a better experience for students than play in the classroom to solidify concepts.

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Recommended Readings/Viewings

Concept How to Play. Ultra Board Games. https://www.ultraboardgames.com/concept/game-rules.php.

Concept Instructional Video. Asmodee/Repos Games. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjGrbVNGHS8.

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Ideas and Insights from the TYCA National Conference:

A Discussion

Thursday, April 15, 2021, 3:00-4:00 pm PST

Zoom

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