

INTERACTION TWO: TEACHING PRACTICES

The second interaction of the Peer Review Program is to analyze your teaching practices to make sure they help you achieve your goals and objectives for the course. This interaction is actually a series of interactions: three class visits, each involving a preparatory memo, a response memo from your partner, discussion with your partner and mentor, and a subsequent follow-up memo.

Preparatory Memos:

Before your partner visits your class, provide him or her with information that will help him or her give you the most useful feedback:

- what teaching methods (eg lecture, group work, question/answer, student presentation) will you be using the day of the class visit?
- what is your rationale for using those methods?
- what are your objectives for that day in particular?
- how do those objectives relate to your overall course objectives?
- what problems / challenges have you been experiencing or do you anticipate?
- what do you think is best about how the course is going so far?
- what activities will students engage in during the day of the class visit?
- what do you hope students will gain from those activities?
- how will you assess whether the activities did what you wanted?
- what are your expectations of students prior to entering the classroom? (readings? homework activities or questions? independent writing? independent research? other?)
- are there specific things you want your partner to look for or attend to when visiting your class?

Class Visits:

Having received your partner's preparatory memo, visit her or his class with her or his objectives, concerns, and hopes in mind. Watch both your faculty partner and also the students, and take notes on things you think are effective in the way the class goes, as well as things you think could be improved.

Class visits should be completed according to the following schedule:

First visit in January (followed quickly by post-visit memo and discussion)

Second visit in February (followed quickly by post-visit memo and discussion)

Third visit in March (followed quickly by post-visit memo and discussion)

Post-Visit Memos:

After visiting your partner's class, write a memo that describes the course as you saw it. Keeping in mind your partner's pedagogical goals and aspirations for student learning, what did you think worked best to achieve those goals? What constructive advice do you have to better achieve those goals? Offer responses to any specific questions, or address any specific issues, that your partner asked about particularly. Also alert your partner to anything you think would be important to their teaching that they might not know about – from things like a classroom blind spot (the teacher not noticing a student in the far corner wanting to speak) to pre-class chatter about preparedness, to knowing whether the whispers in back were students helping, harassing, or distracting one another.

Post-visit memos should be completed as quickly as possible; certainly within a week of the visit.

Discussion:

Meet with your partner and mentor to discuss the class visit, and the observations of the visiting partner.

Discussions should occur before the next class visit.

Follow-up Memos:

Write a brief response to your partner (cc'ing your mentor and the program coordinator). Reflect on what your partner observed, discuss points of agreement or divergence in the way you thought the class went and what your partner observed, and explain any changes you plan to make to your teaching, class activities, or assignments.

Follow-up memos should be completed as quickly as possible; certainly before the next class visit.