

Editing and Revision Exercise

Exercise:

Students sign up for a day to bring in a 2-page sample of writing (samples can be of students' choosing, and can have been written for a different class). Students must bring enough copies for the whole class the period before their date. Classmates should read through the texts in full before the next class so that class can commence with line by line deconstruction. On the day of the class, students have the opportunity to preface their papers with very brief remarks, such as describing what the paper assignment was, what the student had difficulty with, or how many drafts the paper had been through. Students will have the option of reading aloud or having the paper read aloud by someone else. Students may elect to have instructor read. Line-by-line approach is used to deconstruct the grammatical structures. Line editing helps keep the focus on grammar and usage, rather than higher-ordered concerns. Peers would be encouraged to mark up their copies of the papers and would be given a couple minutes to write end notes. All copies would be returned to the student (whose sample it was) at the end, for use in their continuing assignments.

Context:

This exercise would come in the second half of the semester, and in the context of writing exercises that focus on how grammar informs style, and how grammatical structure can be a source of power and control for the writer. Before student papers are reviewed, a model lesson would be planned that addresses two samples of writing. Both pieces would be from instructors in the department (not of too personal a nature). Students would not be told this until after the assignment. This is to demonstrate to students that everyone has room for improvement, regardless of level of education.

Continuation:

Students would be to do two follow-up assignments:

1. To write a 2-page reflection of their experiences with the exercise. Papers would address what students thought of the assignment, what they got out of the experience, whether or not it was valuable and why, how they felt about the comments of their peers, how they felt about the atmosphere of the classroom (whether it was comfortable, safe, nurturing, threatening, whether the student felt respected, attacked, etc.).
2. To rewrite the paper sample, incorporating, if they chose to, anything gleaned from the editing workshop. The rewrite would be accompanied by a 1-page statement justifying the changes that were, or weren't, made.