

Chapter 3

The Peer Power Framework

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“What we’ve discovered is that formative peer assessment, where students are helping each other to improve their work has benefits for the person who receives feedback but also has benefits for the person who gives feedback.”

–Dylan Wiliam (Lamb, 2014)

OUR GOAL IS FOR *YOU* and your *team* to be #PeerPower Revolutionaries! So, cultivating and growing empowered learners through the self- and peer assessment process is vital for learners to feel that they are making a contribution to building a classroom learning culture. When teachers explicitly teach students to self- and peer assess, students become empowered to drive their own learning. Putting students in the driver’s seat sends a loud, clear message that we trust them and that we believe in them. My mentor, Mimi Aronson, always said that if we listen to students and trust them, they will always lead the way. Without further ado, we are about to dig into the six-stage Peer Power Framework.

The Power of a Peer Coach

Our aim is for students to coach each other in the learning process. Our role is vital because we have to coach student partnerships and groups to have quality academic conversations grounded in valid and reliable feedback. When we create structures for students to coach each other, we create conditions for them to see each other as a valuable resource. In addition, when students coach each other we increase their engagement in the learning process. Hattie and Clarke (2019) discuss enhancing peer feedback through peer coaching by describing four principles of cooperative learning outlined by Slavin, Hurley, and Chamberlain (2003). These principles maximize peer-to-peer feedback.

1. **Motivation:** Students support their peers because it is in their own best interest to do so. Keep in mind that the expectations for cooperative learning must be well structured and taught. When students are motivated, it leads to greater effort.
2. **Social cohesion:** Students help each other because they care about their partners or group. When students feel they are contributing to one another in a positive way it leads to greater effort.
3. **Personalization:** Higher-achieving students help lower-achieving students and vice versa. This personalization ensures that students are working at their zone of proximal development.
4. **Cognitive elaboration:** Requiring students to elaborate and justify their thinking forces students to think more clearly. It also helps them to consolidate their own understanding.

The Phases of Self & Peer Assessment

Black and Wiliam (1998) describes the importance of training students in self-assessment: “If formative assessment is to be productive, students should be trained in self-assessment so that they can understand the main purposes of the learning and thereby grasp what they need to do to achieve.” We have found that when teachers abandon self- and peer assessment, it is typically because

they have not taught the students strategies to be successful. In addition, self- and peer assessment requires a lot of practice, so it must be a ritual embedded into classroom culture. With extensive practice and feedback, students get better at co-constructing learning intentions and success criteria, giving and receiving feedback aligned to criteria, activating each other as a resource when they are in the learning zone, and using descriptive feedback to revise their work and/or thinking. Rolheiser and Ross (2001) describe a four-stage model for teaching students to self-assess:

- Define together with students the criteria that will be used to assess the learning.
- Teach students to apply the criteria.
- Give students feedback on the quality of their self-assessments.
- Help students develop individual learning goals and specific action plans.

We have adapted this four-stage framework by adding two extra stages, in an effort to give students extra scaffolding when teaching the peer assessment process. We have found that students need explicit modeling on how to peer assess, so we recommend adopting a peer assessment protocol (Glow and Grow, TAG, Ladder of Feedback, Critique Protocol) to expand peer-to-peer feedback. In addition, we included another stage regarding strategic revision. When students receive feedback from a partner or teacher, they must think about the feedback and then make a strategic decision about revision. In other words, students must actually use the feedback (aligned to the success criteria) from their self- and peer assessment(s) to revise their work and set personal learning goals. Modeling peer assessment, strategic revision, and goal setting for students is essential to be a true #PeerPower Revolutionary.

Gradual Release of Responsibility

Each phase of the Peer Power Framework leverages the gradual release of responsibility. The goal of the gradual release of responsibility model suggests that cognitive work should shift slowly and intentionally from explicit modeling, to joint respon-

sibility between teachers and students, to independent practice and application by the learner (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983a). Each phase will require explicit modeling and will require the teacher to think aloud while teaching each process. You will gradually release the responsibility to the students and then “amp up” descriptive feedback as you continue to coach students through the process. Throughout the rest of this chapter, we will unpack the six phases of peer assessment.

The Peer Power Feedback Framework

Phase 1: Define Success Criteria Through Co-Construction

Phase 2: Apply and Practice Using the Success Criteria

Phase 3: Teach and Model Peer-to-Peer Feedback

Phase 4: Provide Feedback on Feedback

Phase 5: Leverage Strategic Revision

Phase 6: Set, Monitor, and Celebrate CLEAR Learning Goals

The six phases are not quite linear. Many times, after we co-construct success criteria, we often return to co-construction as we refine our understanding about what “success” looks like. As soon as students are clear about the success criteria they can begin moving through the phases. Keep in mind that even when they are moving through the peer review process they can go back and refine and revise the success criteria, especially if there are some key things that they discover as they learn more about the concepts and skills. Feedback is unleashed throughout the process as well. Feedback is ongoing and critical for peer assessment success. Ultimately, students can be moving in and out of the Peer Power phases based on what they need.

The Peer Power Feedback Framework Unpacked

Let’s explore the six phases of peer assessment. There are videos in our online resources that will help to illustrate key phases within our framework.