Orienting Students to a Writing Checklist

Roundtable Exercise

1. **Prepare students for the exercise.** Arrange students into small groups of three or four. Instruct each student to take out a pencil or pen. Ask someone in the group to supply one sheet of paper for the entire group. Or, students can each take out an electronic device and prepare a Google doc or a similar electronic tool for making a collaborative, synchronous list.

2. **Provide an activity overview.** Tell students they will participate in a group activity:

   a) Your group will make a bulleted or numbered list in response to a prompt I will give you shortly.

   b) When responding to the prompt, each of you will enter one to three words each time it is your turn. Avoid sentences; list should include brief items.

   c) Pass the paper around in a clockwise fashion or make online entries when it is your turn to add an item. Read the items before writing yours to eliminate duplications.

   d) If at some point you are out of ideas when it is your turn, you can say "pass."

   e) You have ___ minutes for this activity. *[Give students a timeframe of six to ten minutes.]*

3. **Make a group list.** Once students prepare their materials or electronic devices, issue this prompt: **"What does a strong _____ include? Remember to include what contributes to good writing in general, too."** *[Replace blank with the specific genre that is the focus for your unit.]*

4. **Report out.** When time is called, each group reports out one line item at a time that you record on chart paper, whiteboard, or interactive whiteboard.

5. **Review the class-generated list.** As a class, review the class-generated list. Examine it and do any or all of the following:

   a) Invite individuals to add any items a group might not have offered.

   b) Combine items.

   c) Categorize items and add subheadings to the list.

   d) Delete unnecessary or incorrect items.

After the Roundtable Exercise

6. **Cross-reference the class list with prepared checklist.** Distribute the teacher-prepared checklist to each student. Instruct groups to do a one-to-one correspondence to check what items on the class-generated list (see #3) match those items on the distributed checklist. Groups do the following:

   a) Check off matching items.

   b) Add missing items to the teacher-prepared checklist.

7. **Consider adding items.** Discuss as a class if the matching items contribute to an effective piece of writing. If students recommend adding any items that were omitted, discuss why they are worthy of being included. If so, add them.

8. **Assess writing models.** You might elect for students to examine a student sample and assess it against the checklist. Discuss to what degree the writer satisfies key points on the checklist.

9. **Distribute checklist.** Give students a clean copy of the checklist to keep in their writing folders to use as a guide while writing or provide an electronic version.

10. **Use the checklist throughout instruction.** Focus on discrete or a combination of line items as the basis for a lesson. Use the checklist and associated guiding questions to set the purpose for learning.