**THE TALKING CIRCLE**

**Problem:** Peer Reviews were not as productive as desired. Was there a better way for students to engage with their peers about their writing ideas and research?

**Experiment:** The Talking Circle Workshop: Students will share ideas and reflections with their talking circle. (Consider TC as their discursive space.) Discussion will focus on observations, examples and development of ideas. Collectively, the circle will gather ideas and weave together a recap for the class.

**The Art of Communication:** The talking circle

Communication in Native American culture is quite different than the "usual" American competitive-style communication. Their style values cooperation over competition, reflective of many areas in their lives. When many Native Americans engage in conversation they listen intently, usually looking down and not establishing eye contact, until the person speaking is completely finished talking. Then the other person talks and fully expects to be able to completely finish their thought without interruption or before the conversation turns to another person.


**1ST ASSIGNMENT using Talking Circle** for short report.

**Arts & the Workforce** Focus of this writing assignment: You will mine the essay for an idea that you can research and illustrate with example(s). You will research more sources than you will actually use in a short report. This allows you to develop your expertise on the topic. You will draft your ideas before you complete a short report that concentrates on your single, clearly stated main idea that you support with examples.

**Talking Circle I**
1. Read the essay and annotate as you read.
2. Prepare for your talking circle discussion by writing your answers to the following questions:
   a. What is the essay’s main idea? What are the ideas/evidence that the author provides to support his main idea?
   b. Review the essay a 2nd time to answer these questions:
      i. What idea(s) did you find surprising? Why
      ii. What points did you think were the most significant? Why?
      iii. What ideas/statements did you question? What did you think differently?
   c. In class you will discuss your reactions and ideas with your talking circle to help you crystalize your thinking.
3. Each circle reports back to class on their ideas and discoveries.

**Talking Circle II**
4. Select an idea from the essay that you find interesting – create 3-5 researchable questions.
   a. Explore 5-7 sources on your idea. Read and take notes. Make sure you reflect on sources - do not just regurgitate or copy source material!
   b. Write one page brief on you ideas to discuss with your circle.

For longer essays: Talking Circles shared ‘writing from middle’ ideas and strategies for paper; critiqued introductions...etc.

**RESULTS AND DISCOVERIES**

**Student Feedback:** Positive. Found others ideas interesting. Felt comfortable sharing suggestions. Liked hearing ideas and viewpoints about work from peers. Felt they got more out of circle than they would from peer reviews.

**My Observations:** By the 3rd essay, I did not have to give instructions. They recognized the pattern and knew what to do. Conversations stayed focused on listening and offering support/suggestions. Most often they acted as consultants to each other. They liked doing a Brief first - rather than draft essay. Brief made it easier to talk about ideas...and took the ‘gotta write an essay’ pressure off, so they could think better.

**AND**
A) This Gen of writers likes instant feedback on whatever they do...the Talking Circle does just that...they get instant feedback. B) Talking their ideas out loud gives them more confidence to pursue those ideas...without Prof critique.

*My Real Inspiration came from *My Life on the Road* by Gloria Steinem (pg 36-37) where she discovered the phenomenon.*