

Week 3: Pedagogy Worksheet

Name: _____

1. Use the paired reading protocol to read the handout about the ‘Communication Triangle.’
2. Successful use of the communication triangle puts the student in the role of an expert who is addressing someone who knows less than they do about the topic. Here is an example of a science prompt created using the Communication Triangle:’

You are a mining geologist exploring for feldspar and quartz to use for making glassware. You assure your investors that you can easily distinguish the two minerals because feldspar has cleavage and quartz does not. Your investors have a lot of money, but don’t know anything about minerals. They insist that you write up a brief memo explaining (a) what cleavage is, (b) how you will recognize it, and (c) what causes it to form in feldspar but not in quartz.

In this example the Student Writer’s role is that of a mining geologist, the writer’s audience is a group of investors, and the form of writing is a memo.

Use the Communication Triangle to construct a writing prompt about mineral resources. The purpose of your prompt is to create a scenario where the student writer would be required to write about at least two examples of minerals used to make products in one of the categories from p.34, (the writing should include why those minerals belong to that category).

3. Which norm were you assigned to work on today? (*circle one*)
paraphrasing pausing probing for specificity presuming positive intentions

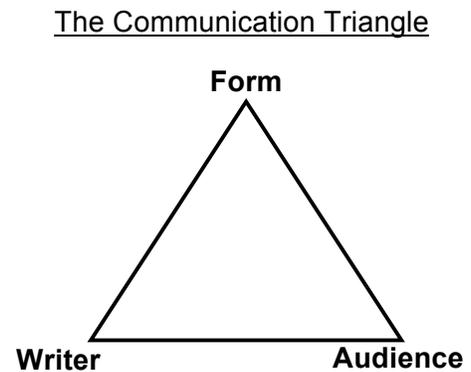
Reread what the purpose of your norm is (see the handout you read).

How did you do?	
What worked and what didn’t work as you tried to apply this norm?	
Did it help, hinder, or have no effect on productive group work? (clarify)	

The Communication Triangle

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The Communication Triangle is a visual tool for structuring writing prompts. The points of the Communication Triangle represent three aspects of writing to consider when attempting to increase student engagement in the writing. By adjusting the variables of the Communication Triangle (the role of the student writer, the form of writing, and the audience) teachers can present students with more engaging situations that increase student motivation to write, and makes student thinking more evident.



One point on the Communication Triangle represents the **writer**. This reminds us to be attentive to the role we are assigning the writer. Most writing tasks in school science can be described as “novice to expert” type writing tasks. The novice to expert task generates depressed responses in students. It puts the student in the position of a novice trying to provide an answer to an expert (the teacher) who will determine its level of correctness. The novice has to take a risk in answering the question. When faced with this type of task students are reluctant to risk much. The act of answering basically becomes a guessing game in which the student tries to guess what the teacher will accept as the answer.

By using the Communication Triangle you can free students of the novice to expert scenario. You can assign them a more expert role or a role that has a perspective from which to write. Students might be assigned roles as writers that can be that of – scientists, concerned citizen, parent, knowledgeable friend, spokes person, legislator, chairperson, doctor, researcher, etc.

A second point on the Communication Triangle represents the **audience**, who the writer is writing to. The concept of the novice to expert response is germane here as well. If we do not identify to whom the writer (student) is writing to then by default they are writing to the teacher (expert) and the likelihood of a diminished response is increased.

The third point of the Communication Triangle represents the **form** that the writing will take. Will it be argumentative where one is trying to make or defend a point, position, or perspective? Or will it be explanatory where one is uncovering reasoning and using evidence to substantiate that reasoning? Additionally, the writing can be in the form of a letter, newspaper article, email, memo, testimony, dialogue, or other written mode of communication. Assigning a form for the writing to conform to aids in scaffolding the writing task because it provides students with a model or structure to emulate when writing.