Challenge #6: My students do their work for the most part, but they don't take much ownership of it.

TRY THIS: DESIGN A CRITIQUE LESSON THAT INVITES OWNERSHIP, INQUIRY, AND UNDERSTANDING

Of all the feedback we've received from teachers since the publication of *Leaders of Their Own Learning*, among the most frequent is that it's hard to facilitate effective critique lessons that motivate all students to do high-quality work. Our most viewed video, with millions of views, is *Austin's Butterfly*, which illustrates Ron Berger's critique lesson with elementary school students discussing a first-grader's progress on his scientific illustration of a butterfly: https://eleducation.org/resources/austins-butterfly.

A good critique lesson is empowering for students: it amplifies students' voices and unique perspectives and honors their membership in a community of creative experts. You don't want to spoon-feed your own critique to your students. You want to get them involved. A lesson that engages every student in looking deeply at the model and sharing their insights will ratchet up students' ownership of the lesson and their commitment to using their learning to improve their own work.

The respectful and strategic teacher-student dialogue of a good critique lesson is perhaps the hardest thing to master. For example, when students critique a model, it's fine to slightly reword student comments to make them more clear and useful. When a student offers a grain of something important, build on it yourself (e.g., "Jalen, what I hear you saying is that the opening grabs you – has a good hook – is that right? That is an important observation! I'll write that on our anchor chart."). If students notice that Anton has used an especially efficient strategy in a math problem, label that "Anton's approach." Forever afterward, the suggestion to "try Anton's approach" will make Anton beam with pride, and it will be a shorthand way for other students to easily remember the strategy. Also, if students have missed something important in the work that you wish they would address, bring it up yourself as a question and prompt them to name it (e.g., "Did any of you notice what Madison did here in this part. . .?"). Table 4.3 shows sample sentence stems for various purposes during a critique. The table is in no way

Table 4.3 Sentence stems for encouraging engaging critique lessons

Purpose	Sample Sentence Stems
To restate a student's comment using more precise language or vocabulary	• Destiny, what I hear you saying is that. . . • Chris, am I correct in saying that you are suggesting. . . • Karina, there is a scientific word for exactly what you are describing. It is. . . • Terrific, Aidan! In English grammar we call that a. . .
To engage a particular student or make a student feel proud	• Sergio, what do you think about what she did in this section. . . • Wow, I was so impressed with the improvement by. . . • We saw this same good idea from Jalen last week. . . • We could call this "Kristina's Strategy." • Brianne, your eye is so sharp! Can you say more about. . .
To ensure a point is made that students haven't yet made themselves	• Your comments made me think of. . .. • Great! Another feature we could name is. . . • I love these observations! I want to add. . . • There is one more thing we all need to consider. . .

complete; we encourage you to add to it with your own favorite phrasing that will work best for you and your students.

The best way to build understanding and ownership with students is to ask them questions that invite them to examine the model like real investigators. A lesson that ignites curiosity and students' "need to know" engages students because they understand that in order to do their own work, they need to understand how the model represents quality, and in what dimensions. Model-dependent questions – questions that push students to identify the exact words or numbers or features of the model that show an answer to the question – are key. It's also important that all students feel accountable to probing the model and answering the questions. By summarizing the strategies that students notice on an anchor chart along the way, you also create a helpful resource for students to refer back to as they do their own work. Video Spotlight 4.6 features two videos that illuminate the power of critique lessons.

Video Spotlight 4.6: (a) A Group Critique Lesson
https://vimeo.com/44053703

(b) Ron Berger: Teachers as Learners
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulG65R6hH6Y&app=desktop

In the first video, Ron Berger leads an in-depth critique lesson with third-grade students from Presumpscot Elementary School in Portland, Maine. With guidance from Berger, students use a piece of student writing as a model from which to identify criteria for a quality story.

In the second video, filmed at High Tech High in San Diego, Berger is interviewed about the power of models and critique and the importance of a safe classroom culture for critique. This video was produced by High Tech High.

Video Reflection Questions
1. What phrases and questions did you hear Ron Berger use in the first lesson that caused students to become enthusiastically engaged in dissecting this piece of writing.
2. How would you describe the role that the model played in the critique lesson in the first video? How might the critique lesson have been different if students had been reading a published story (i.e., not written by another student)?
3. Did the interview with Ron Berger in the second video make you think differently about the use of models in school? Describe any insights you may have had.

TRY THIS: USE A CRITERIA LIST INSTEAD OF A RUBRIC

Sometimes a critique lesson is an excellent launch pad for creating a rubric with students. Connecting the rubric criteria explicitly to the points elicited during the critique lesson will significantly increase student understanding of and engagement with the rubric. However, much of the work in creating a rubric is spent in the time-consuming details of creating the gradations of partial success (i.e., what distinguishes the category "exceeding expectations" from "meets," "approaching," and "not yet"). Often there is no need to involve students in that work, and it is not the best use of their time. Indeed, if what you need is a list of features that represent good work in that genre in order to guide students to create high-quality work, a rubric may not be needed at all. Creating a criteria list is simpler, clearer, and more feasible. A criteria list is basically the highest column on a rubric – the "exceeding expectations" category.

When analyzing models of student work, creating a list of the strong qualities gleaned from the examples is what builds that criteria list. It can be posted on a chart or turned into a print or digital document that students can use as they work. It is not usually as simple as a checklist – though checklists are also useful – because the criteria may be nuanced and require judgment or discussion (e.g., while a checklist may say "bibliography includes at least five sources," a criteria list for a quality bibliography may have descriptors such as "balances primary and secondary sources," "gives evidence for the credibility of online sources," "uses sources that the professionals in the field use").

There is also a hybrid version of the criteria list/rubric, as in Figure 4.8, a Public Service Announcement (PSA) criteria list, which also functions as a rubric. Students found their original rubric, which spelled out all levels of success, to be unwieldy, with too many criteria and too many gradations of quality. As a result, their teacher instead decided to illuminate the same criteria for quality through precisely worded learning targets that are closely connected to their required writing standards. Teachers shared this tool with students early in the project as they unpacked the learning targets. Students then used it as a reflection tool and to guide their peer critique during successive drafts when writing their arguments.

Figure 4.8   Social activism PSA criteria list with learning targets from Irving A. Robbins Middle School in Farmington, Connecticut
SOURCE: This document is available in the online toolbox at http://www.wiley.com/go/lotolcompanion.

Standards and Corresponding Criteria		Evidence	E	M	N	B
STANDARD *Research and Inquiry* **Score:**	**LEARNING TARGETS** **I can** conduct a short research project to answer questions (including self-generated questions).	**Generating Questions**				
	I can draw on multiple sources to focus my inquiry.	**Research Notes** **Works Cited**				
STANDARD *Speaking and Listening* **Score:**	**I can** integrate multimedia and visual displays into a presentation to clarify information and add interest.	**PSA**				
	I can present a memorable concept which emphasizes key points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, valid reasoning, and well-chosen details.	**PSA**				
STANDARD *Speaking and Listening* **Score:**	**I can** deliver the presentation with appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.	**Presentation**				
	I can present the problem clearly by emphasizing the key points and well-chosen details with valid reasoning.	**Presentation**				
Feedback:						

Exceeds 95 +   **Meets** 90. . .85. . .80   **Near** 75. . .70   **Below** 65. . .60   **Lacking** 50

Created by Bonnie Frascadore, English language arts teacher, Irving A. Robbins Middle School