Read-Around-Groups: Real-World Peer Models

(adapted from Kelly Gallagher’s *Teaching Adolescent Writers)*

**Rules for RAGs**

1. Students bring clean typed drafts of their papers to the RAGS. They do not put their names on the paper. Instead, they write their student ID number at the top of their papers.
2. Prior to class, have students arranged in groups of 4-5. The papers are collected in one pile for each group. It is better to mix up writing skill level students so that you have strong and struggling writers in the same groups.
3. At the start, on the teacher’s signal, the papers are passed from one group to the next. Students DO NOT read papers by members of their own group. Each student receives one paper from the pile passed from another group, and reads it for one minute. Not all students will finish all papers, but in one minute they have an opportunity to get a strong feel for the paper.
4. At the teacher’s signal after the one minute is up, students pass the papers clockwise *within* the groups. Each student now has a new paper and has one minute to read that paper. This process is continued until everyone in the group has read all four or five papers.
5. Once everyone in the group has read the set, each group is charged with the task of determining which paper is the “most effective.” They have 2 minutes as a group to do so. The hope is that this will produce discussion, because it is through this discussion that students think deeply about the merits of good writing.
6. One student in each group is designated as the recorder. The recorder student writes down the student ID number at the top of the page of the ‘most effectively written’ paper in that batch of 4-5.
7. Once the number is recorded, the group then passes the entire batch of 4-5 papers over to the next group, receive a new set of papers, and the process repeats itself. This is continued until all students have read all papers. Remember, each group is not to score their own papers.

Once these seven steps are complete, the teacher asks the recorders for the numbers of the “most effective” papers for each round, and charts them on the board for all the students to see. Generally, two or three papers in the class will receive the most votes. These papers are then read aloud by the teacher (again, no names are identified). As they are being read, students need to individually take bullet point notes as to what makes these papers the “most effective.” The lesson is completed by students sharing their bullet notes through a whole class discussion, thus giving everyone a clear idea of what features made these good essays.

\*\*Some additional tips for RAGs: this process is more beneficial to students if they do them *before* their final drafts are due. This will give them the opportunity to implement the discovered features into their own writing. It can also be helpful to collect the clean drafts of the essays the day before placing student in RAGs—this makes it easier to determine the groups ahead of time.