Collaborative Writing Activity

This activity is an amended version of an online shared writing activity created by Tawny LeBouef Tullia. She envisioned this project as a way of creating community in online spaces. I have reformulated it a bit to work with small groups in a face-to-face setting.

The basic idea is to create a group narrative by each person adding something to the text. It combines storytelling with collaboration. This can be used as a community-building exercise or even as a way of discussing multi-voiced narratives. It functions both as a way of helping students connect with each other and to negotiate meaning collaboratively.

Here is how the assignment works.

1. Create small groups of no more than four people. (Three person groups are better, but do not have more than four.)
2. Each group will be given a writing prompt. You can choose to give the entire class a single writing prompt or give each group their own writing prompt. However you use reflects your overall pedagogical goal in this project. Some examples of prompts to use in the feminist classroom could be “Experience is the best teacher because...,” “How would you define identity...,” or as simple as “What was the most important aspect of the readings.”
3. One person in each group will freewrite for a short period of time (two-five minutes). It is important to note the freewriting is a process that requires the writer not to edit as they write, but just keep writing even if they are struggling with ideas. Please explain to students (or participants) that the freewriting they complete is not a traditional freewriting experience because they will be sharing their work with the group.
4. Then the paper is passed to the next person, who will read receive a minute or two to read what is written and then write for two-five minutes. Then, the person passes it to the next person, etc.
5. Once all group members have completed the writing, then the group will read the completed project and make revisions as a group. This creation of a revised version of the
essay may take up to 10 minutes or more, so be sure to leave enough time to complete this part of the activity.

6. Once the group members decide on what they have to say together, they will then share their revised essay (or excerpts from it) with the entire class. This is a crucial step, as it shows both a connection in small groups and a connection with the entire class.

7. Don’t forget to ask the students what they thought of the exercise.