Group critique directions

This is a procedure I have used with many grade levels. It is important that all student names be on the back of the artwork for this to be successful.

I begin by posting all student work to be critiqued in a place where all student work may be viewed easily-i.e., the whiteboard. Masking tape is usually used to accomplish this. Allow time for students to help with this, or do it yourself before they arrive.

Next, I lead a group discussion of the elements and principles of the art, then we narrow it down to the specifics of the project. What were the objectives of the project? What did I specifically tell the students they needed to include to get an "A"? This is discussed at length, and I write these on the board as we agree on what these are.

We take each objective individually, and we separate from the group the projects which we agree have not reached that objective- still in view , but off to the side. Gradually we eliminate the ones who have not reached the objectives. This leaves only the "A" projects- in theory. Of course there is much debate as to what "accomplishing the objective" is. Here is where the students learn the value of a group critique! Is grading art strictly subjective? Can one objectively grade art?

We then agree on the B's, including B+ and B-, and continue to do this for the C's and the D's, and what constitutes a grade of "F".

I do not tell the students at the beginning when the project is assigned that they will be evaluated in this way, nor do I attempt to grade every assignment in this way!

Be prepared to take some time for this. If it went too quickly, the students probably were not actively engaged in looking at the work.

I have found this method to be extremely effective when trying to get students to be reflective thinkers, and self-evaluate. If they can see how others might view their work, then they may begin to see what changes they can make to improve their own artwork.