

Enriching Student Learning through Writing Feedback



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Writing Centers of
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Workshop Goals

1

Establish the relationship between writing and critical thinking

2

Conceptualize writing as a process

3

Explain strategies for providing feedback

- incorporating writing into teaching
- commenting on student writing
- prioritizing feedback to guide revision



Why Should Students Write?



The amount of writing involved in a course is directly related to the amount of student engagement (Light, 2001)

Writing and related activities encourage critical thinking and bolster disciplinary knowledge (Bean, 2011)

Incorporate Writing Tasks into Your Teaching

Formal academic writing assignments

Low-stakes writing tasks (graded or non-graded)

- In-class guided writing
- In-class free writing (reflective, etc.)

Writing in alternative genres or styles

- Blogs
- Op-ed pieces
- Interviews
- Web pages





Why Give Feedback?

Determine your purpose

- Are you seeking to justify the grade you've given?
- Are you trying to help students improve their skills?

If you see writing as a process, the feedback will help students improve their skills.

Emphasize Writing as a Process, Not a Product



- Discuss writing as a process
- Have students submit writing beyond a final draft (prewriting, early drafts, etc.), preferably early on
- Devote class time for students to discuss their ideas with one another through brainstorming and peer review workshops
- Share your own writing process and even early drafts of your own writing



Supporting Writers Through Feedback

Provide feedback throughout the writing process

- Giving feedback early in the writing process is more productive than “correcting” final drafts
- Shift the labor from time spent grading to time spent conferencing/commenting before students submit papers.
- Incorporate opportunities for feedback from different sources (instructor, peers, writing center if available)
- Allow rewrites

Position yourself as a reader and respond to students’ writing

- Act as a “coach” during the writing process (Bean, 2011, p. 314)
- Example: “The introduction clearly explains the background of this issue, but I had trouble finding your thesis. A reader would need a clearer statement of your argument.”
- Use written/verbal comments as correspondence/conversation with students



Supporting Writers Through Feedback

Comment on strengths rather than only focusing on errors

- Help students understand not only what needs improvement but also what is effective in their writing

Be specific

- Example: Instead of “unclear,” write, “I had trouble following this passage because you didn’t define your terms”

Use marginal and end comments

- Develop a comment bank
- End comments: Address strengths, limited number of problems, and advice for revision (Bean, 2011).

Do not overwhelm students with feedback

- Resist the urge to comment on everything
- Strategically choose themes to focus on



HOCs and LOCs

Prioritize higher-order concerns (HOCs) over lower-order concerns (LOCs)
(McAndrew & Registad, 2001)

If student writing needs major revision of HOCs, it is too early to focus on LOCs; doing so won't help them make the necessary revisions.

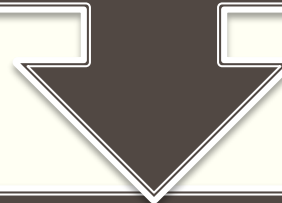
| | |
|------|--|
| HOCs | Major or global issues such as thesis, argumentation, and organization |
|------|--|

| | |
|------|--|
| LOCs | Minor or local issues such as grammar and mechanics. |
|------|--|



Identify Patterns of Error

Identifying patterns of error is effective for higher order concerns (HOCs) and lower order concerns (LOCs), **but it can be particularly effective for LOCs.**



Rather than try to identify every grammar or punctuation error, focus on patterns of error.

This will allow you to point out one or two examples of the error, explain what the error is, and provide a possible correction. Then, you can encourage the student to review the document and identify on their own any other places where this type of error occurs and make the necessary corrections.



Strategy for Feedback: Praise, Question, Wish



Praise

Example Comment: I really liked that you talked about "balance between basic self-knowledge and self-care." That is always a tough boundary to tread, and both kids and adults could learn much from your story about dealing in that gray area between the two.



Question

Example Comment: As you reader, I want to hear more about this "balance." What are some examples of this dynamic? I ask this because you make the statement and then move on to another subject.



Wish

Example Comment: Consider taking a minute to talk about what you mean. You can even tell a story to illustrate this "balance" you talk about. This will allow your reader to know exactly what you mean instead of trying to figure it out!



Strategy for Feedback: Praise, Question, Wish

I really liked that you talked about "balance between basic self-knowledge and self-care." That is always a tough boundary to tread, and both kids and adults could learn much from your story about dealing in that gray area between the two. As your reader, I want to hear more about this "balance." What are some examples of this dynamic? I ask this because you make the statement and then move on to another subject. Consider taking a minute to talk about what you mean. You can even tell a story to illustrate this "balance" you talk about. This will allow your reader to know exactly what you mean instead of trying to figure it out!



Introducing Peer Review in the Classroom

- Share examples of peer review in “real world”
- Give guidance for what to look for
- Remind them that being too nice or too harsh is not helpful
- Frame it as an opportunity to support peers
- Be mindful of the time—allot enough time for deep conversation. Peer review takes longer than reading silently and commenting



References

- Bean, J. C. (2011). *Engaging ideas: The professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Light, R. J. (2001). *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Harvard University Press.
- McAndrew, D. A., & Registad, T.J. (2001). *Tutoring writing: A practical guide for conferences*. Boynton/Cook.

Questions?



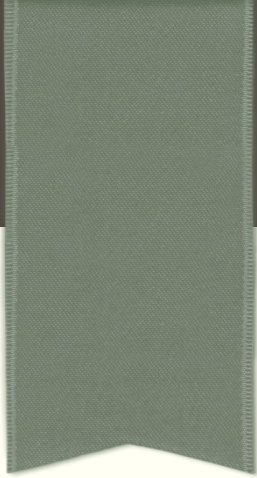
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JOURNEY

Which way will you go?

Delta Kappa Gamma
TSO Convention June 16, 2022

Praise, Question, Wish: Responding to Student Writing

This three-step process of commenting on writing is one way to provide feedback that acknowledges student voice. Critical feedback can facilitate revision if balanced effectively with positive reinforcement.

PRAISE

Recognition goes a long way, so begin your response with praise. What about the piece is memorable? Be very specific about what was effective by using an example. If you keep an open mind and a sympathetic attitude, you increase the likelihood the writer will be receptive to any changes you suggest.

Context: Patricia wrote an expository essay about getting lost while out hiking, titled "What I Learned About Myself While Hiking Caprock Canyons." She made some strong connections about her experience. There are some issues with the content, but before the instructor points those out, they acknowledge specific, positive aspects of the student's writing:

Example Comment: Your discussion of the "balance between basic self-knowledge and self-care" was insightful. That is always a tough boundary to tread, and both kids and adults could learn much from your story about dealing in that gray area between the two.

QUESTION

After setting the tone with a positive statement, the next step is asking questions about their writing choices. Critical statements can often seem confrontational; questions allow writers to consider for themselves without feeling directed. For example, saying "I really didn't get what you mean by X" could be read as an attack, whereas "As your reader, I am not sure what you mean by X. Can you tell me more about what this means and why you chose it?" gives the writer a space to make a judgment without feeling judged. If you ask sincere questions, you will be helpful to the writer.

Context: Once the instructor acknowledges the positive, they can then focus on questioning something that needs clarification or revision. In this case, the instructor had a question about Patricia's word use:

Example Comment: As you reader, I want to hear more about this "balance." What are some examples of this dynamic? I ask this because you make the statement and then move on to another subject.

WISH

Since many writers are sensitive about receiving advice, it is a good idea to avoid sounding like you are directing their piece. The word “wish” has a positive connotation, so starting your advice with “I wish” avoids the tone of a command. For example, “I wish you would talk more about X.” Along with “wish,” another helpful word is “consider.” Saying “Consider changing the piece from present to past tense because...” communicates the writer is in control and that the reader is not some expert ordering mandatory changes.

Context: Now that the instructor has asked questions about the writing that needs revision, they can be a little more directive.

Example Comment: Consider taking a minute to talk about what you mean. You can even tell a story to illustrate this “balance” you talk about. This will allow your reader to know exactly what you mean instead of trying to figure it out!

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Your discussion of the “balance between basic self-knowledge and self-care” was insightful. That is always a tough boundary to tread, and both kids and adults could learn much from your story about dealing in that gray area between the two. As you reader, I want to hear more about this “balance.” What are some examples of this dynamic? I ask this because you make the statement and then move on to another subject. Consider taking a minute to talk about what you mean. You can even tell a story to illustrate this “balance” you talk about. This will allow your reader to know exactly what you mean instead of trying to figure it out!

FINAL THOUGHTS

Using this three-part format for student feedback helps instructors to show they are actively reading and comprehending student work. You can use this strategy in marginal comments, as a final endnote or letter at the end of the writer’s paper, or in a conference with the writer. By asking questions about content and writing choices, students feel their instructor is trying to understand student voice and context. Asking students to consider, or “wish,” for certain elements of revision is a way to be kind-yet-critical with directive feedback.

Revised from Southwestern University’s Debby Ellis Writing Center’s resource “Responding to Student Writing”

Peer Review Strategies

ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

- Introduce yourself
- Ask friendly (but not too personal) questions
- Sit side-by-side
- Let the writer have control of the paper/keyboard

SETTING THE AGENDA

- Ask questions and show interest
 - “What can I help you with?”
 - “Where do you want to start?”
 - “What was the hardest part to write?”
 - “What areas are you most concerned with?”
- Read the assignment—make sure the writer understands it

ENGAGING IN THE CONSULTATION

- Actively listen
 - Ask open questions: “You’re talking about x in paragraph 1. How does that relate to y in paragraph 2?”
- One of you will read the paper out loud as the other person follows along
- Respond as a reader
 - “That is such an interesting idea! Can you tell me more? Maybe you could add some of that information here...”
 - “This is what I think you mean. Is that what you want your reader to understand?”
- Give the writer a chance to think
 - Silence and pauses can be useful
 - If they are stuck, suggest they use freewriting, draw a diagram, have them explain ideas out loud

WRAPPING UP

- Get to a stopping point
 - Sometimes, you’ll be able to address all concerns and end naturally
 - If time is limited, let them know when you have 5-10 minutes left and address final concerns/questions
- Create goals for revision
 - What they need to do at home
 - What you’ll do during your next meeting

Adapted from Ryan, L., & Zimmerelli, L. (2010). *The Bedford guide for writing tutors*. Bedford/St. Martin’s.

The Three Stooges. The Marx Brothers. Dick Van Dyke. Lucille Ball. These are all comics that have established the comic element in the middle part of the Twentieth Century. They did not, however, invent the comic tradition. Their styles and techniques have roots in the comedies that have graced the stages from Greece to England to France starting as long as 2500 years ago. The comic traditions established by men such as Aristophanes, Shakespeare, and Molière shaped the mold that all comedies would eventually try to fill.

Hi Terry,

Thanks for letting me ready your draft. From our discussions, I understand that you want to focus on repetitive language and its relationship to comedy. I like how you grasp the audience with names of people who were influential in twentieth century comedy.

Two goals to consider for your next draft are:

1. Create a specific thesis about what exactly you are targeting. You can even say “In this essay, I...” to get you started. It’s a good time to introduce repetitive language as your focal point. It will be important to be specific about what you are doing early on so your readers will know what to expect. It’s okay if you are not sure yet. It’s okay for your thesis to revise as your paper does.
2. As you can see from my comments, I suggest that you take a little more time to talk about the comic tradition. This will provide more context for your reader before you get into the history. I suspect the discussion of comic tradition will come before the thesis, but it might come after.

Adding it now means you can move it around later, as needed.

I hope this helps. Please let me know if you have questions. If you are comfortable, let's set up a time next week to conference about the revisions you made to this draft.

Good luck!

Dr. M