Providing Positive and Constructive Feedback to Student Writing

WAC SERIES WORKSHOP

AUA

The Predicament

➢We work hard to provide detailed feedback to student writing.

   ➢The student does not consider our revision suggestions for the next draft, or makes revisions selectively.

      ➢<u>The result</u>: We get annoyed, and the student does not learn what we want them to learn in the process.

      ➢<u>Why</u> does that happen?

How We Respond Matters

Studies show that:

- Freedman (1987): The question 'How should written work be criticized?' is one of the most important in the whole problem of teaching English."

- Fife and O'Neill (2001): "The important response, the response that counts, is the written response to the student draft."

- Goldstein (2014): There has been little agreement among teachers about what constitutes effective feedback for improvement.

- Fife and O'Neill (2001): Context issue—teachers have little information on how the comment function as part of the class.

Goal of this Workshop

If you find yourself in the described predicament and think that you need to provide feedback that helps student improve their writing,

➢ We will together rename and reframe the practice of giving feedback.

As a result, you will leave by having:

  ➢ A better understanding of feedback that makes a difference
  ➢ A few strategies to use in your feedback practice
  ➢ Several examples of how you can turn "negative" feedback into a "positive" commentary

Plan

1. What we want our students to achieve?

2. Providing feedback – actual and best practices

3. Strategies to rethink and reframe our approach

4. Examples

What We Want Students to Learn?

We need to think of our commentary to student writing within the larger context and specifically the goals of our class.

➢Better writers

➢Critical and logical thinkers

➢Good researchers

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Best Practices in Providing Feedback

Scholars call for feedback that is:

➢ Praise-oriented

➢ Dialogic (i.e., asking genuine questions)

➢ Aware of strengths and weaknesses

➢ Aligned with assignment expectations

➢ Dependent on a hierarchy of concerns that are focused, organized, evidence-based
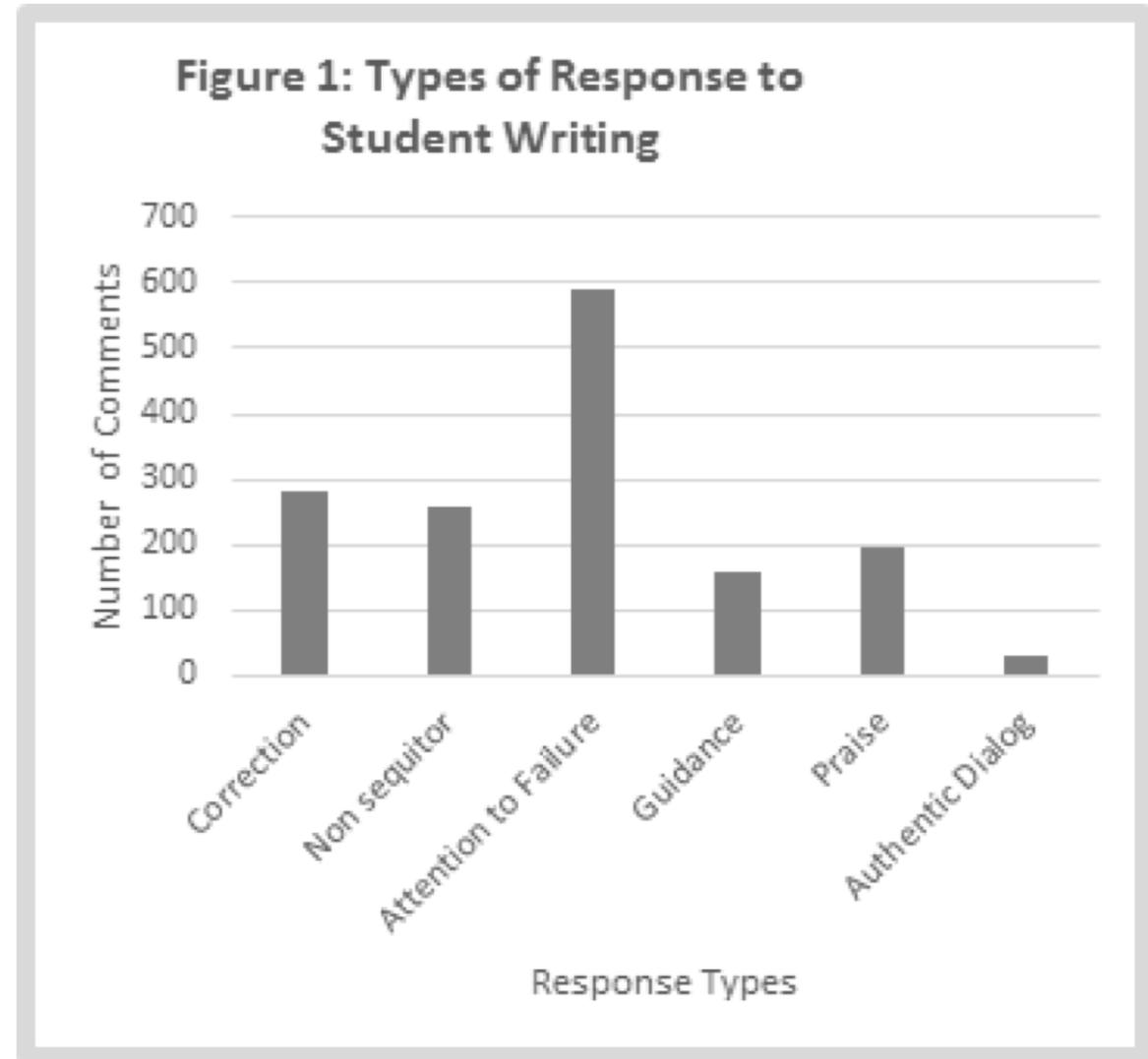
Actual Practices

Stern and Solomon (2006):

◦ Studied three primary best practices of effective feedback:

➤ Positive feedback

➤ Feedback that addressed only areas directly tied to the assignment's learning goals

➤ Feedback that reveals patterns of strengths, errors, or weakness

◦ "The lack of written comments (positive or negative) for the students' support, evidence for claims, paper structure/organization, voice and creativity was perplexing at least."

Actual Practices

Rysdam and Johnson-Shull (2006):

content analysis of 1,000 student papers

Figure 1: Types of Response to Student Writing

Actual Practices

Rysdam and Johnson-Shull, "The Ink We Leave Behind" (2010):

Related study, peer-feedback, with six response types

Discovered that students inclined toward using mean, punitive and even incorrect comments

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Table 1: AFOSP Assessment Criteria (Writing Center Hierarchy of Values for Responding to Writing)

Assignment
- Your writing demonstrates that you have understood and addressed the expectations of the assignment.

Focus:
- Your essay sets a clear context for the development of your main point.
- The introduction clearly explains your purpose; the body "flows" logically in support of that purpose; the conclusion provides a sense of closure
- Your essay continues to tie back to the main point throughout.

Organization:
- Your essay is structured with transitions and cohesive paragraphs.
- Your essay has a clear structure (e.g., beginning- middle – end) and the strength of the components is consistent.
- Transitions connect thoughts and paragraphs consistently and carefully.
- Paragraphs function consistently as units of thought and advance argument.
- You avoid redundancy or unnecessary repetition of ideas and information.

Support:
- The paper provides evidence of search, selection, and source evaluation and the relationship of the evidence to the main point is clear and convincing.
- Adequate story or anecdote is provided and supports main point.

Proofreading:
- Your essay uses proper word choice, syntactically and grammatically correct sentences, proper spelling, format and citation.
- Word choice is precise and manages to express ideas clearly.
- Clauses and sentences are grammatically and syntactically correct and comprehensible.
- A rare mistake or typo may be present. Spelling is largely correct and provides little or no distraction to the reader
- Expected format is followed.
- Citation is present and used correctly.

Renaming & Rethinking the Practice of Giving Feedback

Main theoretical ideas:

➤ Non-Violent Communication (NVC)

 Marshall Rosenberg: "The first component of NVC is the separation of observation   from evaluation."

➤ Rhetorical Listening

Krista Radcliffe: "Understanding means listening to discourses not *for* intent but *with* intent—with the intent to understand not just claims but the rhetorical negotiation of understanding as well."

➤ Deep Reading: not-evaluative observation and description (not passive aggressive but rather asking students to study their own writing and notice patterns). See handout.

Renaming: From Feedback to Feedforward

"Feedforward," unlike feedback which focuses on what happened in the past, offers strategies and solutions for avoiding certain mistakes and improving student writing *in the future.*

Feedforward is a response to student writing that sends a positive message because it assumes opportunity and capacity for improvement.

How to Turn Feedback into Feedforward?

Feedback

"This paper lacks adequate description."

Feedforward

This paper could be stronger with more sensory vocabulary. When you describe your hometown, I ask myself, "What does it look like? What does it sound like?" I could better experience the place if you described those things more fully.

How to Turn Feedback into Feedforward?

<u>Feedback</u>

<u>Feedforward</u>

"This essay is confusing."

Connecting the sub-points in each paragraph directly to your main thesis will make the focus of this essay clearer.

How to Turn Feedback into Feedforward?

Feedback	Feedforward
"This introduction is not very exciting."	Consider using a hook or a lead that includes more action and storytelling to draw in the reader. Perhaps draw on personal experiences to connect the reader to your topic.

How to Turn Feedback into Feedforward?

Feedback	Feedforward
"Too many short sentences."	Add more sentence variety.

How to Turn Feedback into Feedforward?

<u>Feedback</u>

<u>Feedforward</u>

"Voice is too informal."

Since this is an academic paper, using a more scholarly vocabulary will improve the tone.

How to Turn Feedback into Feedforward?

Feedback	Feedforward
"You have missed the point in this assignment in that you've failed to discover anything interesting or universal."	Reread the assignment. It asks you to make connections between the class reading and your own experience. Draw more of these connections.

Technology that Supports Feedback Comments: Pros and Cons

➢Microsoft Word

➢Turn-It-In (example)

➢Online forums

➢Annotation programs

Stories and Examples

➢Christian's students

➢Others

References and Further Reading

➤Rystam and Johnson-Shull, "Introducing Feedforward: Renaming and Reframing Our Repertoire for Written Response" (2016)– main source for this presentation

➤Ratcliffe, *Rhetorical Listening* (2005)

➤Haswell, "Minimal Marking" (1983)

➤Murray, "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product" (2011) – in your package

➤Bartholomae, "Inventing the University" (1986)

➤Hartwell, "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar" (1985)

Note: I can provide electronic copies of all cited sources except for Ratcliffe's book. I can, however, provide an article by Ratcliffe on rhetorical listening.

Some Great Online Resources

➢A Brief Guide to Responding to Student Writing (Harvard Handout)

➢How to Use Writing in Your Classes to Improve Student Learning

➢How to Talk to a Student Who Isn't There

➢A Few Reasons to Stop Writing on Student Work