

Beyond the Red Pen:

Meaningful Feedback & Purposeful Reflection on Student Writing

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Trust the process. If the process is sound, the product improves."

--William Zinsser

Presentation Overview

Across decades writing has been seen as an essential skill for students to learn, but the manner of instruction has varied over the years. Writing instruction is often seen as pendulum that swings back and forth based on the current research. Teachers of writing have often grappled with ways to provide quality and effective feedback on writing assignments to help students with revising the assignment and growing as a writer. While the teacher's feedback is important, it can take away ownership of the paper from the student. A combination of feedback and reflection allow the teacher to guide the student, but the ownership of the work remains with the student.

Presentation Outline

1. Opening Discussion: Positive & Negative Experiences with Feedback
2. Embedding SOL Writing Prep Seamlessly Within the High School English Curriculum
3. Feedback & Reflection Throughout the Writing Process:
 - a. Pre-Writing: Claim Development & Feedback on Strength of Argument
 - b. During Writing: The Power of Audio Feedback
 - c. During Writing & Post-Writing: Meaningful Student Self-Reflection

Resources & Selected Bibliography

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- Dunne, E., & Rodway-Dyer, S. (2009). Is audio feedback a useful way of enabling students to learn? A case study. *Proceedings of the European Conference on e-Learning*, 174-180. Retrieved on May 30, 2010 from Education Research Complete.
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Embedding SOL Writing Prep

Some say that the journey is more important than the destination. They argue that people find more joy and satisfaction in working toward a goal than in achieving it. Others say that it is the destination that gives meaning to the journey. They argue that the process of working toward a goal would be meaningless without its achievement. Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your ideas.	The Great Gatsby / American Dream Odyssey / Myths
The British naturalist and politician John Lubbock wrote, “Your character will be what you yourself choose to make it.” Do we choose our own character traits, or is our character formed by influences beyond our control? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.	Night Life of Pi Nature vs. Nature Atonement
Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Determine never to be idle . . . It is wonderful how much may be done if we are always doing.” Do we accomplish more if we are always doing something, or does inactivity also serve a purpose? Take a position on this question. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.	
It has been said that first impressions are almost impossible to change. Based on your experiences, do you agree or disagree with this statement? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.	The Great Gatsby To Kill a Mockingbird
It has been said that a positive attitude is the key to success in life. Do you agree or disagree with this statement about the importance of attitude? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.	Caged Bird The Awakening
Author Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.” Do you agree or disagree with Emerson’s statement about individuality? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.	Transcendentalism
Author Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.” Based on your experiences, do you agree or disagree with Emerson’s statement? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.	Transcendentalism Caged Bird
Civil rights leader Mahatma Gandhi wrote, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Do you agree or disagree with Gandhi’s statement about the importance of helping others as a way of discovering more about yourself? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.	Martin Luther King
Some people say that with dedication, persistence, and time, people can accomplish any goal. Others say that people are limited in what they can accomplish and need to be realistic when setting goals. Take a position on this issue. Use specific reasons and examples to support your ideas.	Great Gatsby / American Dream
The great artist Michelangelo once said, “The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.” Do you agree or disagree with Michelangelo’s statement? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with details and specific examples.	Great Gatsby / American Dream
It has been said, “Failure is not the worst thing in the world. The very worst is not to try.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your opinion.	
Think about the benefits of working with a group or working alone. Which do you feel is more beneficial? Write to convince your teacher of your preference, either to work with a group or to work alone. Support your position with reasons and specific examples.	
Technology allows people to complete many tasks without having contact with others. People can check out books, shop, and play games without speaking to another person. Has the limitation of human contact due to the use of technology had positive or negative effects on people’s lives? Take a position on this question. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.	1984 Brave New World

Many people feel that American society is too competitive. Does competition lead to better products and results, or does it lead to a focus on winning at all costs? Is fierce competition a good idea or bad idea? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.	
Philosopher, physician, and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer said, “Example is not the main thing in influencing others; it is the only thing.” Is setting a good example by your own behavior the best way to influence other people, or are there better ways to influence others? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.	
Most public places, including schools, have installed video cameras for surveillance. Is the installation of surveillance cameras the best way to provide security, or is it a privacy violation that would not deliver what it promises? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.	1984
Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once said that “success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.” Do you agree with Churchill’s statement about the important role that failure plays in the pursuit of success? Take a position on this question. Use reasons and specific examples to support your ideas.	
People who value self-reliance define it as the need for each individual to follow his or her own instincts and ideas. Should people make their own decisions, or should they seek guidance from experts and authorities about life’s important matters? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.	Emerson / Thoreau Transcendentalism Power of the Individual

Prewriting: Claim Development

Directions: Our writing focus during the Crucible unit is on crafting an argument. You will be writing four short response papers, one at the end of each act. The specific guidelines and requirements for these papers can be found on the back of your unit overview sheet. Below are the core writing skills we'll be focusing on as we practice crafting strong arguments.

1. Making an argumentative claim

- Imagine having a heated debate with a classmate about a text. Your claim should be argumentative, focused, and specific. You can make a claim about a character, a symbol, a motif, an emerging theme, an element of the plot that that you'd like to explore more in-depth... something that bothers you, frustrates you, angers you, etc. as you're reading.
- In order to strengthen your claim, imagine someone challenging you and asking, "SO WHAT?" This will help you narrow and focus your argument.
- Sample progression of an argument from weak to strong by answering the "so what?" question:
 "Abigail pressures the girls into going along with her story by threatening them." ← WEAK
 "So what?"
 "So, Miller seems to be arguing something about the power of peer pressure."
 "So what?"
 "Well, it seems significant that all the accusers are young girls. Maybe Miller is really making a social argument about the manipulative powers of groups of women."
 "So what?"
 "So, The Crucible is really a critique of female gender identity." ← STRONG

2. Supporting your position with textual evidence

- For your Crucible responses, you're required to have at least two direct quotes from the text (of course, "quotes" includes stage directions.) Always choose your evidence carefully. Integrating and citing evidence

3. Integrating and citing evidence

- NO FLOATING QUOTATIONS. Quotes are "floating" if the writer has just thrown them into the paper without integrating them into his or her own analysis.
- Use the formula below when integrating quotations:

Introduce, "Quote," analyze (cite). **Note capitalization AND punctuation*

- Example: In *The Crucible*, John Proctor says, "A fire is burning. I see the Devil, and it is you and me," which shows the underlying evil of humanity revealing itself (Miller 22).
- You won't always necessarily have an introduction and analysis, but you must have one or the other (or both, if you wish.) NEVER AGAIN will we have any quotations simply standing alone.
- For your Crucible response papers, you'll cite quotes exactly as above (Miller ____).

4. Taking a risk in your analysis

- Don't play it safe and argue something simplistic and obvious in the text. Push yourself to argue something new and expand your analysis skills. Be creative and think outside the box.

Feedback on Strength of the Writing Argument

Sample Claims: <i>Crucible</i> Response Paper Act #1			
Score of 4	Score of 3	Score of 2	Score of 1
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "The eruption of mass hysteria in <i>The Crucible</i> is directly related to the Puritans' inability to intertwine reason and religion/ superstition." 2. "The opening of the play <i>The Crucible</i> by Arthur Miller follows the common misconception that all teenagers are attracted to disobedience." 3. "Religion is a manipulative tool used for personal gain." 4. "Reverend Parris's character is used by Arthur Miller as a catalyst to demonstrate the hypocrisy of religious authority." 5. "Betty was never physically possessed, but was scared and seeking a way of escape to ease the lasting effect of her mother's death." 6. "<i>The Crucible</i> demonstrates the selfish tendencies of human behavior, creating a paradox and a sense of hypocrisy even in the face of God." 7. "<i>The Crucible</i> is an explanation of why ignorance is the key to survival." 8. "Goody Ann finds pleasure seeing others in pain, because she yearns for everyone to feel the same pain she did having lost seven of her children." 9. "<i>The Crucible</i> is an unjust assessment of the basis for American democracy." 10. "<i>The Crucible</i> portrays the pattern of conservative parents leading to rebellious children." 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "<i>The Crucible</i> is really a play concerning the effect of communism." 2. "In <i>The Crucible</i>, Miller is trying to show Abigail's inner evil." 3. "Arthur Miller's <i>The Crucible</i> is a commentary on human behavior." 4. "Betty Parris is pretending to be asleep because she's scared." 5. "In Act One of <i>The Crucible</i>, Abigail shows multiple personalities and morals that change depending on who she is around at a given time." <p>REWRITE: # ____</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "The accusations against Tituba in this play are supposed to represent the struggles and obstacles African slaves had to go through, showing the cruelty of the owners of these slaves." 2. "<i>The Crucible</i> is a play about a group of mischievous girls who gradually take possession of Salem." 3. "The girls in <i>The Crucible</i> are all spoiled, impure, immoral liars that blame all their actions on the Devil and witchcraft." 4. "Although Abigail Williams is a sweet, nice girl on the outside, she is really quite manipulative and evil." 5. "Betty was awake the whole time during the play." <p>REWRITE: # ____</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Reverend Parris believes that there is a 'faction' that is out to get him." 2. "<i>The Crucible</i> takes place between 1692 and 1693." 3. "The night before the opening of the play, a bunch of girls were dancing in the woods." 4. "Arthur Miller's <i>The Crucible</i> takes place in the Puritan colony in Massachusetts." 5. "One of the 'afflicted girls' is Betty Parris, the minister of Salem's daughter." <p>REWRITE: # ____</p>

The Power of AudioFeedback

Student Feedback

"It's like having a writing conference with your teacher."

"There are explanations for errors and usually helpful hints on how to fix them. Explanations are said in a way that is very understanding. When circling errors there is explanation rather than guessing what the mistake is."

Process for Recording AudioFeedback

Materials: computer, microphone, audacity

1. Read the students reflection on the paper, and then read the paper with a pen (not red) in hand. Try not to write comments, but make marks to remind yourself of key points you want to make.
2. Record myself walking through the paper, and always start by discussing the overall argument/purpose of the paper. Then walk through the paragraphs.
3. Pause the recording and mark the rubric. Return to the recording and walk through the grade on the rubric. Discuss the student's reflection and where I agree or disagree with them.
4. For any assignment after the first one, look back at the previous essay to discuss their growth.

Process for Returning AudioFeedback for the Students

Materials: computer, headphones, media player

Set Up

- Go to My Computer → Global → _Collaborate → Spengeman → Block → TFA Feedback → Select the Wav File with your name on it.
- Open the file and save it to your documents. I will be removing the files from the Global file at the end of class, so that no one can access them.
- Please ensure that the file is yours. It should be saved as your last name. Please stop listening and let me know if the feedback does not refer to your paper.

Feedback

- As you listen to the feedback, please make annotations in **pencil** on your essay. This does not mean simply write down my comments verbatim, but apply them to the paper. If a topic sentence was vague, try rewording it. If quotations were standing alone, identify each time this happened and incorporate the quote into a sentence.

Reflection

To be completed on the reflection sheet in your writing folder.

- Once you have listened to the feedback and annotated your essay, please explain whether or not you understand your score, and if you plan to revise your essay.
- Set two writing goals for your next essay (not necessary your revision)
- Place your packet to your writing folder. It can be picked up next class if you choose to complete a revision.

Meaningful Student Reflection

Opening Paragraph

- Pg10 Feedback cards are a way for students to give focused, thoughtful, and constructive responses to their peers' writing. They are used during writing workshops as the students are focusing on revision.
- Pg11 When students submit a draft of an essay, they are asked to select three questions to answers. Reading their responses ensure that the teacher addresses the areas of importance to the student as well as the areas important to the teacher.
- Pg12 Writing folders can be used to help students see that each writing assignment is connected. This handout is stapled inside each student's writing folder. After the students listen to the audiofeedback, they first state whether or not they understand their grade and if they plan to complete a revision. Next they set two writing goals for their next assignment. When giving feedback on the next assignment, the teacher addresses the goals.

Focused Feedback Card: College Essay Writing Workshop #1

Your Name: _____ Writer's Name: _____

Overall, here's what **works** in your essay: *[be specific]*

Overall, here's what **doesn't work** in your essay: *[be specific and honest]*

After reading the essay, the tone is mostly: *[check one]* _____ Positive _____ Negative

After reading the essay, if I had to describe the tone in **one word**, it would be:

If I didn't know you, the overwhelming impression I would get about you as a person after reading this essay is that you... *[complete the sentence]*

To accompany the copy of the paper submitted today,
you should write a thoughtful statement focused on the process of writing.
Choose three of the foci below and respond.
For each case, clearly indicate the focus you are addressing.
Then write one to three specific questions about your paper
that you most want your reader/responder to answer

1. One big problem I had in the writing of this paper...
2. A risk I took...
3. How I tried to make the assignment my own, to carve out my own authority...
4. How the audience that I imagined most influenced me...
5. How my personality did or did not affect or effect one choice I made in the composing process...
6. A paragraph where I was especially aware of pace or syntax...
7. The kind of comment I expect/want/dread from the responder...
8. Where text/instructor/peer influenced me...
9. Where I broke a rule on purpose and why I did it...
10. What intimidated me and how I fought back...
11. How I think I could improve on this if I had time for one more draft...
12. What I hope most readers will/won't catch...
13. How I tried to integrate an insight from another course I'm taking...
14. How I hoped to make my paper distinct from others...
15. How I experimented with diction...
16. My best claim to originality/creativity here...
17. How I focused and focused and focused until I got it the way I wanted it to be...
18. Please don't miss...

Writer's Autobiography	___/50
Did you understand the feedback and score? Please explain.	
Do you plan to revise? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Two Goals for Next Writing Assignment	

College Essay	___/100
Did you understand the feedback and score? Please explain.	
Do you plan to revise? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Two Goals for Next Writing Assignment	

	Content ___/50	Organization ___/25	Style ___/25	Mechanics ___/20
Did you understand the feedback and score? Please explain.				
Do you plan to revise? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Two Goals for Next Writing Assignment				