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“ A STUDY IN RESPONSE
TO STUDENT WRITING ”

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State College,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Michael K. Sonnenburg
February 1984

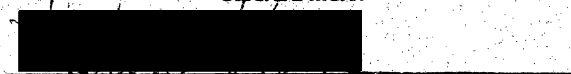
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Approved by:


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February 29 1984
Date

ABSTRACT

In the past fifteen years, dozens of researchers and hundreds of theorists and practitioners have published books and articles about response to student writing. For the high school teacher this plethora of information has created a chaotic picture of procedure, for because of inadequate training in response to student writing, they are not in a good position to make comparative judgments about different methods of response. This study has organized the information about response into eight categories or eight methods of response: 1) the One-to-One Conference, 2) Written Peer Response, 3) Group Oral Response, 4) Limited Written Response, 5) Traditional Response, 6) Staff Grading, 7) Holistic Evaluation, 8) Self-Evaluation. This organization will help the high school writing teacher to see the virtues of each method, to compare methods, and to understand how each relates to the writing process. The bulk of the study is an annotated bibliography with each entry placed under one of the eight methods of response.

This study found that the method of response the teacher uses should be chosen to achieve specific instructional goals. That choice depends on 1) what the teacher wants to teach about writing, 2) when in the writing process the response occurs, 3) the ability and maturity of the student, 4) the classroom situation (class size, time restraints, etc.). This study also found that regardless of the method of response used, response should be primarily to content.

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to categorize and examine theories about and research in teacher response to student writing. This categorization and examination is intended both to help teachers of writing choose which method of response is most appropriate for each situation and to summarize for theorists and researchers the state of the art of teacher response to student writing. Dozens of researchers and hundreds of theorists and practitioners have published books and articles about response to student writing in the past fifteen years, and yet many high school teachers don't know how few choices they have in the way they respond to essays (Sommers, p. 154). This study will allow writing teachers to compare theories, judge research, and see what other teachers do. By arming classroom teachers with a variety of ways to respond to student writing, with a strong theoretical base in response, and, where possible, with empirical research that relates to response, this study will give writing teachers more understanding of and more control over their responses to student writing.

SCOPE

This study in teacher response to student writing is intended mostly for secondary level writing teachers. However, many of the theories described and much of the research discussed focus on students or instruction at elementary and college levels. The state of the art is such that high school writing instructors need input from all levels. The findings of the Dennis Searle and David Dillon's study in how 6th grade teachers respond to their students' writing, which contrast with the findings of the Sarah Freedman study of how college instructors respond to their students' writing, will be helpful to high school teachers. Knowing both the response to their students' essays at lower grade levels and the response at the college level, high school teachers will be better able to plan their writing programs. So little is known about how students learn to write at different age levels that it would be wrong to assume that the findings of a study on how community college students react to "The Garrison Method" of one-to-one response would be of no use to a ninth grade writing teacher instituting the conference method of response.

This study will also address itself to essay writing, meaning non-fiction writing--expository, narrative and

descriptive. For the purposes of definition, essay writing excludes imaginative writing and private writing (personal journal entries, personal letters, etc.). It must be noted though that while nearly all the research and theories pertain to the essay form, few exclude imaginative writing from what they are saying about responding to writing. Therefore, what we know about response to any one type of writing may be useful in responding to other types.

Lastly, research and theories that differentiate the basic writer from the average or advanced writer will be examined, but no one ability level will be the focus of this study. Most high school writing teachers have all three levels in the same class, so they must be flexible and accommodating in their responses. Moreover, the ability level of the student may not be the sole determining factor in the decision on how to respond to a student's writing, for evidence indicates that personality types, I.Q., and motivational factors should also be considered (Edelsberg, p. 4373-A; Gagne, pp. 320-324).

RESPONDING OR GRADING: A CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

In the past, when teachers of writing read student essays, they were grading them. In this sense, responding to student writing meant judging it, usually by placing critical comments on the writing and attaching a letter grade. In the last fifteen years, however, numerous researchers and theorists in teaching writing, James Moffett, Janet Emig, and Peter Elbow to name a few, have been using the word "response," deliberately avoiding the term "grading," when talking about a teacher or a student reading an essay. One of these theorists, Mary K. Healy, defines "response" as "The initial reaction to a piece of first draft writing, usually in the form of questions to the writer about the content or form of the piece" (p. 6). The term, "response," then, is often used by specialists in the field of writing instruction to mean something different from evaluation. Since the word "response" has a general definition in dictionaries of "any reaction," and the grading of an essay is a reaction to it, the word has often been used to mean just that: "any reaction," including grading. Researchers like Nancy Sommers, Lil Brannon and C. H. Knoblauch use the word in its general sense, but they don't want teachers of writing to respond to their students' writings with just any

reaction. They want the response to be a controlled look at content, even when it also evaluates that writing. Because many of the response methods are evaluative, in this study, the term may include evaluation as one form of response.

INTRODUCTION

Response may be the most important step in the teaching of writing (see Moffett's discussion of "Feedback," pp. 188-200 in Teaching the Universe of Discourse), yet many high school writing teachers are not trained how to respond to student writing. Many teachers respond in the same way their teachers did--by making critical comments in red ink throughout a student's essay and attaching a letter grade at the end. Teachers spend 20 to 40 minutes on each essay (Sommers, p. 148), believing that is how writing is taught, and expecting their comments, corrections and grades to teach and motivate the student. Likewise, students expect teachers to respond to their essays this way; parents expect it; other teachers expect it; and administrators expect it. In fact, English teachers often measure their own worth by how much time they spend correcting papers and by how many comments they write on them (Sommers, p. 155). Yet many teachers will freely discuss how exasperating it is to work so hard only to find that many students learned little or nothing from this labor (Diederich, p. 22).

Obviously, some growth in writing ability takes place with students whose teachers use this traditional method of response, for many students do learn to write, but the growth

in these students is hardly commensurate with the amount of teacher labor. Evidence indicates that a large number of students would benefit more from other methods of response (see Lynch, and "Testing the Effectiveness of the One-to-One Method of Teaching Composition: Improvement of Learning in English Project"). Sadly, many high school writing teachers don't know much about other methods of response. Those who have sought information on response often don't use it because the sources of that information--journals, books, conferences, and workshops--create a chaotic picture of procedure. One source extols the virtues of the conference method, another trains teachers to use peer response groups, and an article in the English Journal tells the writing teacher not to "judge" writing at all--just ask questions about the text. Writing teachers are not in a good position to make comparative judgments about such different methods of response and many continue to correct papers with the traditional red pen.

While there is much to learn about response, there is already much known. To give a more coherent view of the field, I have organized the information about response--theories, research, and practices--into eight categories, or methods, of response. Actually these eight methods had already formed themselves. They are all distinct classroom practices that have been researched and thoroughly discussed. For instance, a large and growing amount of information has been published

about the benefits of Written Peer Response, and in a similar manner the distinctly different practice of the One-to-One Conference Method, has given rise to a great deal of literature. What this study has done, then, is discover how many methods of response seem to be available to the teacher of writing. Though I have found information on eight methods, it is more than likely more methods will be created, for there is enormous interest in the writing process as fundamental to education.

THE EIGHT METHODS OF RESPONSE

The eight methods are listed in the order I think may be used most effectively throughout the writing process.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| 1. One-to-One Conference | } | Best used for early drafts to stimulate revision |
| 2. Written Peer Response | | |
| 3. Group Oral Response | | |
| 4. Limited Written Response | } | Best used for later drafts and for evaluation |
| 5. Traditional Response | | |
| 6. Staff Grading | } | Best used for evaluation of final draft |
| 7. Holistic Evaluation | | |
| 8. Self-Evaluation | | |

Each method has a unique purpose, a purpose which creates a specialized role for the writing teacher. In the One-to-One Conference and in the Limited Written Response, the teacher is a questioner and motivator. In the Written Peer Response, the Group Oral Response, the Staff Grading, and the Self-Evaluation, the teacher plays a limited role as responder but is involved in setting the criteria for response, in training the responders, in training the student writer to expect response, and in helping the student writer learn from it. Often the teacher's role is to respond to the responses that students make. To decide which method is best for the student at each stage of the writing process, the writing teacher needs to understand all eight methods.

The One-to-One Conference Method

Description

The One-to-One Conference Method may best be described as "individualizing." The teacher talks with each writer, usually in a three to ten minute conference, about the essay. Specific guidelines steer this conference to produce the best results and use the time efficiently. Following are some sample guidelines taken from Murray's and Garrison's books:

1. The teacher should question the student to encourage self-assessment. "What do you think about your essay?" "Any particular part you're not happy with?" "Why?" "Any particular part you especially like?" "Why?"
2. The teacher may describe any personal response to what the writer is saying in the essay.
3. It may be necessary for the teacher to restate what the writer has attempted to say to show the writer how well he or she communicated what he or she intended to communicate.
4. The teacher should comment on what the writer has done well.
5. The teacher should limit criticism to only the most important problem in the essay.
6. The teacher should allow the student to write on the text or to take notes if necessary, but the teacher should not write on the text of the essay.

Integral to this method are student generated topics. Murray, Garrison, and Wiener advocate the teacher setting the task, but the student finding the subject matter. For instance, the teacher may ask for a persuasive essay, then the student should discover what to be persuasive about. Student generated topics along with the One-to-One Conference Method encourage students to think more about what they are saying in writing. This method is used to help students revise and to help teachers evaluate student writing, for after helping the student with at least one revision, the teacher will be familiar with the student's intentions in writing the essay. This then would help the teacher evaluate how successfully the student had achieved those intentions.

Comment

Since there is more to the One-to-One Conference Method than just its method of response, writing teachers should follow the guidelines of Garrison and/or Murray (they are quite similar) from start to finish. Both Garrison and Murray allow room for adaptation, but the method pervades the whole writing process. Every essay must be revised several times, and each revision is stimulated by a conference with the teacher. It is possible for the teacher never to take a paper home if the class and the conferences are managed correctly. O'Brien's and Calabrese's articles on how to handle a secondary class while using the One-to-One Conference

Method should encourage some teachers to try this, but a thorough understanding of the method, best obtained by studying Garrison's and Murray's books, appears necessary. The most impressive piece of research found for any of the eight methods, "Testing the Effectiveness of the One-to-One Method of Teaching Composition: Improvement of Learning in English Project," shows that the "Garrison Method" is more effective in teaching composition at the community college level than previous approaches. Instructors in the control classes for this study were not using any specific method--they were doing what they "normally do." What that was the study did not say.

Annotated Bibliography

Theory and Practice

Calabrese, Marylen E. "I Don't Grade Papers Anymore."
English Journal. 71 (Jan. 1982), 28-31.

This article explains why grading essays hinders writing instruction and why other types of responses ultimately will lead to effective writing instruction. Calabrese believes that good writing instruction develops self-evaluation in the student. A "richness of response" is needed so students can learn how others perceive what they are saying. Restatements, observation, impressions, and questions are the types of responses needed. Teachers who only judge writings of their students are evaluating, not responding, and students learn to

see only the grade. A practical method for determining a student's grade in a writing course is given without ever grading an essay. Strategies for meeting resistances to non-grading are discussed, and references are given.

Garrison, Roger. How A Writer Works. Harper & Row: N.Y. 1981.
99 pages

In this book Garrison assumes that each writer has individual problems that cannot be effectively addressed in a class group. He also assumes that the job of teachers of writing is to match problems in expression with learning tasks. Teachers can best do their job by collaborating person-to-person, student to teacher, the way a professional writer works with an editor. The goal of "The Garrison Method" is to lead students eventually to become their own critic-editor. One last assumption of this "updated apprentice system" is that the teacher has mastered the ability to write. Garrison intends this book for student use, so it often informally addresses the student. Garrison helps the student with finding ideas to write about, with writing about literature, with finding voice and style. He gives many tasks that treat writing as learning. He also gives examples of what goes on in a student-teacher conference. An instructor's manual, One-to-One: Making Instruction Effective, is available.

Garrison, Roger H. "One-to-One Tutorial Instruction in Freshman Composition." New Direction for Community Colleges. II (Spring, 1974), 55-84.

Garrison states that the real work in most composition classes is done by the wrong person: the teacher. It is the teacher who learns to identify errors in writing, not the student, who usually accepts passively the teacher's editing. Garrison's premise is that the student must be the one to rewrite and edit. He emphasizes that the teacher can best guide the student in a one-to-one conference, in which the teacher must not correct the student's paper but points out the strengths and the most serious error. "One problem at a time and the most important one first," is Garrison's motto. Putting a grade on a paper is a temptation to be avoided. Grades should be given only at six or seven week intervals because growth in writing is slow, and only the last one should be the student's grade in the class. Averaging earlier and later grades only punishes the student for poor writing before improvement occurred. This article is a brief yet thorough introduction to the One-to-One Conference Method.

Murray, Donald M. "Teaching the Other Self: The Writer's First Reader." CCC. 33 (May, 1982), 140-147.

Professional writers claim that they write to please themselves first. Murray says that within the mind one self writes and another self reads, and teachers should train the

self that writes by training the self that reads. If the audience within a student writer can act as monitor, the student is on the way to writing well. The reader-self is not just a critical entity but also serves at least five other functions, and Murray says that research is needed to determine how complex this "other self" is. To train that self, the teacher must be a listener. In one-to-one conferences the student should talk first so that the teacher can determine how the "other self" perceives the writing process, the context of the writing, the audience, and the product before responding to the writing. The teacher's response should be non-judgmental, neither praising nor criticizing, and should be based on the assumption that all texts can be improved. Murray asserts that the successful teacher has the student discover what is working and encourages the student to build on it, avoiding the correction of errors. He gives strategies and questions that teachers will need to follow his method.

Murray, Donald M. A Writer Teaches Writing. Houghton Mifflin Co.: Boston, 1968.

256 pages

Murray states here that most American high school graduates don't know how to write (p. 103) because their teachers don't know how to teach writing. He describes the classroom environment necessary for writing, details the steps a writer goes through to produce a draft, and

summarizes ten myths which have hindered teachers of writing. One of those myths is that "Each student paper must be corrected by the teacher." He believes the opposite is true: students must correct their own papers. The teacher trains the student to think critically about writing by pointing out the main or chronic problems of papers in conference with the student. Occasionally the teacher may have to edit ruthlessly in red ink (to punish sloppiness), but ridicule must be avoided. Murray suggests a "writing lab" environment be created in the classroom wherein students help each other edit. "Most papers in a writing course should not receive a grade" (p. 37). Only at the middle and at the end of the course should papers be graded. Detailed chapters are given on how to run a conference and on how to teach students to edit their own work.

O'Brien, Michael. "Oral Evaluation: An Effective Vehicle." English Journal. 71 (Jan. 1982), 43.

In this article, O'Brien, a high school teacher, describes his method of evaluating student papers in brief one-to-one conferences. He lists eight points he has worked out through experience: 1) assign brief papers, 2) work individually with a student while other students work on writing assignments or worksheets, 3) ask students at outset of conference what their problems were in writing the paper, 4) try to give favorable comments, 5) cover only one or two major problems, 6) give students a chance to respond and to

ask questions, 7) have students record comments in their journals, 8) do not grade papers in a conference. O'Brien says students choose the one essay they want graded after several have been written and orally evaluated. That one is then rewritten and graded in "the traditional manner."

O'Brien states that he can "get through" six to seven essays in a 50 minute period, that most students approve of the one-to-one conferences, that the conferences increased the effectiveness of his teaching and decreased his after-school grading. Having adapted the One-to-One Conference Method to his own situation, O'Brien has added something writing teachers should note: not every essay is rewritten, only one. He seems to be teaching students that the writer must judge which writings are worth working over and which should be put aside.

Wiener, Harvey S. The Writing Room. Oxford University Press: N.Y. 1981.

337 pages

This resource book builds on Mina Shaughnessy's work and gives clear practical advice. While it reminds the reader that writing is personal, therefore the writer is emotionally attached to it, the book also provides sequential structure for teaching writing. Wiener doesn't ignore the hard facts of grammar, spelling, usage, and syntax; but he does emphasize the need for the beginning writer to spend time on the whole process of prewriting, writing, revising,

editing, and responding. The teacher must refrain from writing the paper for the student, he says. While the draft is still in an unfinished form, the teacher should not respond in writing but should roam about the room making general comments to individuals. When a final draft is turned in, then the teacher may make a written response to the essay, limiting it to what was taught and keeping it mostly positive. The teacher should not rewrite any passages; the student may be directed to do so, but only if major flaws are found. Wiener also suggests that the best essays be read aloud by the writer after specific listening objectives are given to the class. The book is easy reading and provides a variety of alternative activities for the teacher in each area of the writing process.

Research

Brannon, Lil and C.H. Knoblauch. "On Students' Rights to Their Own Texts: A Model of Teacher Response." CCC. 33 (May, 1982), 157-166.

Using results of their own research as an example, Lil Brannon and C. H. Knoblauch claim most teachers respond to student essays in one of two ways:

- 1) Conservatively: comparing the student writing to an Ideal Text, with the student's work always falling short. The teacher's job here is to fix the text to come closer to the ideal.

- 2) Liberally: exaggerating the writer's competence, assuming that, although the writer has not matched the Ideal Text, some quality in the writing excuses the lapse.

Brannon and Knoblauch say the trouble with both is that teachers believe they actually know what the writer meant to say. Teachers' adherence to an Ideal Text interferes with their ability to read student writing. Brannon and Knoblauch suggest that teachers need to consult student writers about what they intended before suggesting how they ought to say it. They recommend the One-to-One Conference Method, as an effective way to attract a student writer's attention to the relationship between intention and effect. Brannon and Knoblauch also recommend peer group collaboration and certain kinds of teacher comments written on essays. The teacher must resist the temptation to say, "Do it this way." They go on to describe a process for students to write their intentions in an expanded margin of the essay as a substitution for a one-to-one conference. Evaluation of the student's essay occurs only after these three steps:

- 1) Peer and teacher response,
- 2) Revision, if desired,
- 3) The student's decision that the essay is a finished product and ready for evaluation.

Johnston, Brian. "Non-Judgemental Response to Students' Writing." English Journal. 71 (April, 1982), 50-53.

A psychologist in the research section of the educational department of South Australia, Johnston did research in 1978 comparing the effects of judgemental and non-judgemental response on student motivation to write. The research is only superficially described as a survey of over one thousand English teachers (presumably at the secondary level) and their students. The conclusion he reached is that non-judgemental response in a one-to-one conference is better. The article is his description of three ways to respond non-judgementally to student writing:

- 1) Questioning to encourage self-assessment,
- 2) Describing one's personal response, and
- 3) Empathetic response.

Examples and comments are given for each. Advice and evaluation are little help to the writer, he says. No attempt was made to assess writing growth. Motivation seems to be the only factor considered.

"Testing the Effectiveness of the One-to-One Method of Teaching Composition: Improvement of Learning in English Project." Los Angeles, Los Angeles Community College District, 1979.

32 pages

This research project undertook to determine if the "Garrison Method" would be effective in the Los Angeles Community Colleges. The outcome gives evidence that

Garrison's tutorial method is effective as the research shows that student writing significantly improved when the "Garrison Method" was used compared with a control group. The number of students involved, over 4,000; the number of instructors involved, 16; the professional manner of assessment; and the three areas of assessment all give validity to this research. In two of the three areas tested, groups using the Garrison method showed better results than the control groups. Writing improvement was the most important area tested and the area of the most dramatic improvement, but student and teacher morale also improved. The third area was an objective test of vocabulary, usage, and sentence structure. No significant difference or progress was made by the Garrison groups or the control groups in this area.

The Written Peer Response Method

Description

Written Peer Response requires that students read each other's essays and, using set guidelines, write a response. The guidelines vary, depending on the authority giving them. Frank O'Hare suggests an editing sheet that refers to content, form and grammar (p. 7), and students become "seekers of errors," writing symbols and comments on the essays the way a teacher would. The student then revises the essay before handing it in for teacher evaluation. Kenneth Bruffee has students do something quite different. His students write "descriptive outlines" of their own papers, following detailed guidelines, then pair up, exchange essays and write descriptive outlines of each other's essays. The descriptive outlines and essays are then returned, and students compare the outlines done by peers with their own outlines. This allows peers to respond to content without making judgments. Students see how well or what they communicated and base their revisions on the descriptive outlines (pp. 103-125). In a variation of this, the peer writes a brief summary, sometimes as brief as one sentence (Elbow, p. 20). In another peers write a mixture of positive and critical comments on the essay. Thompson's holistic procedure is yet another. All methods require the teacher to train the students to respond to specific items.

Comment

Written Peer Response appears to have many advantages: 1) the student writing will be better by the time it is handed in for teacher evaluation since it has already been looked at critically by a trained audience, 2) fewer essays need teacher response as students pick up the load, 3) student writers receive immediate response, 4) an audience of "significant others" (Emig, p. 100) will pressure the writer to perform better than for a teacher, and 5) student responders will learn how to read critically which will enable them to write better (see Thompson's research). Some important details that pertain to classroom realities, however, should be remembered about this method. First, the teacher still grades essays outside of the class. Second, this method of response seems best fitted to the early and middle stages of the writing process. Finally, the teacher's class time is used to train the students to respond and to monitor them closely while they are responding. This could possibly mean that less class time would be used helping individuals with writing problems.

Annotated Bibliography

Theory and Practice

Bruffee, Kenneth A. A Short Course in Writing. Winthrop Publishers, Inc.: Cambridge, 1980.

232 pages

This "short course" stresses expository-argumentative writing in a three paragraph model. Bruffee claims that it is adaptable to "the kind of writing most people have to do in their life and work..." What is new about Bruffee's method is that he asks for an outline after the essay is written. This "descriptive outline" is then the tool for revision. In this "pedagogical procedure" Bruffee calls "Collaborative Learning," the teacher trains the student, using model essays at first, to write descriptive outlines. Students work with each other, responding to each other's essays in a structured, helpful manner. Bruffee's goal is training students to respond to their own writing in a way that objectively looks at content and form for the purpose of revision.

Elbow, Peter. Writing Without Teachers. Oxford University Press: N.Y. 1973.

317 pages

The basis for this book is Elbow's considerable experience in teaching writing, not research. Specific, tried guidelines are given for the creation and perpetuation of a "teacherless writing class," which he explains as a small group of motivated writers who react to each other's writing. He denies that teacher-response has any value, for one person's response is too narrow, especially if that person is an English teacher. Elbow believes that English teachers are often callous and calculating when they respond to

student writing. The book is specific, thorough, practical, and theoretical. It would be an over-simplification to say Elbow bases his theory solely on the writer's need for a broad audience, for he also discusses the process of writing, private and the public aspects and methods for stimulating writing. He uses terms such as "freewriting," "growing," "cooking," and "center of gravity" to describe his ideas.

Elbow, Peter. Writing With Power. Oxford University Press: N.Y. 1981.

384 pages

What Elbow means by "writing with power" is "getting power over the writing process." In this six section book, he moves through the writing process, starting with two sections about "ways of getting words on paper." He then gives the reader a section on different ways to revise, followed by sections on "Audience" and "Feedback." The final section, "Power in Writing," is a theoretical discussion of why "some writing has great power over readers even though it is not 'good' by most conventional measures." He explores the possibility that "power" comes from several sources: the writer's voice, the words fitting the subject, and the magic words have to allow the reader to experience what is written.

The four chapters in the "Feedback" section give specific guidelines for the writer to follow when asking for response. Elbow says the writing may be read aloud or just handed over

to be read. In either case, he discusses two types of feedback: Criterion Based Feedback, and Reader Based Feedback. Using Criterion Based Feedback, the writer should ask the reader specific questions about the writing: Is the basic idea a good one? Is it supported with logical reasoning or valid argument? Is the whole thing unified? Are there too many abstractions and too few examples? Are the sentences clear and readable? If the writer wants to know what the writing does to a reader, these types of questions should be asked to receive Reader Based Feedback: What was happening to you, moment by moment, as you were reading the piece of writing? Summarize the writing. Which words or phrases struck you most? What ideas or beliefs or feelings do you bring to this piece that could influence the way you read it? As in his previous book, Writing Without Teachers, Elbow advises writers to form a writing support group that meets regularly to give support through feedback.

How to Handle the Paper Load. NCTE: Urbana, 1979.

135 pages

This book consists of 27 articles about responding to student writing. It is divided into six categories: 1) Ungraded Writing, 2) Teacher Involvement--Not Evaluation, 3) Student Self-editing, 4) Practice with Parts, 5) Focused Feedback, 6) Alternative Audiences. These articles contain practical alternatives for writing assignments and practical

alternatives for responding to student writing. Many of the articles are based on research and all of them are consistent with modern theory of writing as process. While the title explains the intention of the book--removing the overwhelming number of essays teachers grade--the book also explores different ways of teaching composition

Koch, Carl and James M. Brazil. Strategies for Teaching the Composition Process. NCTE: Urbana, 1978.

108 pages

This book gives the high school teacher who deals with large classes a variety of strategies for teaching each step of the composition process. Each strategy is in outline form under subtitles of "Group Size," "Time Required," "Materials," "Goals," "Process," and "Variations." In essence the book is a compilation of lesson plans for a writing class at a high school level. Group interaction is stressed, as Koch and Brazil believe that students learn more if they are also teachers. In "Appendix A" they address the teacher's role as responder and remind us to comment on the good things in a paper, to diagnose the major problems, and to begin working on those problems in a systematic manner. Their priorities for handling writing problems start with unity, focus, and coherence and end with mechanics, usage, and dialects.

Research

Brannon, Lil and C.H. Knoblauch. "On Students' Rights to Their Own Texts: A Model of Teacher Response." CCC. 33 (May, 1982), 157-166.

(For annotation see page 18.)

Edelsberg, Charles Marc. "A Collaborative Study of Student Writers' Uses of Teacher Evaluation." Dissertation Abstracts International. 41 (June, 1981), 4373-A (Order No. 8107319).

Stated in general terms, the research question for this study is: How does evaluation of students' writing function for individual learners? Edelsberg examined a one-semester, eleventh grade composition course. One assumption of this study was that teachers' evaluations and students' responses to them cannot be separated from other teacher-student interaction. Not all writing was graded, peer tutoring was common, and teacher evaluation was traditional. The study reveals that students attend selectively to teacher commentary, and that they also use other sources of information--class activities, assignments, directions, peer response, in-class teacher feedback, etc.--to help them generate and edit compositions. A major factor influencing students' use of teacher commentary is the student's own motivation to write. Edelsberg reports that at least four motivations could be detected: 1) to get good grades, 2) to be a model student, 3) to do more competent writing, and 4) to become more fully realized as a person. Some students felt the teacher's comments were useful information to help them develop as

writers, others felt the comments were judgments on performance. The study demonstrates what seems to be Edelsberg's basic assumption: evaluation is not a simple matter of automatic pupil response to one-dimensional teacher stimulus.

Emig, Janet. The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders.
NCTE: Urbana, 1971.

151 pages

Eight twelfth graders of above average ability were chosen for this study. These students were interviewed about their writing and writing instruction, then each wrote three essays, composing aloud in the presence of a tape recorder and an investigator. While Janet Emig draws many conclusions from this study, she does not claim it to be exhaustive or definitive. Her conclusion is that "teachers of composition don't know how to teach composition," and that they need to be trained and retrained. They need to write themselves, and they need to change the way they respond to writing (p. 98). She advocates more peer response and less teacher evaluation, "We have seen that the most significant others in...the writing of twelfth graders are peers" (p. 100), and states that teacher-centered presentations must change. This study is complete, full of commentary, and includes an extensive bibliography.

Thompson, Richard F. "Peer Grading: Some Promising Advantages For Composition Research and the Classroom." Research in the Teaching of English. 15 (May, 1981), 172-174.

In this brief article Richard Thompson describes a two year study he conducted with his own community college English classes. In eight short practice sessions, he trained students to grade essays holistically. He then compared their results with those of a panel of English teachers and found that his students were 80% accurate. More important, at the end of the course, he compared the writing of these trained graders to the writing of similar students who were not trained and found that the trained graders wrote better. More detailed information on his exact procedures is necessary to evaluate his results; however, the results do seem to support Bruffee's contention that students must learn to be judges of writing in order to write better.

The Group Oral Response Method

Description

Group Oral Response is the oral response a class and its teacher give to a student essay read aloud. Students learn from hearing the sound, sense, and rhythm of their own essays (Macrorie, p. 3) and from hearing and seeing the response of the audience. Usually students read their own essays. The teacher's role is to make sure that the content is not embarrassing to the student or to the audience (Macrorie, p. 286), and to train the students to respond helpfully. Trained students should respond positively, directly after the reading, by stating what the student did well, then critically by asking questions or making observations. Both types of response should refer specifically to ideas and features in the writing. For example, student responders may say that they liked the introduction because it was humorous and caught their attention, or that they became confused when a specific word or allusion was used (the writer may then explain what was meant). In The Writing Room, Wiener has students take notes while the essay is being read. These notes relate to features of writing: the way the topic is stated or the use of transitions (p. 55). Caplan, in her research, had success in teaching students to write by training them to look for density of detail, movement from general to specific, and cliches.

The teacher may want to try a few other tactics with this

method. Since the goal is to train students to respond to their own writing, teachers shouldn't forget that students, hearing their essays read aloud, may wish to respond with a comment or two of their own also. Moreover, the teacher may respond to the essay, but only to demonstrate how to respond. Lastly, to enable more essays to be read and to enable more students to respond, essays may be read aloud by their authors in small groups. Ken Macrorie's "Helping Circle" (pp. 73-77) is a good example of how one of these groups functions.

Comment

This method is time consuming but rewarding. Reading essays aloud to a whole class could take a week or more if good discussions follow each reading. Separating students into groups of five or six may be the only way to read every essay aloud in a reasonable time. Hirsch says only the best essays should be read aloud in order to avoid embarrassing poor writers and to illustrate to the whole class what students can do (p. 160). Hirsch's goals seem to be to reward good writing and to give models of excellent writing to the class, goals different from Caplan's, Wiener's and Macrorie's. They say the value of Group Oral Response is in the training of the class to respond and in the motivations the students receive to "perform." Emig agrees that reading papers aloud before the class motivates students, adding that they will work harder, knowing that fellow

students will be judging that writing. The power of writing must be felt by everyone in the class (see Jane Tompkins' introduction to Reader Response Criticism), for it affects people, and the students are bound to sense that. So, with Caplan's research revealing that trained responders become better writers, and Emig's that the students will be highly motivated with an audience of peers, this method of response appears to be beneficial for both the writer and the responder. As it takes place near or at the end of the writing process (if Hirsch's advice is followed), this method should be used with another form of response that is effective in the early stages of the writing process. But, if Caplan, Weiner, and Macrorie are followed, it takes place in the early and middle stages of the writing process, and should be used in conjunction with another form of response that is effective in the later stages of the writing process.

Annotated Bibliography

Theory and Practice

Healy, Mary K. Using Student Writing Response Groups in the Classroom. Bay Area Writing Project: Berkeley, 1980.

31 pages

This monograph outlines a process for developing student ability to work effectively in response groups. Healy explains how to prepare a class for response groups, how to form the response groups, and how to monitor the response groups. She includes assignments, examples of desired

responses, excerpts from a transcript of an actual response group, checklists for evaluation of response groups, and a bibliography. She works with seventh and eighth graders, and her groups respond orally. Building on Peter Elbow's and Ken Macrorie's work, Healy's monograph is intended, she says, for "any classroom whether English, science, social studies, etc." The response groups help students "develop a sense of writing as a process which involves revising based on reclarification of their ideas and purposes."

Hirsch, E.D., Jr. The Philosophy of Composition. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1977.

200 pages

In this book Hirsch deplores the lack of research in teaching composition and gives his answer to the question, "What is the most effective way to teach composition?" He points out the problems inherent in teaching a subject abounding with authorities who disagree with each other and who have little proof, if any, for their theories. Nonetheless, Hirsch proceeds to give an answer to the question. On pages 159 to 161 he lists nine "maxims of commentary." Teachers should follow these nine maxims, he says, when commenting on students' papers. These maxims are meant to direct revision by forcing the teacher to read accurately, be brief, and keep in mind what is important to the student. On succeeding pages he explains that after revision a third

step--third party evaluation--takes place. For this Hirsch suggests oral reading of papers to the class, then testing the class's understanding of it to help assure the readability of the prose. Lastly, he advocates that essays not be given grades, that a colleague relationship needs to be created between student and teacher. The only problem Hirsch sees is that the assessment of writing on a test is necessary, and as of yet no method of assessment has been proved reliable and practical.

Lyons, Bill. "The P Q P Method of Responding to Writing." English Journal. 70 (March, 1981), 42-43.

Lyons says that "having writers ask questions about their own paper promotes commitment to the revising and proofreading process." These three questions are what he suggests:

P (praise) - What do you like about my paper?

Q (question) - What questions do you have about my paper?

P (polish) - What kinds of polishing do you feel my paper needs before it can be published?

A teacher, another student, a group, or the student writer himself or herself may respond to these three questions. A discussion of how to train a class to use these questions is included. Like Healy, Macrorie and Wiener, Lyons emphasizes the need to train students to respond. The Healy monograph details, step by step, how she trains a class.

Macrorie, Ken. Telling Writing. 3rd edition, Hayden Book Co., Inc.: Rochelle Park, 1980.

300 pages

In this "extended essay" on the nature of writing, Macrorie describes what is wrong with the teaching of writing in most institutions and he describes how writing should be taught. In the first chapter he defines "English" and tells why students use it. Students write meaningless, voiceless writing because teachers have not responded to the ideas in their writing, but seem to care only about spelling and punctuation. His cure focuses on the types of writing assignments and on the quality of the responses. Students should write more from their unconscious, as that is how professionals work. He says this forces students to speak in honest voices and tell the truth. He suggests students begin with "freewriting" in order to discover something they'll want to focus on. Finally, the students will "tighten" their essays through revision. Macrorie stresses facts rather than ideas in essays to get at the truth of reality. To improve response he uses "The Helping Circle," the class or small group that responds to the writing after it is read aloud. He outlines strategies on how to control and improve response. The teacher is not the sole responder or judge, and few or no marginal comments are made. Student writings are reproduced for the class or published for the school. The book is full of assignments and examples.

Moffett, James. Teaching the Universe of Discourse. Houghton Mifflin Co.: Boston, 1968.

215 pages

Moffett reasons that without feedback to their writing, the students' motivation will die. They need audience, an audience that will react to what is said, not just to how it is said. The response must be real and pertinent--unvarying response teaches nothing. For students, the best and most natural audience is their peers, classmates. The response of a person who is important to the writer has more effect than a person who is unimportant. Teachers should encourage and create the audience to coach and help the writer. The teacher can help as a clarifier of problems students have raised. The teacher then must teach the students to teach each other.

The next point Moffett makes is that the teacher should not try to prevent the learner from making errors by pre-teaching problems and solutions. Students will learn faster and more thoroughly by making their own errors. They need feedback during writing--not just after. While they are writing, they know they are making errors, so they should have the response during the process so they can overcome their errors before they finish the final product.

Moffett, James. Active Voice. Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.: Montclair, N.J. 1981.

148 pages

In the introduction Moffett states that the purpose of

this book is to "enunciate" writing assignments central to an English curriculum and to "array" them in a purposeful order. Emphasis is on the evolution of one kind of discourse into another in a way that language experiences build on and reinforce each other. Moffett's assignments fall into three groups: 1) Revising Inner Speech, 2) Dialogues and Monologues, and 3) Narrative into Essay. He regards these three groups as "running parallel" to each other "in sequence," meaning individual sequence, not group sequence, since "individual differences in growth rate and growth order outweigh...any universal or timing" (p. 9). Students are initially asked to draw subjects from actual personal observation and then move to higher levels of abstraction. Moffett says you can't generalize for a whole grade level, that what should be taught and in what order depends on the individual student. In "Mid-writing" Moffett advises the teacher to form the students into groups for the purpose of response. These students will listen to each other's writings, with the teacher over-seeing and guiding the type of response. At the "Post-writing" stage, final versions are to be posted, printed, or performed. One last note Moffett makes: students should be told at the beginning of the writing process that they are writing for more than a grade.

Najimy, Norman C. ed., Measure for Measure. NCTE: Urbana, 1981.

32 pages

This guidebook for evaluating students' expository writing emphasizes that evaluation is a vital step in teaching students to write. Holistic grading by teacher and students and analytical grading by the teacher are described. In order for the writing task to be taken seriously by students, Najimy says, the teacher must honestly, realistically, and constructively evaluate the students' writings. The guidebook looks to content and expression as the heart of the evaluation process.

Wiener, Harvey S. The Writing Room. Oxford University Press: N.Y. 1981.

337 pages

(For annotation see page 17.)

Research

Caplan, Rebekah and Catherine Keech. Showing Writing. Classroom Research Study #2, Bay Area Writing Project: University of California at Berkeley, 1980.

144 pages

This research study illustrates the "effectiveness" of Caplan's program for training writers. Integral to her program is the method of response to the students' writing: the teacher reads most of the writings aloud to the class (five to seven a day), and the class responds as well as

the teacher. Both students and teacher are looking for density of detail, for the writer's ability to move from general to specific, and for the avoidance of cliches.

Keech helped evaluate the study and found that not only did the students "effectively" learn, but many were also able to transfer what they learned to other situations.

The Limited Written Response Method

Description

This method limits the teacher to writing comments on the student's text that respond to content and what was taught. Generally, comments should follow these guidelines:

1. What the student says is more important than how the student said it.
2. The teacher's response should be honest and mostly positive. Students need to know what it is they do well. Restating ideas and asking questions are more appropriate than sarcasm or negative comments.
3. If many problems are present in the writing, teachers should respond only to the most important. Content is more important than form or style, and grammar and spelling are less important.
4. Comments must be text specific: "good writing" or "more details needed" have little meaning for the student, or they are vague enough to be arguable or misunderstood. Be precise: "Your use of verbs like 'trotted,' 'skimmed,' and 'puffed' in the second paragraph help me see what you mean. That is good writing!"
5. Avoid rewriting student sentences in most cases. Make the student work with the language.
6. Comments should aim toward revision, teaching "writing as a process."

Comment

A large number of researchers and theorists recommend this method (see the annotated bibliography) because it seems to satisfy many needs. It is an appropriate form of response to both early and late drafts, because it limits response to what was said, not to how it was said. The critical comments will stimulate revision in content, and the positive comments will encourage the student. With some practice, the teacher will spend far less time on each essay (see Metzger's article) than with the Traditional Method of response. Both student and teacher will have improved attitudes about writing (see the Brimmer, Diederich, and Sommers articles) because of the balance of positive and negative criticism, and because of the brief time needed for response. Besides encouraging revision, this method can be used for the final grading of an essay, the comments being the justification for the grade.

Annotated Bibliography

Theory and Practice

Butler, John F. "Remedial Writers: The Teacher's Job as Corrector of Papers." CCC. 31 (Oct. 1980), 270-277.

Remedial writers need different treatment from average or better writers. Butler has found that remedial writers need someone who will look closely at ideas and ignore mistakes of form and mechanics. By relating a case history,

he argues the need for someone who will seriously try to educate remedial writers, not simply prove them unworthy. He does not mislead these students but tries to make them realize they are improving. Butler is noting the same concern as Mina Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations: remedial writers can be taught to write better, but not by merely marking their errors. Both Butler and Shaughnessy say the teacher's response must be realistic but must also encourage more writing.

Dusel, William J. "How Should Student Writing Be Judged?" English Journal. 46 (May, 1957), 263-268.

This article explains why student writing should be judged, what standards of judgment should be used, and how a teacher can go about the task. First, Dusel states that teachers have to judge student writing to justify the cost of the educational system, and, second, teachers need to ascertain whether or not course objectives have been met. He lists five categories for judging student writing, but he reminds us that pupils are not adults, so emotional temperaments must be considered. The five categories are as follows:

1. Content, with honesty as the highest value.
2. Complexity, not distorted by stereotyped thinking, habit, or prejudice.
3. Order, simple progression of thought.

4. Appropriateness of style, concreteness, and first-hand experience, neither inflated nor colloquial.
5. Accuracy, exact writing--no more. Mechanics must not be forgotten, but perception, creativity, and judgment are to be valued more.

Dusel suggests that students, using a checklist, evaluate their own writing first. Then peers and groups of peers evaluate papers. Finally, after revision, the paper should be submitted to the teacher. He observes that students may find peer criticism more worthy of attention than the teacher's criticism and concludes that teachers should not be grading machines, that writing should not be seen as something produced just for a grade.

Haswell, Richard H. "Minimal Marking." College English. 45 (October, 1983), 600-604.

In this article Haswell describes his method of marking surface errors in student writing. Each mistake, any unquestionable error in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or grammar, is indicated only with a check in the margin by the line in which it occurs. The number of errors in any one line determines the number of checks next to it. The sum of checks is recorded at the end of the paper and in the grade-book. Papers are then returned fifteen minutes before the end of class. Students correct their papers as best they can and turn them back in. Haswell says that by the end of the term the surface errors decline by approximately 50%

(4.6 errors per 100 words to 2.2 per 100 words). He has never set up a control group, for he considers this method too valuable to deprive any student of it deliberately. "The ultimate value of the method," he says, "is that it relegates a minor aspect of the course to a minor role in time spent on marking...while at least maintaining and probably increasing the rate of improvement in that aspect."

Hirsch, E.D., Jr. The Philosophy of Composition. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1977.

(For annotation see page 34).

Koch, Carl and James M. Brazil. Strategies for Teaching the Composition Process. NCTE: Urbana, 1978.

(For annotation see page 27).

Lees, Elaine O. "Evaluating Student Writing." CCC. 30 (Dec. 1979), 370-374.

Using a sample paper, Elaine O. Lees examines some of the complexities of response, which she arbitrarily divides into seven modes: correcting, emoting, describing, suggesting, questioning, reminding, and assigning. She then examines each of these modes. The first three put the burden of work on the teacher, she says, the next three shift some of the burden to the student, and the last provides a way to discover how much of that burden the student has taken. A response to a paper should utilize several modes, but the last mode, assigning, is the most important, for it forces

the student to react by writing, usually another paper. She believes that heavy editing of a student's paper is, as Garrison has also said, appropriating the student's job.

Metzger, Margaret Treece. "Talking Back to Students: Responding to Student Writing." English Journal. 71 (Jan. 1982), 39-42.

This article is an account of Margaret Metzger's search for a reasonable way to respond to student writing. She briefly describes how her papers were graded when she was a student and how she started grading her students the same way. Dissatisfied with error marking, she moved into "Responding Comments," "Critical Comments," "One Word Comments," and "Longer Comments." She adapts Don Murray's method to her own style. Like Murray, she focuses in on the main weakness of the paper and comments on it. The difference is that she keeps a "running comment" in the margin--her response to the content. At the end of her reading, she writes about five sentences describing her reaction and offering advice. The article ends with 15 standard comments she uses.

Murray, Donald M. "Teaching the Other Self: The Writer's First Reader." CCC. 33 (May, 1982), 140-147.

(For annotation see page 14.)

Murray, Donald M. A Writer Teaches Writing. Houghton Mifflin Co.: Boston, 1968.

(For annotation see page 15.)

Najimy, Norman C. ed., Measure for Measure. NCTE: Urbana, 1981.

(For annotation see page 39.)

Shaughnessy, Mina. Errors and Expectations. Oxford University Press: N.Y. 1980.

311 pages

Teachers, usually trained to evaluate writing by absolute standards rather than by developmental standards, concentrate unrealistically on certain errors during the early stages of writing instruction, Shaughnessy says. She then argues that we need developmental models for maturation of writing skills. Lacking these models, we cannot say with certainty what progress in writing ought to look like. The absolute standard of correctness associated with English teachers is unrealistic, yet it is "irresponsibly romantic" to say that error is not important at all. She presents two propositions to help English teachers:

1. Errors count, but not as much as most English teachers think. Error-prone English students should be viewed the same way ESL students are viewed: their errors reflect their linguistic situation, not their educability. Time will rub off the rough edges; English teachers should

force them to use language, which means allow them to write, write, write.

2. Teachers should keep in mind the cost to them and their students of mastering certain forms and be ready "to cut their losses" when the investment seems no longer commensurate with the return. The fact that a student has not mastered a concept does not mean the teacher should go back and teach it over and over until the student masters it. Cognition of the concept may be beyond the student at that moment. Allow the student to write and casually keep noting the error.

Wiener, Harvey S. The Writing Room. Oxford University Press: N.Y. 1981.

(For annotation see page 17.)

Research

Beach, Richard. "The Effects of Between-draft Teacher Evaluation Versus Student Self-evaluation on High School Students' Revising Rough Drafts." Research in the Teaching of English. 13 (May, 1979), 111-119.

Among other things, this study examined treatment (written teacher evaluation versus guided self-evaluation between drafts), topics, grade level, and sex as they affected the mean degree of change from rough to final drafts. 103 students in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades were subjects, and their papers were judged by separate graders. The

essential finding was that students who were provided between-draft teacher evaluation showed a greater degree of change than students either employing self-guided forms or receiving no evaluation. Little difference was noted between those doing self-evaluation and those doing no evaluation. Beach did not say what method of teacher evaluation was used, but proposes that teachers encouraging revision should provide evaluation between drafts. The difference in topics (all in the expository mode) also produced markedly different results in revision. Beach suggests that great care be given to topics and that more research is needed.

Brannon, Lil and C.H. Knoblauch. "On Students' Rights to Their Own Texts: A Model of Teacher Response." CCC. 33 (May, 1982), 157-166.

(For annotation see page 18.)

Brimmer, Larry Dan. "The Effects of Praise and Blame on Writing." English Journal. 71 (Jan. 1982), 58-60.

This experiment was conducted by Brimmer in his writing lab over an eight week period. Eleventh and twelfth graders who had failed the writing proficiency exam and who were, with one exception, Mexican-Americans with reading comprehension levels between 4th and 9th grade, wrote one sample each week. Some students received negative comments on their papers, others positive comments. At the end of the eight weeks there was no observable difference in the writing of students from the two groups. Brimmer's conclusions are

that students will respond favorably to either type of reinforcement, that "What seems important is that attention of some kind is paid to student attempts," and that the attitudes of the two groups were markedly different: students receiving praise wanted to write more. Brimmer concedes that a long term study is needed. He footnotes other research.

Freedman, Sarah Warshauer. "Why Do Teachers Give the Grades They Do?" CCC. 30 (May, 1979), 161-164.

This study of college teachers at California State University at San Francisco found that teachers at that level valued content over organization, sentence structure, and mechanics. Freedman rewrote student papers to be weak or strong in content, organization, sentence structure, or mechanics. She then had colleagues, ignorant of what she was doing, grade them. She concludes that "a pedagogy for teaching writing should aim first at helping students develop their ideas logically, being sensitive to appropriate amount of explanation necessary for the audience." The findings of this study contrast with the Searle and Dillon study (see page 55) which discovered that most teachers at the intermediate grades avoid comments on content. The Freedman study seems to say that teachers at all levels should pay attention to content first.

Gagné, Ellen D., J. William More, William E. Hauck, and Robert V. Hoy. "The Effect on Children's Performance of a Discrepancy Between Adult Expectancy and Feedback Statements." The Journal of Experimental Education. 47 (Summer, 1979), 320-324.

This research on fourth graders, though not in the field of writing instruction, may have important implications for the teaching of writing. While some researchers in teacher response to student writing try to determine whether positive or negative response is better, this research tries to determine if positive and/or negative feedback statements, when combined with low and/or high expectancy statements at the beginning of a task (in this case a memory exercise), affect the student's performance. The findings point in a new direction. Instead of trying to determine which is better, perhaps researchers should explore the possibility that neither is as effective alone as when used together. These researchers found that when a discrepancy exists between adult expectations and feedback statements, most groupings of students performed better. The best performance occurred with a group of high achievers given low expectancy statements before the task, then positive feedback during the task. Because the groups were formed by I.Q. and by achievement level, this article is worth reading by anyone concerned with individualizing instruction or with homogeneous grouping.

Lynch, Catherine M. and Patricia A. Klemans. "Evaluating Our Evaluation." College English. 40 (Oct. 1978) 166-180.

These instructors of composition and literature at Pennsylvania State University at McKeesport designed a questionnaire asking basic writing students what they thought of teacher comments written on their papers. The study revealed that students found comments that clearly explained what was wrong most helpful. The comments they thought least useful were vague like "awk" and those which questioned content. The results are detailed, with many categories (over 16) and many student comments included. Lynch and Klemans conclude by stating that the ideal vehicle for response is the personal conference; but since many factors force teachers to rely on the written comment, those should be detailed, clear, factual, and positive. They report that many students remarked that comments at the end of the paper "counted and helped the most."

Sommers, Nancy. "Responding to Student Writing." CCC. 33 (May, 1982), 148-156.

This article is the result of a year long study by Nancy Sommers, Lil Brannon, and Cyril Knoblauch on comments teachers write on student papers to motivate revision. 35 university teachers at two universities were studied. This study was an attempt to determine what messages teachers give their students through comments on papers, and what determines which comments students ignore or use in revision.

A computer response was compared to the teachers' responses.

Sommers reports two findings:

- 1) Teachers' comments can take students' attention away from their own purposes and focus that attention on the teachers' purposes.
- 2) Most teachers' comments are not text-specific and could be interchanged, rubber-stamped, from text to text.

These findings are not good, Sommers says, blaming the problem on lack of teacher training in how to respond in writing. We teachers, she goes on to say, need to do three things when responding in writing:

- 1) Sabotage our students' conviction that the drafts they have written are complete and coherent.
- 2) Develop an appropriate level of response for commenting on a first draft, and differentiate that level from the level suitable to a second or third draft.
- 3) View our comments as a means of helping the students become more effective writers.

The Traditional Response Method

Description

In the traditional way of responding to student writing, teachers collect essays, take them home, and, using red ink pens, correct or point out every error they can find. A grade is then attached with an explanatory comment. While some comments are directed at content, the teacher is mostly an editor of grammatical and stylistic errors found in books like Strunk and White's The Elements of Style, Warriner's Grammar Book series, and/or The Harbrace College Handbook. The teacher's comments are responses to student error, and "good writing" is rewarded with few red marks and a high grade.

In a variation of this method, two grades are written on each essay, one for content and one for mechanics. Another is the analytical checklist attached to the paper; as many as twenty different stylistic or grammatical categories are often featured, and the teacher checks the degree of success the student had in avoiding error in each area. (For examples of these checklists see Compose Yourself, pp. 62-64.) Other teachers use the editing symbols found in most grammar books, and students are supposed to use these books to understand the teacher's response.

Comment

This method seems best suited as a response to middle or late drafts of students who need tough criticism. Both

Murray and Shaughnessy agree that students at times need harsh criticism. The teacher using this method (spending a great deal of time "correcting" flaws in the essay) makes many comments and suggestions on a student's paper. The student is expected to revise the paper according to the suggestions and corrections. Since the initial stages of writing are devoted to discovering content, a Traditional Response too soon into the writing process could hinder the writing process by asking that too much attention be given to editing before the student has sufficiently developed the topic. Or, the student may try writing what the teacher thinks should be written, not in thinking about the subject in an active manner that would discover the student's own subject matter. Good writers and writers who occasionally need to be reminded that they are not as good as they think they are will benefit more from this method than the insecure or the truly weak writer.

Annotated Bibliography

Theory and Practice

Black, Mary J. et al. A Common Ground for Assessing Competence in Written Expression. Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools. 1978.

46 pages

This booklet guides teachers and administrators in understanding the complexities of measuring competence in writing. It makes the point that writing assessment can

become a common ground for planning instruction. The booklet was intended for workshop use and gives excellent examples of holistic and analytic scales, along with writing samples which can aid in understanding on what grounds students may be assessed. The booklet argues against the objective testing of writing skills and for the direct measurement of writing samples. It moves away from the preteaching of writing skills through preteaching problems and their solutions, and towards the teaching of writing by handling problems as they come up in student writing. The booklet also describes writing prompts in the four domains of writing, shows steps for creating a scoring guide, contains a glossary, and has an excellent, brief bibliography.

Compose Yourself: A Plan for Instruction in Written Composition Grades 7-12. Los Angeles City Schools Instructional Planning Division, Publication No. SC-741, 1976.

75 pages

This "Plan for Instruction" is an overview of a comprehensive program in composition for grades 7 through 12. Avoiding long lists of objectives, this booklet outlines "continuous composing experiences in four major domains of written discourse" at five levels of competency. The four domains are 1) Sensory/descriptive, 2) Imaginative/narrative, 3) Practical/informative, and 4) Analytical/expository. Starting with prewriting activities the booklet gives writing activities for each domain at each level of competency.

Included are sample student essays that have teacher comments written on them. Eight pages of the booklet are devoted to suggestions to help teachers mark and grade papers (pp. 57-65). Basically, the booklet asks teachers to be "reasonable" when marking and grading essays and to give equal weight to content and mechanics. While the booklet emphasizes (through its many examples) The Traditional Response Method, it does, on page 59, advise teachers to use other methods of response in order to save time. Peer Response, both written and oral; Student Self-Evaluation; Holistic Evaluation; and The One-to-One Conference are some "time savers" briefly described. Examples of student self-evaluation forms and of evaluation forms for teacher use are given.

Hillard, Helen et al, editors. Suggestions for Evaluating Senior High School Writing. NCTE: Urbana, not dated.

109 pages

Prepared by the Association of English Teachers of Western Pennsylvania, this booklet is intended to guide high school English teachers in evaluating compositions. Sample tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade compositions are evaluated and commented on. Comments are of two sorts: 1) those intended for the student and 2) remarks intended for the teacher reading the booklet. Most of the writing is expository in nature and suggestions for writing

assignments are given. The basic premise is that evaluation should be for the purpose of teaching; therefore, it should be constructive. Skillful questioning and suggestions on how to correct errors appear to be the essence of their recommendation. An end comment should include the success with which the student has fulfilled the assignment. While giving what seems to be sound advice ("avoid writing vague comments in the margin"), the work seems oblivious to research and modern theory in composing and perpetuates evaluation as an editing process. If teachers won't change and can't be retrained, this is the answer, have them continue to do what they do--only better.

Najimy, Norman C. ed. Measure for Measure. NCTE: Urbana, 1981.

(For annotation see page 39.)

Sloan, Gary. "The Perils of Paper Grading." English Journal. 66 (May, 1977), 33-36.

Sloan neatly categorizes harmful graders into three descriptive types: the Nit-Picker, the Compulsive Revisionist, and the Indignant Partisan. Nit-Pickers impose every grammatical rule in their repertoire, Compulsive Revisionists teach style--their own, and Indignant Partisans slay all papers that disagree with their obviously correct ideologies. At the end of this article, Sloan discusses an approach which guides the student stylistically through the use of

exercises in rewriting that avoid personal criticism or teacher bias. Though his approach is positive, it limits the teacher and does not seem to be as well thought out as his criticisms of grading, which (though a bit snide) make the article worth reading.

Research

Beach, Richard. "The Effects of Between-draft Teacher Evaluation Versus Student Self-evaluation on High School Students' Revising Rough Drafts." Research in the Teaching of English. 13 (May, 1979), 111-119.

(For annotation see page 48.)

Brannon, Lil and C.H. Knoblauch. "On Students' Rights to Their Own Texts: A Model of Teacher Response." CCC. 33 (May, 1982), 157-166.

(For annotation see page 18.)

Brimmer, Larry Dan. "The Effects of Praise and Blame on Writing." English Journal. 71 (Jan. 1982), 58-60.

(For annotation see page 49.)

Edelsberg, Charles Marc. "A Collaborative Study of Student Writers' Uses of Teacher Evaluation." Dissertation Abstracts International. 41 (June, 1981), 4373-A (Order No. 8107319).

(For annotation see page 28.)

Emig, Janet. The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders. NCTE: Urbana, 1971.

(For annotation see page 29.)

Groff, Patrick. "Does Negative Criticism Discourage Children's Compositions." Language Arts. 52 (Oct. 1975), 1032-1034.

This article briefly reviews studies from 1963 to 1973 that look at the effect negative criticism has on children's writing and compares the results of negative criticism to those of positive criticism. Patrick Groff concludes that research supports the use of negative criticism by stating that at worst it is no better than positive criticism. He includes a bibliography. Brimmer's study and Gagne's study are more recent looks at the effects of negative and positive criticism; though neither directly contradicts Groff's conclusion, they do view response as more complex, as affecting the motivations and attitudes of students as well.

Lynch, Catherine M. and Patricia A. Klemans. "Evaluating Our Evaluations." College English. 40 (Oct. 1978), 166-180.

(For annotation see page 52.)

Raymond, James C. "Cross Grading: An Experiment in Evaluating Composition." CCC. (Feb. 1976), 52-55.

This article details an experiment by the English department at the University of Alabama to achieve at least "wild civility" in the evaluation of Freshman Composition papers. The goals were to give students some assurance of consistency in evaluation of their work and to train teaching

assistants in evaluation. The essays from the Freshman Composition classes were given to two teachers not associated with Freshman Composition classes, along with a checklist for evaluation. The results revealed weakness in the "teacher as grader" tradition. The classroom teachers, as graded papers were returned, gained a heightened awareness of the problems of evaluation. These are some of the problems with grading they encountered:

1. The teachers had difficulty agreeing on criteria.
2. The teachers had difficulty explaining criteria to students and each other.
3. The ability of the teacher was being measured by grades assigned to the teacher's students' papers, causing the teacher to pressure the grader for precision and clarity.
4. Papers were sometimes graded down for debatable questions of usage or quirks of style that were merely a matter of taste.
5. Teachers felt insulted by sarcastic or glib comments on their students' papers.
6. Teachers were annoyed by unexplained low grades.
7. Papers graded holistically were not as helpful as those graded analytically.

Two views that were expressed by the students in a midsemester survey made apparent a positive shift in their relationship with the classroom teacher:

- A. The teacher became more of a helper than a critic.
- B. The student became more willing to accept the instructor's suggestions.

Raymond remarks that because of staff guarding, the adversary relationship between student and teacher is eliminated and a great deal of resentment towards the teacher is cut out. If this is so, then it must follow that a healthier attitude towards writing will result. This research seems to reinforce the observations of Diederich and Moffet that the teacher is better off not grading his or her own students' essays.

Searle, Dennis, and David Dillon. "The Message of Marking: Teacher Written Response to Student Writing at Intermediate Grade Levels." Research in the Teaching of English. 14 (Oct. 1980), 233-242.

This study investigated the written responses made by intermediate level teachers to their students' writing. Findings show that teachers overwhelmingly responded to form rather than content and that specific types of responses tended to be of two kinds: remarks that evaluated the work generally, like "well written;" and remarks that were instructional by focusing on mechanical errors or language structures. Searle and Dillon conclude with a view that teachers saw writing in their English classes as practice in mastering forms of writing, beginning with mechanics. They also include an observation that more information is

needed on what happens after the papers are handed back and on what happens before the papers are written. They end with a suggestion that a comparison of teacher responses to pupils' writing should be made to the responses of other groups, such as parents, preservice teachers, and professional writers.

Sommers, Nancy. "Responding to Student Writing." CCC.
33 (May, 1982), 148-156.

(For annotation see page 52.)

The Staff Grading Method

Description

Paul Diederich advocates this method of response to allow students and teachers to work with more cooperation and understanding than when teachers grade their own students' essays. Several times a quarter, essays are collected and exchanged by writing teachers in the same department. The teachers must meet and agree on grading criteria for either a Traditional Response or a Limited Written Response (a Holistic Evaluation, according to the findings of Raymond's study, does not work well). The papers are marked by a writing teacher not teaching the class, then returned, and students discuss with their teacher the comments and grades. These evaluations would be the only essays evaluated for the term, as the purpose for doing Staff Grading is to remove the adversary relationship between student and teacher, who now become partners, both with a stake in the student learning to write well. Fewer essays are graded using Staff Grading, but the writing teacher helps the students produce first drafts and revise them. Only the best essays of each student are handed in for the staff grading.

Comment

According to Raymond and Diederich, Staff Grading works in creating a better relationship between writing teacher and student. The teacher becomes more helper than critic,

and the student becomes more receptive to teacher suggestions. An additional benefit of this method is that writing teachers become more aware of the problems of grading and more aware of the effects the comments have on students. This method seems best suited to take place at the end of the writing process, because all necessary revisions have been made before the staff grading. Though Staff Grading takes place only at the end of the writing process, it forces the teacher to pay attention to the whole process, for the students' essays will be looked at by other teachers, thus exposing to some extent the teacher's classroom practices. In fact, Raymond's study shows how Staff Grading can be used to raise the quality of writing instruction at a school by creating a forum for discussion of teaching techniques and grading policies.

Annotated Bibliography

Theory and Practice

Diederich, Paul. Measuring Growth in English. NCTE: Urbana, 1974.

103 pages

Diederich talks of the pain and difficulty of grading essays. He even states that it made teaching an unpleasant occupation. Happily, he found an answer: Staff Grading. This frees the teacher from becoming an adversary of the student, a relationship which wastes valuable instruction

time. At the end of a specified time, an essay is given to other teachers to grade. One essay or several essays graded at intervals determines a student's grade in the class. Diederich states that he still requires an essay a week with students choosing which of their essays should be graded. He says that he still goes over each essay with the students and that the tips he gives them on how to improve their essays are valued more highly than if he were grading them. He relies heavily on praise and believes only one modest suggestion for improvement is best, especially with remedial students. He says that a friendly relationship between teacher and student is the most effective way of teaching.

Research

Raymond, James C. "Cross Grading: An Experiment in Evaluating Composition." CCC. 27 (Feb. 1976), 52-55.

(For annotation see page 60.)

The Holistic Evaluation Method

Description

Holistic Evaluation is sometimes called Holistic Scoring or General Impression Scoring. The reader places a score or grade on a piece of writing after a rapid reading that gives a general impression of the effectiveness of the writing. "Holistic evaluation is usually guided by a holistic scoring guide (a 'rubric') which describes each feature and identifies high, middle and low quality levels for each feature" (Cooper, p. 3). Readers are trained for reliability using sample essays and the scoring guide before doing the evaluation. No comments or other markings are made on the essay.

Many variations to this method exist. Cooper describes six different types of Holistic Evaluation, and the other books and articles mentioned under this method include various models for Holistic Evaluation. Most of Cooper's article is devoted to holistic scoring guides he calls "scales" that are used for ranking papers, diagnosing the writing problems of groups, assessing programs or research, or determining proficiency for placement or graduation. The other books and articles pertain more closely to Holistic Evaluation as a tool for teaching writing. While most of them use it because it is a fast easy way of grading, Thompson, in his research, looked at how well students learned to write after a semester of doing Holistic Evaluation

themselves. He trained students in this method and found that it helped develop them as writers. Dreyer, in his article, also explains a unique variation that puts the burden of analyzing what is wrong in an essay back on the student. He marks his students' essays "S" or "U" for satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The "U" means that what Dreyer has just taught them was not demonstrated in the essay. The student needs to have a certain number of "S" essays for a grade in the class, so he or she has the option of rewriting a "U" essay or not. Students who choose to rewrite are forced to find out what their essays did not do that they should have done.

Comment

This method seems to have two uses for the classroom teacher. When the writing teacher has to respond to many essays in a short period of time, as at the end of a grading period, the speed and reliability of this method make it appealing. Obviously, it would be a poor method to use to stimulate revision, since no comments are given. Therefore, it would only be appropriate for final grading on essays. The second use refers directly to Thompson's research. When students are trained to grade essays holistically, Thompson found they learn to write better (how much better he doesn't say). Training students to respond to writing according to a rubric reveals to the student how writing is often judged,

teaches the student which features of writing are important, and gives the student valuable experience in criticizing writing. Though the uses of this method of response seem limited since it doesn't stimulate revision, it is one way of allowing students to have an audience other than the teacher.

Annotated Bibliography

Theory and Practice

Black, Mary J. et al. A Common Ground for Assessing Competence in Written Expression. Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools. 1978.

(For annotation see page 55.)

Cooper, Charles R. "Holistic Evaluation of Writing." Evaluating Writing. Edited by Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell. NCTE: Urbana, 1977. 3-31.

This article defines Holistic Evaluation as a "guided procedure for sorting or ranking pieces" (p. 3). The rater makes no corrections or revisions on the paper. Only a letter or number is assigned to each piece, indicating the rater's impression of how the piece of writing ranks against other pieces of writing, or how it compares to a scoring guide which describes certain features as desirable. Cooper describes in detail various types of Holistic Evaluations: the Essay Scale, the Analytic Scale, the Dichotomous Scale, Feature Analysis, Primary Trait Scoring, General Impression Marking, and Center of Gravity Response. Procedures for

developing scales and strengths and weaknesses of the different scales are discussed.

Dreyer, John. "Grading Student Compositions: An Alternative to the Traditional Weaponry." Media and Methods. 13 (March, 1977), 62-64.

As a once unhappy high school writing teacher, Dreyer developed a plan to put the grading of compositions in perspective with what he had taught the students. He had the feeling that his writing assignments weren't teaching anything, they were just producing grades. He now has each writing assignment teach something different, such as the use of details, a clear purpose, and transitions. He comments on the writing and also puts an "S" for satisfactory or a "U" for unsatisfactory on the paper. The student may rewrite to receive an "S." At the end of the course, an arbitrary number of "S's" is an "A," one less is a "B" and so on. As the assignments add up, what was taught in the previous one must not be ignored in the present one or it will receive a "U" and have to be rewritten. He points out that when spelling and mechanics interfere with communication, the paper will receive a "U." This simplified method has allowed him to assign more essays and to focus his teaching on specific concepts.

Najimy, Norman C. ed. Measure for Measure. NCTE: Urbana, 1981.

(For annotation see page 39.)

O'Hare, Frank, Dr. "How to Cut Hours Off the Time You Spend Marking Papers." A pamphlet produced by Scholastic, Inc. 1981.

16 pages

Frank O'Hare here outlines an eight-step system for teaching and responding to writing: 1) Introducing Topics, 2) Discussing Topics, 3) Writing a Rough Draft, 4) Editing, 5) Working on a Final Draft, 6) Handing in the Final Draft, 7) Selecting Each Student's Best Paper, and 8) Grading by the Teacher. In this one month unit, students write three essays, edit their own work and edit others' work by following a teacher-made editing sheet. All three essays, numbered by the student from best to least best, and all editing sheets, rough drafts, notes, and outlines are handed in to the teacher. O'Hare says that 500 teachers in Florida tried this. They quickly read or only "skimmed" the best paper of each student and checked that the other work was there with some effort visible. No "red marking" occurred. Quality and effort grades were given. Mechanics were worked on after the writing unit was over. O'Hare states that "the improvement was noticeable."

Research

Thompson, Richard R. "Peer Grading: Some Promising Advantages For Composition Research and the Classroom." Research in the Teaching of English. 15 (May, 1981), 172-174.

(For annotation see page 30.)

The Student Self-Evaluation Method

Description

In Student Self-Evaluation, students comment on their own essays and often grade their own essays before submitting them to the teacher. The teacher may regrade the essays or respond to the students' evaluations or do both. Since the purposes vary, what students do during Self-Evaluations varies. One purpose of Self-Evaluation is for revision (Beach, p. 112), so students, using an editing sheet that asks general questions about content, form, mechanics, and spelling, mark on their own papers, then revise accordingly and finally turn both drafts in to the teacher for grading. (For sample student self-evaluation forms see Compose Yourself, pp. 60-64.)

Rather than give students an editing sheet that asks general questions about writing, a teacher may have the students evaluate their writing based on specific questions that relate to what is being taught. If a student, for instance, has been learning to use transitions, a question on the editing sheet may ask for certain types of transitions a certain number of times. A specific content may be checked: "Have you contrasted the settings as well as the main characters in each of the short stories?" or a series of specific questions may be followed by some general ones. Then the revision is made.

A third purpose of Student Self-Evaluation is to force students into making judgments about their writing instead

of just editing it. One way of doing this is to use the editing forms, but rather than having students revise after marking on their own papers, the teacher has them place a grade on their own papers and turn them in. The teacher then reviews each student's evaluation with the option of changing the grade.

In an alternate version students write a response to their own essays, answering a few general questions about the quality. For example:

1. What are the strengths of your essay?
2. What are its weaknesses?
3. What one thing do you need to do to improve it?

(For other questions Lyons, p. 42 and Beaven, p. 43.)

Students hand in their essays and answers to the questions for teacher review and response. Again, it is possible for students to attach grades to their own work. Because students tire of the same questions if they are used week after week, the teacher should vary them.

Comment

This method of response may be the most limited. Nancy Sommers states that students will revise in a "narrow and predictable way" if they don't receive feedback from teacher or peers (p. 149). Reinforcing the idea that Self-Evaluation may be of limited value is Richard Beach's research which indicates that students don't make significant revisions

after they evaluate their own writing. This means one of two things: 1) Self-Evaluation is a waste of time if intended for revision as it seems to be no more than an exercise in proofreading, or 2) students and teachers need to know how to improve Self-Evaluation for the purposes of revision. Susan Miller's study of the perceptions and habits of writers shows that a formal Self-Evaluation does not benefit revision, that in fact, for professional writers it inhibited revision. The purposes for Self-Evaluation must then be questioned. Mary Beaven points out that the purpose best served by Self-Evaluation is to help students make judgments about their own writing. Susan Miller says it helps students perceive themselves as writers. By making value judgments of their own product, however, students become self-satisfied (Miller, p. 182). If that is so, if the purpose of Self-Evaluation is to help the students perceive themselves as writers, and if Self-Evaluation hinders revision, then Self-Evaluation should come at the end of the writing process--if it is to be used at all.

Many specialists in the teaching of writing have been saying that the goal of response should be to teach students to be critical of their own writing (Dusel, p. 3; Garrison, How A Writer Works, p. viii; Murray, A Writer Teaches Writing, p. 10; Sommers, p. 148). Care must be taken however, that in teaching students to be critical of their own writing we don't stop them from revising it. We must realize that

those critical powers that help produce good writing are at work throughout the writing process and should not be called for in a formal Self-Evaluation step until the end.

Annotated Bibliography

Theory and Practice

Beaven, Mary H. "Individualized Goal Setting, Self-Evaluation, And Peer Evaluation." Evaluating Writing. Edited by Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell, NCTE: Urbana, 1977. 135-156.

Mary Beaven, along with English teachers she has worked with, has developed three methods of responding to student writing: individualized goal setting, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation. In all three methods, the individual student, not the teacher, assumes the role of responder. Because teacher comments often produce negative student attitudes that hinder writing, the teacher is removed from the evaluative process. Six assumptions underlie these three methods:

1. Growth in writing occurs slowly, perhaps measurable in years.
2. Teacher evaluatory comments on essays create an inhibiting environment for writing.
3. Risk-taking is important for growth in writing.
4. Goal setting is an important process in the development of student writers.
5. Writing improvement does not occur in isolation.

6. We have a reasonably clear understanding of procedures that will permit effective formative evaluation.

Beaven says a climate of trust must be developed in the classroom to inspire more authentic writing. After trust is developed, the students are ready for the three methods. She explains in detail specific classroom techniques to implement the three methods.

While the idea behind these methods--that students must develop the ability to evaluate writing if they are to become good writers--seems consistent with contemporary thought on teaching writing, one study that took place after this article was written, Richard Beach's (see page 42), found that student self-evaluation and peer evaluation are not effective methods for stimulating significant revision of student essays. Beach's findings and the findings of "Testing the Effectiveness of the One-to-One Method of Teaching Composition: Improvement of Learning in English Project" (see page 18) both show that the teacher of writing can be a responder that causes the student to write better. Perhaps training teachers in response is the key to their effectiveness.

Compose Yourself: A Plan for Instruction in Written Composition Grades 7-12. Los Angeles City Schools Instructional Planning Division, Publication No. SC-741, 1976.

(For annotation see page 56.)

Lyons, Bill. "The P Q P Method of Responding to Writing." English Journal. 70 (March, 1981), 42-43.

(For annotation see page 35.)

O'Hare, Frank, Dr. "How to Cut Hours Off the Time You Spend Marking Papers." A pamphlet produced by Scholastic, Inc. 1981.

(For annotation see page 71.)

Research

Beach, Richard. "The Effects of Between-draft Teacher Evaluation Versus Student Self-evaluation on High School Students' Revising Rough Drafts." Research in the Teaching of English. 13 (May, 1979), 111-119.

(For annotation see page 48.)

Miller, Susan. "How Writers Evaluate Their Own Writing." CCC. 33 (May, 1982), 176-183.

This research considers three questions about writers' evaluation of their own work: 1) What is the process of self-evaluation? 2) Who shares it? 3) How is it related to the entire experience of writing, both process and product? Three groups were looked at: professional writers, undergraduate and graduate students, and teachers and other professionals. Three kinds of evaluative experiences were discovered: 1) The value of the writing lay in the audience's response. Nearly all students thought like this, but only 30% of the professionals did. 2) How well did the finished product fulfill the writer's intention? Professional editors and authors frequently cited this type of evaluation.

3) The writer valued the writing in which the writer learned or mastered a particular technique, or had managed a theme in a way that taught the writer what the writer meant. The words "discovery" and "learning" were frequently used. Again, professional writers were most frequently in this category. "Unfortunately, student writers rarely report that they value writing for the sake of discovery..." (p. 179). Many professional writers mentioned all three forms of evaluation, but most students only mentioned one.

Susan Miller found several relationships between self-evaluation and the entire process of writing. First, "self-evaluation followed the writing process, but it was evidently not the same experience that motivated revision." The self-evaluation of a piece of work, she says, interferes with, or ends, any sense of "work in progress" (p. 181). The second point, then, she continues, is that we should not encourage or engage in self-evaluation prematurely. On the other hand, she concludes, the third and final point is that those who do not engage in self-evaluation do not gain from having written. A writer must evaluate his or her experience and feel the quality of the writing to develop. The writer engaged in self-evaluation will develop a feeling of "being good at it" and will assume the identity of "one who writes." As a conclusion, Miller suggests that teachers work not only with evaluating student writers in comparison with each other or against a model, but also with a later phase of

response in the writing process, a phase concerned with writers evaluating their own work.

CONCLUSIONS

The method of response the teacher uses should be chosen to achieve specific instructional goals. That choice should depend on 1) what the teacher wants to teach about writing; 2) when in the writing process the response occurs; 3) the ability and maturity of the student; 4) the classroom situation (class size, time restraints, etc.). Generally, though, some specific conclusions about response can be made from this study. First, early in the writing process students should be questioned about content, so they can discover and develop their own texts. The burden for discovery, development and organization of content should be placed on the student. The One-to-One Conference Method, the Peer Response Methods (written and oral), and the Limited Written Response Method appear to be more effective and practical within the early stages of the writing process than the other methods. The intention of these early-stage responses is to stimulate revision in content, not to focus the student's attention on spelling, usage, or mechanics.

Response to papers in mid-stage of the writing process--second and third drafts--should move beyond content to expression and style and end in editing. A trained writing teacher, using the One-to-One Conference, Limited Written

Response, or Traditional Response, would question students on accuracy and appropriateness of expression, matters of style, and considerations of audience. Revision is still the goal of response at this stage. At the end of this stage, the teacher and student should focus on any spelling, usage, and mechanics errors. Responsibility should be placed on the student to carefully edit his/her own paper, but the teacher should not let a student's carelessness or ignorance in editing detract from an otherwise good paper. Teachers should demand a student's best effort and teach to the most important weaknesses.

Finally, grading should take place only at the end of the writing process, after appropriate revision and editing are ended. Though grading is necessary for students to know where they stand and for teachers to ascertain whether or not course objectives have been met, neither teachers nor students should feel that writing is something produced just for a grade. That distorted function of writing changes when the appropriate methods of response are used throughout the writing process. No longer is writing created only to be graded. At the least, grading becomes just one of many reasons to write. For writing to be important, writers need to feel that writing functions for them by doing something (Tompkins, p. xxv): affect people, vent emotions, be beautiful, create joy, shock, confusion, hatred, understanding; it can teach, and it can discover and cause

learning. If students learn this--and they can through teacher and peer response to content--they learn the importance of writing.

Annotated Bibliography

Tompkins, Jane P. editor. Reader Response Criticism. John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1980.

275 pages

Of interest to the teacher of writing in this collection of essays are Walker Gibson's essay on the "mock reader," Wolfgang Iser's article about the reading process as it involves the reader filling in the gaps left by the text, Stanley Fish's piece on "affective stylistics" which persuades that it is impossible to say the same thing two different ways, Norman Holland's "Unity Identity Text Self" that denies the possibility of objectivity in the reader, and Jane Tompkins' introduction that defines and explains the field of reader-response criticism. Tompkins' article ending the book is good background for anyone interested in literary criticism as it gives a history of literary response.

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APPENDIX

Grading Idiosyncracies, Handwriting, and Essay Length

The eight methods of response do not cover all the factors that influence the responder. Every teacher has idiosyncracies that influence his or her response to writing. Some might become upset at seeing certain spelling errors, others at discovering punctuation problems, and still others at usage errors. An essay with many short paragraphs or with one or two long ones could also bother some teachers. The placement of thesis statements and topic sentences, the use of rhetorical questions, the use of colloquialisms, the use of jargon--the list is endless--may well influence an English teacher's response. Research is needed in many of these areas to discover to what extent idiosyncracies do affect teacher response and whether or not they should affect it.

Two research projects, one on handwriting and one on essay length, show that graders are influenced by factors that have little to do with the quality of the writing. The Markham study shows that the effect of handwriting on graders is substantial. Done at the elementary level where handwriting is taught, this study opens up questions for the higher grades: Do teachers grade students' writing lower because of poor penmanship? Do teachers grade students'

writing higher because of good penmanship? How closely should penmanship be tied to an essay grade? Are teachers rewarding appearance while ignoring content? Is the student learning to value appearance over substance? Obviously, more research is needed in the area of penmanship and teacher response to writing. For now, perhaps the best way for teachers to handle the problems of penmanship is to look at the content first. Compliment good penmanship, but don't allow it to interfere with a critical look at what was said. If poor penmanship is carelessness, send the writing back to the student for a more carefully written copy. If poor penmanship is not carelessness but lack of ability, then the teacher must find other solutions: accept the essay, give penmanship lessons, demand typing, refer to a specialist in motor control.

The other study, the effect of essay length on the response of graders, by Tollefsen tells us that teachers often grade the longer essay higher than it should be graded and the shorter essay lower than it should. Teachers are battling stereotypes here: short essays are often underdeveloped and show little effort, long essays are usually well developed and indicate effort. If nothing else, this study reveals the need to train teachers to respond to what is most important in writing: to what was said. An overwhelming amount of research and an overwhelming number of specialists in the teaching of writing tell teachers to respond to content first, but these two studies reveal that

they are often strongly influenced by other factors.

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This study identifies a non-content factor that influences essay grading. A group of essays were rewritten in various qualities of handwriting and graded by several teachers and student teachers. In all cases poor handwriting affected the grade somewhat. Though inconclusive, this study reveals that more factors than content and mechanics are considered by graders. Though this study was done at the elementary level, it raises serious questions about how all teachers might be influenced by non-content factors.

Tollefsen, Nono, and D.B. Tracy. "Test Length and Quality in the Grading of Essay Responses." Education. 101 (Fall, 1980), 63-67.

The general hypothesis tested on these tenth graders' essays was that the quality rather than the length of the essays determines the grade assigned. Results indicate that if papers were of equal length, good quality papers were graded significantly higher than poor quality papers; however, long essays had a much higher mean score than short or moderate length papers. Though the graders were teachers trained to grade these essays on a 10 point rubric that ignored length, Tollefsen and Tracy conclude that length

affected the grading. From this they infer that irrelevant factors such as length, handwriting and eccentricities of the graders have a harmful effect on the evaluation of writing.