

Inclusive Feedback Practices

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Before you comment on the text itself:

- **Center students' own goals for writing.** You may ask students to attach a goals statement or reflective cover letter, but it's important to give students an opportunity to articulate what they want their text(s) to do. Respect and value students' work on its own terms.
- **Explain your own positionality.** Who are you as a reader? What are your expectations? What is your context? (Ask students to weigh in on these questions, too: what kind of reader do they want you to be? What context makes sense to them?)
- **Whenever possible, create the guidelines for feedback *with* students.** Co-creating feedback guidelines and/or grading criteria with students can be a powerful tool for ensuring that your feedback is responsive to students, useful to students, and helps students understand the goals and context of the assignment.

As you read/review students' texts:

- **Avoid feedback that reinforces only one way of speaking, writing, and making meaning.** Appeals to "clarity" (without attention to what clarity means for the specific context and audience), framing correctness as only equivalent to an a-contextual set of writing conventions, and making suggestions for revision that encourage or require students to eliminate their own voices or purposes are all ways of reinforcing single-standard language standards. These do harm to all students, particularly students of color and students from diverse language backgrounds.
- **Be a [generous reader](#).** As writing teachers, we often approach students' texts looking primarily for places to critique and ask for revision. Encouraging revision is, after all, one of the shared tenets of our various pedagogies. But if our relationship to students' work is primarily one of critique, we risk harming students and limiting their learning. Instead, we can approach student work as whole and significant; we can avoid making assumptions about students' intentions. We can celebrate what the text does well. And we can still ask questions and/or offer suggestions as long as those questions and suggestions come from a place of kindness, compassion, and care for students and their communities.

As you begin commenting on students' texts:

- **Ask authentic questions.** I tend to ask a lot of "how" and "why" questions as I read/review a text. These questions allow me to encourage students to expand upon their ideas or clarify their positions without me making assumptions about how they'll do those things.
- **Respond as a reader.** When I find it necessary to make declarative statements about what a text is or isn't doing, I always frame these from my position as a reader. "Here's what I hear you saying..." or "As I reader, I felt lost here because X wasn't clear to me."
- **Connect questions and responses to a specific place in the student's text.** Giving students general feedback about organization or evidence can be useful, but the kind of

feedback that students tell me they find most useful is the kind that's tied to a specific paragraph or part of their text.

After commenting on students' texts:

- **Review feedback to make sure it's specific and reasonable.** Asking students to take on too many significant revisions often results in students making no revisions at all, so review your comments to make sure you're asking for a reasonable number of revisions and asking students to prioritize revisions that will make the most difference. (I try to limit myself to asking for 1 or 2 major revisions and 1 or 2 moderate revisions, and I focus both my in-text comments and my endnote on these revisions.) As you consider how to focus your feedback, always return to the students' goals for their text. What do they want to accomplish? How does your feedback help them accomplish their goals?
- **Ask students to make decisions.** When I offer a specific suggestion for revision, I'll almost always offer students a few ways of addressing my feedback, and I always remind them that they need not take my advice/suggestion. They can choose to make some other revision or to keep the sentence/paragraph/section as-is, so long as they tell me why they've made that decision when given the chance to do so.
- **Create opportunities for reflection after feedback is given.** Whether in the form of a revision plan, a written or verbal response to the feedback they get, or as part of the next draft of the text, it's important to give students time and space to respond to our feedback.