

WAC News and Events

Campus-wide Workshops

Preventing Plagiarism

WAC, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and Library Services invite you to attend a free workshop covering issues such as designing assignments that minimize plagiarism opportunities, citation and plagiarism information for your students, and advice about dealing with cases of plagiarism.

When: Thursday, Nov. 11, 2-3:15 p.m.

Where: CTL meeting room, Library 4026

Please RSVP to Dan Melzer at melzer@csus.edu or (916) 278-6925.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS:

1st Annual CSU Sacramento Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum Conference

The WAC program invites you to propose an individual presentation or panel for a half-day conference on successful approaches to reading and writing across disciplines on Friday, February 28, 12:30-5 p.m. at the University Union.

To submit a proposal, send a 150-200 word abstract and title to wac@csus.edu. Please include your name and department (and names of other presenters for panel proposals). The deadline to submit a proposal is December 20, 2004.

Visit <http://www.csus.edu/wac/conference> for suggestions for topics and other information about the conference.



Handling the Paper Load

On September 22, the WAC program presented the workshop “Handling the Paper Load: Responding Effectively and Efficiently to Student Writing.” In this newsletter you’ll find resources from the workshop: advice for handling the paper load, example responses, and advice for responding to ESL/Multilingual students’ writing.

Advice

for Handling the Paper Load

- **Use a response rubric.** Although they may not be as thorough as responses written on students’ papers, response rubrics reinforce your writing objectives and take less time when your paper load seems overwhelming. Visit the WAC website at http://www.csus.edu/wac/teacher_resources.htm for example grading and response rubrics.
- **Comment on patterns you see in your students’ essays in class.** For example, if you notice that most students are having difficulty citing sources, rather than elaborating on this issue in every paper, discuss it as a class.
- **Stagger response.** Have students turn in essays at intervals so you’re never collecting every essay from every student in all of your classes at once.
- **Encourage students to visit the Writing Center.** The Writing Center (<http://www.asn.csus.edu/writing>) is an excellent option for feedback during the writing process.
- **Assign collaborative writing.** Collaborative assignments help students learn to work in teams—an important “real world” skill—and result in fewer essays to respond to.



- **Use “writing-to-learn” assignments.** Writing-to-learn assignments like journals, reading logs, electronic discussion board posts, etc. can be evaluated quickly, holistically, and at intervals. Visit the WAC website for more information about writing to learn.
- **Don’t proofread.** If students have failed to proofread their essays, don’t edit for them.
- **When you do respond to grammar, don’t try to point out every error.** Look for patterns of error, and ask students to learn to recognize their error patterns and edit their own writing. Research in Composition Studies has shown that students improve their grammar more rapidly by working on a few patterns of error at a time (see the example response on page 3).

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NOTE TO READERS: Pages 2 and 3 of the newsletter contain example hypothetical teacher feedback to a student responding to a prompt about the influence of media on society. Reflections on the responses are based on the advice for responding offered on page 1.

Example Teacher Response #1



The topic I will discuss is drugs, alcohol, and the media. Focus on beer. The media I will cover in this essay are television, commercials, and billboards. Since the don^{SP} of time alcohol has been an issue in society, and I will analyze it. *awkward frag*

You can picture the commercial. A tan, buff volleyball player spikes a shot, then reaches for a cold Budweiser. As he lifts it in the air, beautiful women in bikinis smile at him with an alluring smile. Rock music plays in the background. Never mind that drinking alcohol will not make you more athletic or popular with women. Never mind that the target audience for this commercial, teenagers and twenty-somethings, are the groups most likely to binge drink or die from a car accident while under the influence. This commercial is no exception. I watched television for three hours last night, and I saw five commercials that were almost exactly the same. Substitute rock stars or pro football players. I think there is definitely a connection between these kinds of commercials and the rising problem of alcohol abuse in teens. *awkward vague add more examples*

Commercials aren't the only kinds of media where this is glorified. When I was driving home on I-5 the other day I saw billboards showing women in tight skirts getting ready to pound a beer, men sking down a Budweiser bottle like it was a ski slope, and people who looked about my age partying with Miller Genuine Draft. Not necessarily always such a bad thing. The point is, there are so many billboards that glorify alcohol use that it sinks into our unconscience. We get bombarded and these advertisements have many negative effects on teens in my generation. *develop this*

I think the only solution to this problem is to make it illegal to advertise alcohol in television commercials or billboards. Can't actually drink alcohol on television or billboards. But that's not enough. Smoking is a perfect example of this, because they've been making it illegal to advertise cigarettes. *frag vague*

You need to develop your ideas and avoid vagueness. Explain your solution more. Fix your grammar errors! I counted off for these errors.

Reflection on Response #1:

This response points out some important areas where the essay lacks development, but all of the comments are directive ("develop this" and "add more examples") and there is only negative commentary and no praise. Errors are marked, but marking every error is time consuming and may overwhelm the student. Since the student has a pattern of using sentence fragments, it might have been more useful to focus on this pattern rather than mark every error. Markings like "vague" and "awkward" are a start, but students might not understand why something is "vague" or "awkward," so more explanation is needed.

Example Teacher Response #2



The topic I will discuss is drugs, alcohol, and the media. Focus on beer. The media I will cover in this essay are television, commercials, and billboards. Since the dawn of time alcohol has been an issue in society, and I will analyze it.

nice image to support your point

You can picture the commercial. A tan, buff volleyball player spikes a shot, then reaches for a cold Budweiser. As he lifts it in the air, beautiful women in bikinis smile at him with an alluring smile. Rock music plays in the background. Never mind that drinking alcohol will not make you more athletic or popular with women. Never mind that the target audience for this commercial, teenagers and twenty-somethings, are the groups most likely to binge drink or die from a car accident while under the influence. This commercial is no exception. I watched television for three hours last night, and I saw five commercials that were almost exactly the same. Substitute rock stars or pro football players. I think there is definitely a connection between these kinds of commercials and the rising problem of alcohol abuse in teens. *can you explore this connection?*

Commercials aren't the only kinds of media where this is glorified. When I was driving home on I-5 the other day I saw billboards showing women in tight skirts getting ready to pound a beer, men sking down a Budweiser bottle like it was a ski slope, and people who looked about my age partying with Miller Genuine Draft. Not necessarily always such a bad thing. The point is, there are so many billboards that glorify alcohol use that it sinks into our unconscious. We get bombarded and these advertisements have many negative effects on teens in my generation.

Good examples. What negative effects do they have?

I think the only solution to this problem is to make it illegal to advertise alcohol in television commercials or billboards. Can't actually drink alcohol on television or billboards. But that's not enough. Smoking is a perfect example of this, because they've been making it illegal to advertise cigarettes.

Good solution but you could have explained it more fully for the reader.

Susan, You have good examples and an interesting solution, but the reader needs a little more explanation to be convinced by your arguments. In your next essay, work on clarifying and developing your ideas. Sentence fragments sometimes made the essay confusing for the reader. I put a "✓" next to each sentence that had a fragment so you can work on combining these fragments with other sentences to make them complete. You can focus on sentence fragments when you edit the final draft of your next essay, but focus on developing ideas in your next rough draft.

Reflections on Response #2:

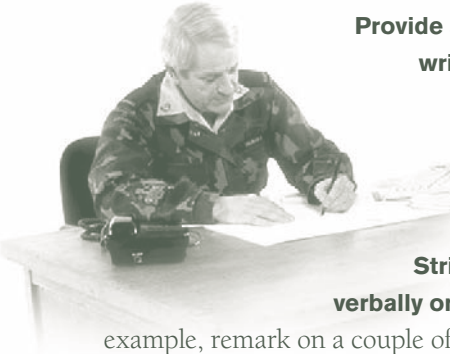
This response begins with praise for what the student has done well, and the constructive criticism is less directive and more open-ended than it is in response #1. The constructive criticism is also connected to future assignments ("In your next essay, work on clarifying and developing your ideas"). Rather than marking every misspelling and typo, the instructor points out a pattern of error and puts the onus on the student to work on this pattern for the next essay.

If you'd like to know more about these responding techniques and how to integrate them in your classes, contact Dan Melzer at (916) 278-6925 or melzer@csus.edu.

Responding to ESL Student Writing By Rachel Dodge, WAC Program Tutor

An important aspect of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) writers is being aware of the eminent presence of error in their writing. It is inescapable and quite understandable to have errors in one's writing when composing in a second language. Therefore, it is very important for teachers to have different strategies for responding to student writing, and ESL student writing in particular.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING *Strategies* WHEN RESPONDING TO ESL WRITING:



Provide all students the opportunity to revise their writing assignments at least once. This allows students time to garner feedback – either from the teacher, a tutor, or their peers – and then revise before the final draft is due, which is especially helpful for ESL writers.

Strive to first make positive comments, either verbally or in writing, when responding to papers. For example, remark on a couple of good ideas the student has presented, point to sections of the essay that are particularly strong, or compliment the overall organization of the paper.

Focus on the content of the paper next. Provide constructive criticism regarding the clarity with which ideas are presented, the organization of main ideas, and the effectiveness of the student's arguments. These first two response strategies are particularly helpful during the draft stage(s) of writing.

Look closely at sentence level errors, such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling, as a final step. Choose a few common errors the student has made throughout the paper. Make notes in the margins about these errors and focus on helping the student take note of mistakes that are consistently being made. This strategy helps students (and teachers) sift through what might otherwise appear to be an overwhelming amount of errors.

Avoid confusing, conflicting, or overly brief comments, so that the writer is clear about the suggestions being made. Throughout this entire, ongoing feedback process, it is important to be very specific.

“At the same time,” says CSUS TESOL Professor Dana Ferris, “teachers need to be careful not to appropriate (take over) student texts.”

Feedback

The following information from “Responding to Writing,” by Ferris, provides a partial summary of research findings for the past two decades in the area of teacher response and peer feedback to L2 (second language) writing:

- ✓ **Feedback** is most effective when delivered at intermediate stages of the writing process.
- ✓ **Teachers should provide feedback** on all aspects of student texts, including content, rhetorical structure, grammar, and mechanics.
- ✓ **Teacher feedback should be** clear and concrete to assist students with revision.
- ✓ **Teacher feedback must** take individual and contextual variables into account.
- ✓ **ESL writers** attend to teacher feedback and attempt to utilize it in their revisions.
- ✓ **Students** appear to enjoy peer feedback and find it helpful.¹

¹ Ferris, Dana. “Responding to Writing.” *Exploring the Dynamics of Second Language Writing*, Ed. Barbara Kroll. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2003. 122.