A workshop presented by New York City College of Technology Writing Fellows Jacob A. Cohen and Syelle Graves in collaboration with Carol Stanger and Gretchen Johnson of the Learning Center

EFFECTIVE GRADING STRATEGIES

Two Main Goals

I. Improve student writing
II. Reduce your grading time
What do we look for and mark when grading writing?

Working together in a group, take two minutes to brainstorm the elements that you evaluate when grading a student paper (e.g. thesis, spelling, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher-Order Concerns</th>
<th>Lower-Order Concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis statement</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of argument/ideas</td>
<td>Grammar (agreement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence used correctly</td>
<td>Formatting (font, spacing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic of conclusions</td>
<td>Citation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of topic sentences</td>
<td>Punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of paper</td>
<td>Sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follows assignment?</td>
<td>Vocabulary/word choice</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Style</td>
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</tbody>
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Instructor Feedback: What is our intent?
How do students perceive feedback?

- Improving vs. correcting
- Coach vs. judge
- Assessment to facilitate revisions vs. copy editing

Video—Beyond the Red Ink: Teacher’s Comments Through Students’ Eyes
Students at Bunker Hill Community College, Boston, MA

Gretchen Johnson,
College Assistant and Writing Consultant
Effective Grading Strategies Overview

**Strategies:**

1. Minimal marking
2. Supportive responding
3. Rubrics
4. Planning ahead to make grading more efficient

**Strategy # 1: Minimal Marking**

- Focus on higher-order concerns (organization, etc.) not on grammatical structure
- Focus on patterns (global errors)
  - Aim for one comment per error type
- Additional tips for multiple-draft assignments:
  - Straight and squiggly lines
  - Line-edit one or two paragraphs only
  - Avoid comments on things that will be removed
  - Identify sentences with errors, but leave corrections to students
Strategy # 2: Supportive Responding

- Use any color ink or pencil... except red
- Ask questions
- Write in legible, complete sentences
- Try little or no negative criticism in margins
- Positive reinforcement
  - “Your supporting arguments need some development, but your thesis statement is clear and strong.”
  - “You have this one great topic sentence here—now add similar topic sentences to your other paragraphs!”
Strategy #2: Supportive Responding—End Comments

- Sandwich negative comments between positive ones
- Personalize the response
- Make neutral descriptions – this is what you did (I am aware of what you’re doing)
- Type if possible or helpful
  - Can save time on drafts because you can re-read your old comments
Group Grading Exercise

Strategy #3: Rubrics

- Can use as checklist
  - For you and for student
- Makes grading technique transparent to students
- Makes grading more directed
- Effective way to communicate goals to students
- Holistic vs. task-specific
Strategy # 4: Planning ahead to make grading more efficient

- Not all assignments need to be graded
  - Try check-in assignments
  - Try uncollected writing assignments
- Peer Review
- Learning Center
References


Sommers, Nancy. “Responding to Student Writing.” *College Composition and Communication* 33, no. 2 (May 1982): 148-156.