# "Opportunities" vs. Injunctions: Guiding Student Revision through Conferencing and Written Feedback

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# Guiding Student Revision

* Theory:
  * Empower
  * Demystify
  * Identify Power Structures
  * Create Safe Environment

* Practice:
  * Multiple drafts
  * Text-specific feedback
  * Conferences > written feedback
  * Questions > directives
  * Avoid appropriating students' text

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# Empowering students to take ownership of their writing

* Peter Elbow:
  * Students are measurably stronger writers when they are given the chance to take greater ownership of their work and ideas.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing with Power*. New York: Oxford, 1981.

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# Demystifying academic discourse conventions

* Patricia Bizzell:

  * When we give students the opportunity to "analyze academic discourse conventions in such a way as to demystify them, we prepar[e] previously marginalized students to speak with powerful voices against the mainstream."

Bizzell, Patricia. *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1992.

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# Having students identify power structures, even those within the writing classroom

* Henry Giroux:
  * Writing pedagogy that has students engage with the power structures that are most immediate to them can have a transformative effect, especially for students from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds

Giroux, Henry. "Beyond the Ethics of Flag Waving: Schooling and Citizenship for a Critical Democracy." The WAC Clearing House 64.5 (1991): 305-308

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# Creating a safe environment where students feel comfortable writing freely

* National Council of Teachers of English's belief about the teaching of writing:

  * "[i]n order to provide quality opportunities for student writing, teachers must... create a [classroom environment where] students are willing to write freely and at length."

http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/writingbeliefs

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# Actually responding to student writing: the nuts and bolts

* Dana Ferris's "Best Practices"
    * Avoid appropriating students' texts
    * Questions > directive

Ferris, Dana R. "Responding to Student Writing: Teachers' Philosophies and Practices" *Assessing Writing* 19. (2014): 6-23.

1. Teacher feedback (whether written or oral) should focus on a range of issues, including content, organization, language, mechanics, and style, and the focus of response should depend upon individual students' needs at that point in time.

2. Feedback should be provided on multiple drafts of student papers, not only final graded drafts.

3. Students should receive feedback from multiple sources (e.g., instructor and peers) so that they can benefit from reactions from different readers.

4. One-to-one writing conferences may be more effective than written teacher commentary.

5. Teachers should give clear and text-specific feedback that includes both encouragement and constructive criticism and that avoids appropriation (taking over) the student's text. Where possible, questions are preferable to imperatives, as they are less directive and promote student autonomy.

6. Teachers should focus primarily on issues of content and organization early in the writing process, saving grammar and mechanics issues for the end of the writing process.

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|---|
| 5. Selective error feedback on several patterns of error is more beneficial than comprehensive error correction, as the latter is exhausting and overwhelming to teachers and students. |
| 6. If feedback on errors is provided, indirect error feedback (in which the error is indicated but not corrected) is more beneficial to long-term student development than direct correction (in which the teacher or peer provides the correct form to the writer). |
| 7. For peer response activities to be successful, the teacher should (a) model the process for students before beginning (i.e., provide training); (b) structure peer response tasks carefully; (c) form peer review groups thoughtfully; and (d) include accountability/reflection mechanisms so that students take the process seriously. |
| 8. To alleviate problems that some students might have with teacher-student writing conferences, teachers should (a) discuss goals and format of conferences with students ahead of time; (b) suggest that the student take notes or record the conference for later review; (c) consider holding conferences with students in pairs or small groups to minimize discomfort any students might feel with one-to-one meetings with the instructor and to maximize instructor time (particularly with small groups of students struggling with similar writing issues). |
| **Sources: Ferris, 2002, 2003; Ferris & xxxx, 2005; Goldstein, 2005; Hairston, 1986; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Lee, 2008, 2009b; Liu & Hansen, 2002; see also Straub, 2006; Straub & Lunsford, 1995.** |

**Fig. 1.** "Best practices" suggestions from response literature.

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# Avoiding Appropriation

"Opportunities" and Questions

vs.

Directives and Injunctions

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# "Opportunities" and Questions

individual case. He also argues that none of this has anything to do with sexism. He says, "I've heard many people say something like, 'well, when a MAN can't do his job, they accommodate HIM!' No, when a man can't do his job they accommodate him as long as it falls under certain guidelines. If a woman's situation falls under those same guidelines, they would accommodate her as well." The fact that being pregnant does not fall under those guidelines, is sexism itself.

Walsh claims that Young cannot say she was not accommodated. He says that because

**Jude Miller**
10:34 AM Mar 15
Resolve

You fully and fairly represent Walsh's statements, which you then challenge and critique. Nice work. That said, I'm seeing the opportunity to even more fully challenge his claims by addressing his total lack of evidence here. What is he basing his points on? His argument appears to be grounded on generalizations and conjectural anecdotes.
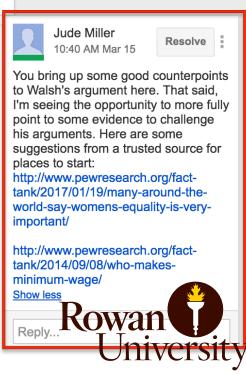
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# "Opportunities" and Questions

Walsh claims that Young cannot say she was not accommodated. He says that because they gave her leave, they made an accommodation for her, when in reality UPS gave her no option but to go on leave. She could not physically do her job anymore and they would not re-assign her, so really she had no other option. Another point Walsh argues is whose job would she take? Who would fill in for her job? "And what about senior employees, men and women, who want to be moved to a light duty position but now get cut in line by someone who hasn't earned it?" Having "earned" a light duty job has nothing to do with someone who medically needs the job and physically cannot do the other job anymore.

"If you force employees to treat pregnancy like a disability, you have also forced them to be very wary of hiring any woman of childbearing age," Matt Walsh writes. Right there is an example of a false dilemma fallacy. He is saying either pregnancy can be treated as a disability but then women would less likely be hired for the job, or pregnancy can not be treated as a disability and women would be hired. He continues saying, "Peggy had the job delivering

on generalizations and conjectural anecdotes.

**Jude Miller**
10:40 AM Mar 15          Resolve

You bring up some good counterpoints to Walsh's argument here. That said, I'm seeing the opportunity to more fully point to some evidence to challenge his arguments. Here are some suggestions from a trusted source for places to start:
http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/19/many-around-the-world-say-womens-equality-is-very-important/

http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/08/who-makes-minimum-wage/
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# "Opportunities" and Questions

knew that the fertility treatments would probably result in a pregnancy, and she knew that

pregnancies limit your ability to lift heavy things." Walsh is basically saying it is the women's

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choice of either having a job or having a child, another example of the false dilemma fallacy. No

one should be forced to make this decision, especially when it is possible for accommodations to

be made. A pregnant woman is someone who most certainly needs a job for as long as she can

work so she can support the baby, herself, the family, etc.

**Jude Miller**
10:42 AM Mar 15
Resolve

Nice critique of Walsh's argument. I'm just brainstorming here, but perhaps it could be productive to critique Walsh's perspective: as a man, he has never had to go through the experience of fearing he will lose his job because he had a baby.

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# A Challenge: Saying Too Much

* Richard Haswell:
* Detailed, text-specific feedback=good
* Saying too much=risks losing student's attention

Haswell, Richard. "The Complexities of Responding to Student Writing; or, Looking for Shortcuts Via the Road of Excess." *Across the Disciplines*. 9 Nov. 2006.

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# What works for you?

* These are some teaching practices that work for me.
* What works for you?

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# Bibliography

* Bizzell, Patricia. *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness.* Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1992.

* Elbow, Peter. *Writing with Power.* New York: Oxford, 1981.

* Ferris, Dana R. "Responding to Student Writing: Teachers' Philosophies and Practices" *Assessing Writing* 19. (2014): 6-23.

* Giroux, Henry. "Beyond the Ethics of Flag Waving: Schooling and Citizenship for a Critical Democracy." The WAC Clearing House 64.5 (1991): 305-308

* http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/writingbeliefs