



## Taking Stock:

### Using Student Feedback and Writing to Support Future Teaching & Learning

[Research in writing studies](#) strongly suggests that when students reflect on specific moments of success and struggle with their writing, they are more apt to transfer learning gains. Student reflection can also guide future teaching. This end-of-the-semester tip offers three suggestions for taking stock with your students and planning ahead.

#### **1) Reflect with students about their experiences as writers in the course.**

While the Student Rating of Teaching (SRT) can inform future course planning, it does not involve opportunities to summarize, discuss, or debrief feedback with your students. Therefore, reserving a little extra time in your class to elicit and discuss writing-specific feedback in the form of a midterm or end-of-term reflection (see TWW Tips, [Getting Feedback](#)) can benefit you and your students. In-class reflections can provide candid and valuable insights about your writing assignments, which may prompt adjustments, and they can help students identify effective strategies to carry forward. Three useful questions to prompt reflection are:

- What have you found most useful about the writing assignments and/or the comments and grading given your writing so far?
- What suggestions do you have for this course's approach to writing instruction or writing assignments?
- What strategies related to the planning, drafting, and revising of your writing have been most useful and productive for you?

#### **2) Gather and Annotate Student Writing**

Before the term ends, identify student work that demonstrates successful “writing moves” ([Graff](#)) – an effective opening paragraph, a properly labeled and well-integrated graph or figure, a concise summary, etc. – and ask students if you can use their writing in future courses. Because your request is also an affirmation, students are often very willing to share their work.

Having gathered samples, take some time to annotate them by labeling their strong rhetorical and cognitive features. The following phrases can be adapted to fit your own annotation style and needs:

*The writer effectively introduces the topic/ question at issue/ argument/ problem by ...*

*Here, the writer organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on ...*

*Notice here how the writer uses appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.*

You can provide annotations in formats suitable for your course:

- Inserted comments in a word processing file
- Sticky notes attached to a pdf file
- Written comments at the end of the text or on an accompanying handout
- Online annotations via a social bookmarking resource, such as [Diigo](#)
- An oral commentary provided on a screencast of the text

### **3) Share Student Successes**

The first two suggestions require a little time in the semester to take stock. This last one, adapted from James Lang, is one you can use shortly after the term ends.

In [Cheating Lessons: Learning from Academic Dishonesty](#), Lang describes an award-winning professor at the University of Richmond who writes a congratulatory email to students who earn high grades in his course. In his complimentary email, the professor asks the students a favor: *to describe the study strategies they used to achieve the grade they earned*. The professor cuts and pastes the student responses into a single document and gives the handout to the next class of students on the first day of the semester. It is a handout students read very carefully.

Asking your successful students to share their effective writing strategies and habits will show future students the value you place on writing and your willingness to support them at the outset.

#### **Further support**

See the [Teaching with Writing pages](#) on the Center for Writing website for teaching resources, including sample assignments and syllabi. As many of you know, our WAC program also hosts the popular **Teaching with Writing event series**. Each semester, this series offers free workshops and discussions. Visit us [online](#). To schedule a phone, email, or face-to-face teaching consultation, [click here](#).