**Could I have my own 30-year standards for my students?**

**How could I use those in conjunction with the CCSS?**

**Could the course content drive my 30-year standards?**

**By Grant Huhn**

*“You can have everything you want in life if you will just help enough other people get what they want.” - Zig Ziglar*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

You will

You will

**STANDARDS**

**My 30-year standards.** 30 years from now, your should remember and be able to:

1. Back up your assertions
2. Follow your bliss. Understanding the full meaning of the phrase.
3. Be intentional in your relationship with… (pick at least two):
   1. Your spouse
   2. Your children
   3. Your money
   4. Your career
   5. Your learning
4. Be a part of (or initiate) social action

**CCSS** – that could be covered

W.3 – Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences

1. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance…
2. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection ...to develop experiences, events, and/or characters
3. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters
4. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative

W.4 – Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

W.5 – Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 11–12.)

W.10 – Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

L.1 – Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

1. a. L.1a Use parallel structure
2. b. L.1b Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) & clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.

L.2 – Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

**BACKGROUND**

I came to teaching a little late in life. So I racked my brain for models–what assignments, teachers, activities stood out. But because they were awhile ago, I don’t remember much from high school or undergrad. So I checked in with my peers… who weren’t in education. What lessons were so useful or memorable that they stayed with you? I asked around 20 of my peers: What instruction do you remember from high school? What were your favorite lessons? … Can you guess their responses?

If my students have that experience 5, 15, 30 years from now, then I will have a sense, when teaching, that I am stealing time and therefore life from the students. And at least some of them will have that sense too. I will have a nagging sense of futility. Indeed, through my 11 years of teaching, I have not been able to quiet this thought: “You’d better not be playing a 4-year, 4,000-hour game with these student’s lives.”

**ONE ANSWER** to the Inquiry Question

Make assignments “two-fers”. Which you all do already, intentionally or not. Cross-category CCSS (W-R-L) is one way. CCSS + 30-year standard is another.

**ACTIVITY**

Zig Ziglar Goal Setting. The steps in the assignment (We will skip several steps in the Goal Setting process):

1. Step 1: Generating ideas: Generate a list of 50 things you'd like to be, do, or have. (20) Let yourself write things wrong.
2. Step 5: Free writing: Four goals
3. Step 6: Explaining, Supporting, connecting: Benefits, Skills/Knowledge, Obstacles, Help
4. Step 7: Building a narrative: Write out story for each. From instructions. ½ page each
5. Revising: Choose one to revise using one or more methods

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Peter Elbow from an interview with John Bush, “On Writing II” for Critique Magazine, Nov 2003:

Stacey, Paula. Ed Week. Vol. 31, Issue 04. 26-27

West, Jessamyn. Saturday Review. 21 September 1957

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**EXTENSION / ADAPTATION**

***Expository Writing***

Could the assignment be adjusted to end with expository writing, instead of narrative writing?

***The Proust Questions***

Answer them yourself… interview someone… ask them as a researcher… and of a research topic.

***How-to***

When you write a How-To list, article, book, you are really writing it for yourself–to gather, evaluate, and sort your own thinking about that topic. The generous, enduring, far-reaching benefit is that you share your insight, learning, story with others. Help yourself; help others.

* What do you already know. How did you learn it?
* Who could you talk to for more information on this topic?

***Social Issues, Ethical Dilemmas***

Provide opportunities for learners to write about their thoughts and feelings about social issues or ethical dilemmas (Caskey and Anfara, 2007)

**Goal-setting for younger grades**

“Goal-setting for career”:

1. Write two goals for school
2. Write two goals that aren’t academic
3. List a Choice A and Choice B for careers
4. Tell why you chose those
5. Write the story of how you get there, or explain what it would be like to have that job.

**WRITING CONSIDERATIONS**

*“I discovered that I couldn’t write when I tried to write everything right, and I could write when I let myself write things wrong.”*

*“The most important thing a writing teacher can do is write with the students.”*

*(Cross-reference:* Liebel, Anne Marie. “Elbow Room: Tweaking Response in the Secondary Classroom”. The Quarterly, Vol. 27, No. 1. 2005. http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2187)

*"An engaging prompt is the most important factor in getting students to write." - Peter Elbow*

*“There is no royal path to good writing; and such paths as do exist do not lead through neat critical gardens, various as they are, but through the jungles of self, the world, and of craft.” - Jessamyn West*

*“The truth is, the more we try to tease apart what writing is and serve it up processed and predigested, the more we either confuse students or, …deny them engagement in the messy process that is thinking. At the very least, it is a benign waste of time and empty calories in the educational diet. At the worst, it crowds out the rich and complex array of intellectual nutrients we need.” - Paula Stacey*

***Some Premises***

* *Students understand and retain course material much better when they write copiously about it. We tend to think of learning as input and writing as output, but it also works the other way around. Learning is increased by “putting out”; writing causes input.*
* *Students won’t take writing seriously till all faculty demand it.*
* *Writing needn’t take any time away from course material.*
* *We can demand good writing without teaching it. The demand itself teaches much.*
* *Students won’t write enough unless we assign more writing than we can comment on–or even read. There is no law against not reading what we make them write.*
* *Writing can have a powerful communal or social dimension; it doesn’t have to feel solitary.*

Elbow, Peter. *“Writing for learning—not just for demonstrating learning”*. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1-4. National Teaching and Learning Forum. 1994

***Hopeful Truths***

* *It is possible for anyone to produce a lot of writing with pleasure and satisfaction and without too much struggle.*
* *It is possible for anyone to figure out what he or she really means and wants to say and finally get it clear on paper.*
* *It is possible for anyone to write things that others will want to read.*
* *When people manage to say what they really mean and to get themselves into their writing, readers tend to have the experience of making contact with the writer—an experience that most people seek”*

Elbow, Peter. *Everyone Can Write*. Oxford University Press, 2000

*“Unlike medicine or the other sciences, writing has no new discoveries to spring on us. We’re in no danger of reading in our morning newspaper that a breakthrough has been made in how to write a clear English sentence—that information has been around since the King James Bible. We know that verbs have more vigor than nouns, that active verbs are better than passive verbs, that short words and sentences are easier to read than long ones, that concrete details are easier to process than vague abstractions.”*

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well*. HarperCollins Publishers. 2006. (297)

**EDITING RESOURCES**

*“The creativity for getting good words on paper is available to everyone (though some people find it difficult to let themselves use it). But revising requires wisdom, judgement, and maturity. There is no way to get these qualities except through practice and experience. The most inexperienced writer can sometimes produce brilliantly, but only scarred old pros revise brilliantly.*

*Best of all, write things you can throw away. For the central act in revising is throwing things away.”*

Elbow, Peter. *Writing With Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process.*

Oxford University Press, May 19, 1998

*When people read their writing out loud, they can tell immediately when something doesn't work. They'll stumble, they'll change a sentence, they'll say, “Wait a minute, let me say that differently” because it's not speakable. They learn an essential fact about voice, but they learn it with no teaching. They learn it with the feel of their mouth and the sound of their ear.*

Elbow, Peter. “Felt Sense and the Wrong Word.” Foreword to Perl, Sondra. Felt Sense: Writing With the Body. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 2004. v-ix.

*If students read aloud each sentence they’ve written and keep revising or fiddling with it till it feels right in the mouth and sounds right in the ear, the resulting sentence will be clear and strong.*

Elbow, Peter, "11. Revising by Reading Aloud. What the Mouth and Ear Know" (2010). *Emeritus Faculty Author Gallery*. Paper 29

**Revision strategies and topics** (See Editing Resources)

1. Read aloud
2. “The Mystery Of The Funny Noise” Insert a sentence between every sentence. Add more detail or connect the sentences.
3. Openers. (Give examples)
4. AAAUOWWBIS, FANBOYS
5. Parallel structure
6. Unexpected openers
7. (Any from the Editing Resources)
8. The end of the sentence carries focus:

*My sister wants to arrive in Paris by Tuesday.*

*By Tuesday my sister wants to arrive in Paris.*

*She knew what car she wanted, but first she needed a job.*

*She would need a job, but she knew what car she wanted.*

*As I watched her eyes, she looked around my shabby, little house.*

*She looked around my shabby, little house, as I watched her eyes.*

*I was different, forever, just for the sight of her.*

*Just for the sight of her, I was different forever.*

*I was in love with her eyes, but I didn't read them.*

*I didn't read them, but I was in love with her eyes.*

Roberts, Gregory David. *Shantaram*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003

**EDITING BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Elbow, Peter. *Writing With Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process.* Oxford University Press, May 19, 1998 (Esp. Chap 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16)

Bell, Susan. *The Artful Edit: On the Practice of Editing Yourself.* W. W. Norton & Company. August 17, 2008

**Revising :: Revisiting**

Here are essential, proven strategies for helping students revisit and revise their own writing:

***Set Up Your Students***

Although not every writing piece will be edited, revision is a part of the writing process, not an extra thing. Try these to help students want to revisit their own writing:

A writing teacher must write. Model writing, revising, and enjoying writing. Write with the students.

Freewrite on (or Loop) the topic before beginning (assigning) the writing piece. For example: freewrite (or Loop) about Conformity and/or The Essay before writing (assigning) an essay from the George Orwell's novel *1984*.

Engage the students in writing with engaging writing prompts. Peter Elbow maintains that an engaging prompt is the most important factor in getting students to write. When a student gets "into" a writing piece, they are more inclined to polish that piece. Here are some ideas: ask the students to write about themselves; have them brainstorm topics that matter to them (and why they matter); use thought-provoking quotes; use single, "rich" words such as: joy, wonder, overcoming, ...

Having a "real" audience (and a topic that matters) will help students want to revisit and polish their writing. Students are good at identifying places to publish, for example: the school newspaper, the local newspaper, a classroom blog, the trophy case outside the school office.

***Have students edit an “authentic” writing piece of yours***

Resume, article, cover letter, letter of recommendation, report, etc.

Liebel, Anne Marie. “Elbow Room: Tweaking Response in the Secondary Classroom”. The Quarterly, Vol. 27, No. 1. 2005. http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2187

***Write About (Discuss) Revision(!)***

Use any writing strategy and have students write about revising. For example, Dr. Grow from Florida A&M University will prepare his students for sharing and revising by asking: "Have you ever had the feeling that the teacher or the other students were responding to your writing in a way that really hurt? Or completely missed the point? Can anyone think of a time?". Then asking: "If you get to read your paper aloud ("workshopped" in a group) today, what kinds of responses from the class, and from me, would really help you make this a better, more effective, more complete piece of writing?"

***A Reverse Outline*** *(The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)*

Make a "reverse outline" from a draft. Read over your paper and, after you read each paragraph, summarize that paragraph in one sentence. Write these sentences in order on a piece of paper and then read over the outline they create. Do ideas flow logically from one to the next? Do any parts seem to be missing? Does anything seem to be in the wrong place, or is there anything that should be eliminated? Does this outline, read by itself, clearly convey the argument you want to convey?

***The Other Side***

Rewrite an earlier piece (of any type) from the opposite perspective. For example, if you wrote about a past family gathering, the most embarrassing thing that ever happened in your high school, the best (or worst) teacher you ever had, the time you learned to do something important (swim, ride a bike, use a computer), or the biggest event you ever attended. Write the story in as much detail as possible, explaining what you saw, what you did, and how you felt. Then rewrite the same story from the perspective of someone else - a relative, a fellow student, another participant, a passer-by, etc.

Or if you wrote an essay or article, write about the same topic from another perspective. Argue the opposite viewpoint. Consider: what arguments might the other side make? What kinds of support might you use?

***Break the Rules***

Have students work together to make gross writing mistakes. Creativity encouraged. See: http://www.longleaf.net/ggrow/wrong.html

***My Own Critic*** *(source unknown)*

Students use a character they have created in an earlier story they wrote to comment on their writing:

* Students select a character from a story they wrote early in the year
* They describe the character in four words
* They draw, and revise, a simple picture of their character
* They revisit a piece of their writing (a journal entry, a freewrite, an essay), draw their character in the margin and have the character comment on their writing by asking themselves: "What would this character say about this piece of writing?"

***Cubing*** *(Ohio State Center for the Study of Teaching and Writing)*

Use "cubing" to think about your writing from different perspectives. Imagine the six sides of a cube as each being one way of looking at your topic. Quickly (no more than 3 minutes each) write down your responses to these six sets of questions/prompts in order. It might help to number your responses so you can keep track of them as you go:

* 1. Describe: Think about your writing in terms of the five senses. What does it look like? What color is it? What does it smell, taste, sound, or feel like?
  2. Compare: What is your writing similar to? What is its not like?
  3. Associate: What does your writing remind you of? When you close your eyes and think about your writing, what pops into your head?
  4. Analyze: Think about the parts of your writing and how they work together. Tell what caused your writing, how it emerges/emerged, what causes or influences it, and how it can be categorized or grouped.
  5. Apply: What can you do with your writing? How can your subject be used productively? What good does your writing do anyone?
  6. Argue: Take a stand for or against your subject - or both! Think of reasons, logical or silly, that you might have for favoring or opposing your subject.

Don't pause between each set of questions -- just keep writing until you have responded to all six sides of the cube.

**A Proper Perspective**

All these strategies help students overcome a common distaste for revising. Other ways to change a negative perspective is to reinforce the proper perspective.

* Show that editing is appropriate: every published author has an editor, every news story gets edited by someone else, every movie gets edited by someone other than the writer or director.
* Bring in a guest speaker: editor of the school paper, etc. Show that it is necessary.
* We use a video starring comedian Jack Black to show that no one writes their final draft first (<http://www.vh1.com/video/shows/acceptable-tv/139910/how-to-write-your-acceptabletv-script.jhtml#id=1555484>).
* Share quotes on revision by famous writers (visit our website for list of quotes on writing).
* Show your own work edited, by you or someone else.

**Looping Checklist:**

(Excerpts from Peter Elbow’s *Writing With Power*, Oxford, 1981.)

Looping is a way to revise your writing through exploratory expansion in a series of loops into new thinking. Often you can select a few of these techniques to significantly grow your draft. Elbow explains, “The loop process is a way to get the best of both worlds: both control and creativity. On the one hand it lets you steer where you are going. Perhaps, for example, you have to write an essay on the causes of the French Revolution and the teacher won’t accept a novel or love letter instead. But on the other hand it expands your point of view . . . “

*Here are several Looping Techniques you can pick from:*

* Record all you “first thoughts” on the topic
* Record prejudices you have about this topic
* Draft an instant version or “zero draft”—the quick written draft
* before the first draft.
* Invent a conversation between advocates on different sides of your topic
* Invent a narrative in the voice of a letter to a friend about your topic
* Tell a little story about your topic, a for instance, a little happening
* Invent a scene involving characters associated with your topic—describe a still photo of one situation
* Draft a thumbnail portrait of the characters associated with your topic
* Vary the audience, invent a whole different audience for your writing
* Vary the writer, writing as though you are someone else
* Vary the time—as though you were living in a different era
* Lies: list things that are almost true about your topic

“The loop process is generally helpful in bringing life to conceptual writing and it is especially helpful feel bored or unconnected to your topic.”

*You can try looping just like freewriting—without actually believing in it—just on a lark—try it.*

# **The Mystery of the Funny Noise**

(Insert a sentence between each sentence, adding more detail or connecting the sentences. Repeat.)

Mary Smith heard a funny noise in her room. She decided to find out what it was.

She looked in the closet. But all she found was a pile of dirty clothes.

Then she looked behind the door. But all she found was her teddy bear.

Finally, she looked under the bed. That’s where she found the dragon.

She said, “If you’re going to sleep in my room, you’ll have to be quieter.”

Then she went back to bed and fell sound asleep.

**The Mystery of the Funny Noise**

**(Expanded)**

Mary Smith heard a funny noise in her room. *She had never heard anything like that before.* She decided to find out what it was. *She got out of bed and put on her robe and slippers.*

She looked in the closet. *She looked and looked.* But all she found was a pile of dirty clothes. *I forgot to put those in the dirty-clothes hamper, she thought.*

Then she looked behind the door. *The squeaking noise it made scared her.* But all she found was her teddy bear. *She picked it up and set in on a chair.*

Finally, she looked under the bed. *That was where she should have looked in the first place.* That’s where she found the dragon. *It looked so lonely that she couldn’t ask it to leave.*

She said, “If you’re going to sleep in my room, you’ll have to be quieter.” *She gave the dragon a pillow and a blanket.*

Then she went back to bed and fell sound asleep.

## In the Middle of the Night

Mary Margaret opened her eyes. She had heard a funny noise in her room. What could it be? she wondered.

She turned on her lamp. Then she got out of bed and put on her robe and slippers.

First she looked behind her door. She looked and looked. But all she found was her teddy bear. So that was where he had been hiding, she thought. She picked him up and set him down in a little rocking chair.

Then she looked inside her closet. She looked and looked. But all she found was a pile of dirty clothes. Her mother had told her to put them in the hamper, but she had forgotten. Mary Margaret picked up the clothes and put them in the hamper. Then she heard the noise again.

She looked under her bed. That’s where she should have looked in the first place. That’s where she found the dragon!

It was sound asleep. It was also snoring loudly. But it looked so comfortable that she couldn’t ask it to leave.

Mary Margaret thought for a minute. Then she shook the dragon’s shoulder. The dragon opened its sleepy eyes and looked at her.

“If you are going to sleep in my room, you will have to be quieter,” Mary Margaret said. “OK?”

The dragon nodded its head. Then it closed its eyes again.

Mary Margaret put one of her pillows under its head and covered it up with one of her blankets.

Then she took off her robe and slippers, got back into bed, turned off the lamp, and went back to sleep.



**What’s the Point? Prove it.**

Find the THEME of the work.

1) The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is about:

(One word. Abstract nouns. Ideas, feelings, beliefs, opinions. ie: Love, hate, freedom,...)

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2) Which of those is the biggest idea? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3) What does the work say / suggest about the idea? Make sure it is a complete sentence; something that can be argued and defended. Don’t use clichés.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| List a detail or quote (with page # in parentheses) from the work where that theme can be seen. | Explain how that detail/quote reveals that theme. (Explain how the detail/quote proves that that theme is in the work.) |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

Find The Theme



**Learning targets**

* SWBAT ask, “Why do I need to find the theme.”
* SWBAT extract from any work, etc the message and meaning *they* need.

**Strategies**

1. Find it by looking for it. Find a message you need. You read, see, hear, or experience something and immediately extract a meaningful, personal message.
2. What does the work say about the Big Ideas?
   1. **THE BIG SIX:**
      1. Ideas we judge by: Truth, Goodness, Beauty
      2. Ideas we act on: Liberty, Equality, Justice
3. Where in the work do you see the Big Themes of Literature. Work backward; start with a theme.
   1. “What will you do when external forces pressure you to conform?”
   2. “There are always father issues.”
      1. “I loved you and you didn’t notice.”
      2. “Your expectations were excessive or didn’t fit.”
      3. “I saw you as a hypocrite.”
      4. “There is a family secret I just can’t forgive.”
   3. “You’d better look at death at some point\*. (It’s been sitting at your shoulder this whole time.)”
   4. “Art celebrates the passionate woman.”

# WR 440—Peer Feedback Writer of the draft: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Cornelia Paraskevas, WOU)

Reader of the draft: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Sharing

1. Writers: Read your paper out loud, slowly and clearly. Read it with authority even if you are not satisfied with it. Don’t worry about whether listeners like it. After you have ready your paper, please give it to the reader.

Pointing

1. Readers: After the reading, underline with a straight line words/phrases that seem important/most memorable.

Sayback

1. Readers: Sum up in a sentence what you feel the writer is getting at**—not the topic but the main point.** Write your response in a questioning tone that invites the writer to respond. Think of yourself as inviting the writer to restate and thereby get closer to what he/she really wants to say.

Summary

1. Readers: write a one-sentence summary of the piece—and give a tentative title.

SAYS/DOES

1. Readers: For each paragraph, write a SAYS sentence and a DOES sentence. A SAYS sentence summarizes the meaning of the paragraph. A DOES sentence describes the function—what is the purpose of the paragraph. [Do that on the margin of the draft you are reading].
2. Readers: TMM—where does the writer need to add more detail? Please mark on the margin of the draft you are reading.
3. Readers: What has the writer done well?
4. Readers: What does the writer need to work on? (This cannot be a comment about grammar/spelling)

WRITERS

1. Create a SAYS/DOES outline for your paper. For each paragraph, write a SAYS sentence and a DOES sentence. A SAYS sentence summarizes the meaning of the paragraph. A DOES sentence describes the function—what is the purpose of the paragraph.
2. Compare your SAYS/DOES outline with the ones received by your peer readers.. Write down what differences you saw between the outlines.
3. Write a response to the comments offered by the reader.

**How to Disagree and Criticize**

# [How to Disagree, by Paul Graham](http://paulgraham.com/disagree.html)

Read the article at the link for the details.

Paul Graham's Hierarchy of Disagreement



Image source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Graham's_Hierarchy_of_Disagreement.svg>

# [How to Criticize with Kindness: Philosopher Daniel Dennett on the Four Steps to Arguing Intelligently](http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2014/03/28/daniel-dennett-rapoport-rules-criticism/)

How to compose a successful critical commentary:

1. You should attempt to re-express your target’s position so clearly, vividly, and fairly that your target says, “Thanks, I wish I’d thought of putting it that way.
2. You should list any points of agreement (especially if they are not matters of general or widespread agreement).
3. You should mention anything you have learned from your target.
4. Only then are you permitted to say so much as a word of rebuttal or criticism.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Graham, Paul. "How to Disagree." Paul Graham. N.p., Mar. 2008. Web. 30 Mar. 2014. <http://paulgraham.com/disagree.html>

Popova, Maria. "How to Criticize with Kindness: Philosopher Daniel Dennett on the Four Steps to Arguing Intelligently." Brain Pickings. Brain Pickings, 28 Mar. 2014. Web. 30 Mar. 2014.

<http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2014/03/28/daniel-dennett-rapoport-rules-criticism/>

**Literacy Narrative /Feedback** For: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Reader: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the key experience described? Write it as a question to invite the writer’s comment/response.

2. On the piece itself, underline specific details that make the piece engaging (i.e. ‘show’ not ‘tell’ details.).

3. So what? What do we learn from reading the narrative? Write it as a question (“Are you saying that…?”) instead of a statement.

4. How has the experience shaped the writer? Again, write a question instead of making a statement.

5. TMM—where does the writer need to add more detail?

6. What has the writer done well?

7. What does the writer need to work on?

**“Playing with Revision”** (Ideas from Wendy Bishop and Tom Romano)

Play transition cop: Highlight your transition—footnote each with an explanation of how each transition functions. Note where transitions connect and when they cover up/smooth over an abrupt change. At those spots, add a paragraph to help us move through the text.

Titles: Write four solid titles, each being significantly different from the others. Revise the opening paragraph in each version.

Using expert strategies: Find three or four examples that you like of the genre of text you’re composing. Revise your opening paragraph to echo the experts you have found.

Create an introductory letter to the reader that explains the paper’s context.

Example:

**Cover Letter**

*Upon completion of this assignment, write a letter to me (Mr. Huhn) that answers these questions:*

1. What did you learn from doing the assignments? (specific list)
2. What was the process you followed (“Fly on the wall”)? Carefully reflect on the steps you took and their order.
3. What sections or aspects are you particularly proud of? Why?
4. What sections or aspects did you have difficulty with? Why? How did you solve the difficulties?

Cover letter for writing—list of possible questions

1. What was your purpose? What effect were you trying to achieve?

2. What did you learn from the process of writing your paper?

3. How did you go about drafting?

4. How did you use the feedback you received from your peers?

5. How did you go about doing revision?

6. What was difficult about this paper and what did you learn from working out the difficulties?

7. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your piece?

Another option for letter to me about your paper:

1. Here’s what I like best about my paper (specific word, sentence, section) and why.

2. Here’s what I like least about my paper (specific information).

3. Describe 1-2 major changes between the discovery draft (first draft) and finished piece. Why did you make the changes?

4. What feedback was useful?

5. What surprised you in this piece of writing?

6. What did you learn about yourself as a writer and your writing process from writing this piece?

**ABOUT RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING**

Peter Elbow

The main point of this memo is to give some simple, concrete, practical guidelines for commenting on student papers. But these will make most sense if I start off with a few larger observations.

It’s clear that students learn from doing extensive writing. It’s not clear that they learn from our comments on their writing. Extensive research has shown that when students read our comments, they frequently misunderstand what we have written.

We have reason then to be humble in our commenting--and also to try to be as strategic as we can: to try to figure out how to spend our efforts in ways most likely to be of use--and least likely to be a waste of time. To put it differently, we should follow the dictum of our better paid fellow professionals: “At least do no harm.”

The fact is, there is no right or best way to respond to student writing. The right or best comment is the one that will help this student on this topic on this draft at this point in the semester--given her character and experience. My best chance of figuring out what is right for this student at any given point depends on knowing about what was going on for her as she was writing. (Did she think she was supposed to sound detached and uninvolved or is this timidity? Was she struggling hard on this paper or getting confused or just being lazy?)

Therefore if I have to write substantive comment on student papers, I try to ensure that I can do so on the basis of some information from them about “where they are at” with this paper. That is, I ask for a short piece of “process writing” or “writer’s log” or “cover letter” with any major assignment. I ask them to tell me things like: what they see as their main points; the story of how they went about writing and what it was like for them as they were writing; how did they get their ideas; what were some of the choices they made; which parts went well or badly for them; were there any surprises; and above all what questions they have for readers. If it is a revision it’s particularly helpful to ask what changes they made and why. Reading the cover letter usually helps me decide what to say in my comment. Often I can agree with much of what the student has said--sometimes even being more encouraging about the essay than the student was. With process writing, my comment is not the start of a conversation about the writing but the continuation of a conversation that the student started.

Process writing is not so easy for lots of students. But it is helping them get better at learning to see their own thinking and writing more clearly and to be more aware of their writing process. In the beginning I often do practice sessions in class on the day that a paper is due.

***Other suggestions***

--It helps to be clear about the criteria that we feel are most important for this assignment--rather than trying to think about “quality in general.” Grids are one way to articulate criteria clearly. (See the handout on grids.)

--I find commenting much easier if I read the whole piece before making any comments--except sometimes putting straight and wiggly lines where I am pleased or somehow bothered. I save lots of time by reminding myself that students can seldom benefit from criticism of more than two or three problems. The most crucial decision in commenting is which problems to focus on, and I can’t make that decision till I read the whole paper through. Most of my bad commenting comes from jumping in with marginal comments as I am reading: I am more likely to waste my time on something that turns out to be a minor issue; or make some passing remark that the student misunderstands; or say something that’s actually wrong (“you obviously don’t understand x”--when later on it’s clear that he does understand x); or get caught up in a little spasm of unhelpful irritation. If I settle for just making straight and wiggly lines during my first reading, these serve me as reminders when I am trying to decide at the end what are the few main things I need to say. Even when I want to give movies of my mind--to tell the story of my reactions as I was in the process of reading--I can usually do this more clearly and helpfully by waiting till I’ve read the whole piece.

--I try not to mess up students’ papers (especially final drafts) by writing on them. When I put anything on them I write only in light pencil, never ink--usually making just straight and wiggly lines and at most a couple of phrases (e.g., “I stumbled here”). I prefer commenting on a separate sheet not only because I can write more quickly and neatly on my computer, but also because this method makes me comment as a reader about effects rather than as an editor trying to fix the text. Not putting ink on their papers sends an important message about them owning and being in charge of their own text, them being writers--and most of all a message about me not trampling on their texts.

--When I return papers to students with comments, sometimes I take five minutes right then and ask them to write me a short note telling what they heard me saying and how they are reacting to it. This helps me learn when my comments are unclear or when students misinterpret my words or react in ways I don’t expect. These are often fascinating short pieces of writing.

--One of the most useful kinds of response is often overlooked because it seems too simple: to ***describe*** the paper as well as I can: what are its main points, its subsidiary points, how is it structured?

--When I comment on a draft, I can make my comments positive suggestions for revising rather than negative points in an autopsy. Even when I am commenting on a final version, I can frame our comments in a positive, forward looking way--”Here’s what to work on in your next paper”--instead of just saying, “Here’s what didn’t work.”

***A final down-to-earth note on epistemology***

When students don’t read or heed our comments very well, we shouldn’t necessarily assume carelessness or ineptness. I think students understand--sometimes consciously, sometimes not--how untrustworthy our comments can be. They may not talk about epistemology, but they see different teachers asking for very different things but calling it “good writing.”

Let me point then finally to an important source of trustworthiness or epistemological validity we can call on when we write comments. We can write comments that are at least true, if we tell our reactions and frankly acknowledge their subjectivity--even if they are true only for one reader. (Examples: “I started out sympathetic to what you were saying, but in the third paragraph I began fighting you--getting irritated and starting to disagree with the very point I was ready to accept in the beginning.” Or, “For the whole first page I was wondering what your opinion was about this volatile issue, and I couldn’t tell. But it wasn’t bothering me; it was kind of intriguing. I was hoping you wouldn’t plop down with a flat- footed black or white position, and it was a great relief to see you torn or conflicted.”)

When we write comments that purport to be true in general or true for other readers, we are very likely to be wrong. (Examples: “You have too many asides and anecdotes.” Or, “You should move this third paragraph to the beginning.”) Even when we write “unclear” we are saying what some other good readers would quarrel with. But when we write about what happened to us in reading, we are paying students the intellectual respect of trying to avoid lies.

There is an enormous pedagogical power that comes from this truth-telling. Students often fight our more impersonal “verdicts”--in part because they sense how questionable they are. Often we win such disputes only by resorting to institutional authority--which further undermines our students’ shaky faith in teacher judgments. When, on the other hand, we simply tell the truth about what happened to us as we were reading, students cannot doubt or quarrel with us: what we say has a higher chance of actually heard.

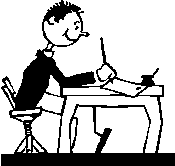
If we are willing to say, “Unconvincing for me,” instead of “Unconvincing,” students are more likely to pause, listen, and think--instead of just resisting, or else unthinkingly giving in to authority. Besides, magisterial shorthand words like “Awkward” are often extremely unclear. I’ve been trying to learn to translate that word into what is more accurate and honest with phrases like, “I stumbled here,” or “I’m lost,” or “This felt roundabout.” Even though it sometimes costs me a few more words, I try to avoid an impersonal God/truth voice in my comments.

Besides, when we give students our frankly acknowledged subjective reactions, we are treating them as writers: “Here are my reactions: you decide what to do about them.” By treating students as writers, we help them learn to treat us as real readers instead of just sources of impersonal verdicts. And interestingly enough, our subjective reactions are often surprisingly universal.

***To sum up.*** Writing comments is a dubious and difficult enterprise. In my view, these are the things that in the end are least likely to waste our time or cause harm: to get students to want to write; to read what they write with good attention and respect; to show them that we understand what they have written--even the parts where they had trouble getting their meaning across; and respecting them and the dialogue to tell them some of our thoughts on what they are writing about. Surely what writers need most is the experience of being heard and a chance for dialogue.

#### **Three Levels of Revising**

Explains a "unique" way of seeing revision, which is probably the most important step in the writing process



 Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff, in their book *A Community of Writers* describes revising as “whatever a writer does to change a piece of writing for a particular reader or readers—whoever they may be (e.g., friends, colleagues, an editor at a publishing house, the general reading public of a particular publication, a teacher, or even oneself).“

The two authors also distinguish three levels of revising as follows:

1. **Reseeing or rethinking:** changing what a piece says, or its “bones”
   1. This is the content, ideas, thinking.
   2. This is also the heart; without bones, we are a mass of flesh.
   3. Writing and rereading changes the writer.  The question is how is this?
2. **Reworking or reshaping:** changing how a piece says it, or changing its “muscles”
   1. This is the structure, organization, or form.
   2. Muscles move ideas and make bones move.
   3. The writer is satisfied with what he/she is saying, but not with how he/she has said it.
   4. Feedback from others is needed in this stage.
3. **Copy Editing or proofreading for mechanics and usage**: checking for standard deviations from standard conventions, or changing the writer’s "skin."
   1. Is the cosmetics (makeup, hair, mascara)
   2. Cleans a work up
   3. Involves checking spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and format
   4. Can be a separate step or included with revision

