



Teachers' Written Responses to Student Writing A Selective Annotated Bibliography

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Because it is difficult, time-consuming, vexing, rewarding, and fundamental to the teaching of writing, teachers' written responses to student writing has been and continues to be a topic of great interest to those in any field where writing is assigned, responded to, and graded. Although assigning and grading writing are closely related to response, the focus for this issue of the bibliography is response. Likewise, as Mathison-Fife and O'Neill remind us, student writers receive valuable feedback and response to their writing in other forms and from other sources—peer feedback, student-teacher conferences, workshops, and so on—yet the responses that teachers write to students on their essays constitutes some of the most important formative feedback and evaluative opportunities teachers have. Not surprisingly, much of the empirical research on response is textual analysis of teachers' comments or revisions students make to their writing after reading teacher feedback. Other research includes case studies of teachers and/or students in the dialogic process of teacher response and subsequent student writing. One of the biggest questions that remains is whether teachers' response styles are consistent with the emerging themes in modern composition studies; in other words, do teachers' responses reflect such important shifts as dialogue, processes, students' rights to their own language, and so on, or is response largely negative and devoted to criticizing and correcting student prose. These and other relevant, pedagogically minded questions continue to fuel the literature on teachers' written responses to student writing. In our bibliography, we have limited ourselves to work that has appeared in scholarly venues and do not include teacher guides or text books, since these appear to be more readily available to those who choose to

use them. We have also had to limit the number of books, articles, collections and book chapters due to space constraints.

Anson, C.M. (2000). Response and the social construction of error. *Assessing Writing*, 7(1), 5-21.

Anson's article focuses on the tension teachers of writing feel between the shifting emphasis on response from local, grammatical issues to larger rhetorical issues and the felt need to help student reduce error in their writing. He suggests a balance between the two through reflective practice and the use of instructional filters that help a teacher determine which teaching on error will help students improve their writing. Anson suggests that the more we know about how readers process error, the better decisions teachers could make in choosing on which areas of correctness to concentrate.

Anson, C.M. (Ed.). (1989). *Writing and response: Theory, practice and research*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

The theme for this collection is that response to student writing is an essential tool for the development of writing abilities. Many chapters call for teaching to implement strategies for critical thinking. The collection is divided into three parts: Toward a Theory of Response in the Classroom Community, New Perspectives for Responding to Writing, and Studies of Response in the Instructional Context. Highlights include Louise Weatherbee Phelps' "Images of Student Writing: The Deep Structure of Teacher Response," which provides a framework for moving from local to more global, process-based responses; Jeffrey Sommers' "The Writer's Memo: Collaboration, Response and Development," which proposes students write metacognitive memos about their process to help them imagine themselves as vested writers; and Chris Anson's "Response Styles and Ways of Knowing," which uses an intellectual development model to trace patterns in teacher responses to writing.

Beason, L. (1993). Feedback and revision in writing across the curriculum classes. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 27, 395-422.

This study reports on the results of research that examined the feedback to and revision practices of students enrolled in writing across the curriculum (WAC) courses. The first and final drafts of 20 WAC students were analyzed to determine the feedback they received on first drafts, the extent to which they used the feedback to revise, the criteria most affected by the revisions and the extent to which the students revised. Since the students in this study received feedback from both peer-review groups and faculty instructors, the researchers were able to draw some conclusions about the differences between different kinds of feedback and to offer comparisons between feedback students receive in composition courses and WAC classes. Although students and teacher commentary did differ in some ways, the researcher asks that we not see the different criterion as conflicting but rather as complimentary, indicating that sound pedagogy should include both. This study's results confirm earlier research that student revisions do not necessary reflect their feedback they receive.

Berzsenyi, C.A. (2001). Comments to comments: Teachers and students in written dialogue about critical revision. *Composition Studies*, 29(2), 71-92

This article describes a method for students to respond to teacher comments. Students are required to transcribe teacher comments from their papers and then respond to them. Students can agree, disagree, justify their rhetorical choices, or in any other way begin a dialogue about their teachers' comments on their writing. The article claims much value

in method because it empowers students to talk back to their instructors as it encourages dialogue and critical thinking about their own writing. Teachers can become aware that they have misunderstood or responded in error about their students writing as well as become aware of new avenues for students to revise. A dialogue with students about teacher commentary can inform teachers that students may have problems understanding commentary on their papers. This method can be used in various ways with different kinds of student in various instructional contexts.

Brannon, L., & Knoblauch, C.H. (1982). On students' rights to their own texts: A model of teacher response. *College Composition and Communication*, 33, 157-166.

Brannon and Knoblauch addresses the rather limited and limiting way teachers often respond to student writing in this article. Instead of trying to help students meet their own linguistic and rhetorical targets, the authors argue that teachers often envision an "ideal text" toward which they respond and on which they evaluate their students' writing. This approach prevents students from being autonomous agents of their own ideas and arguments, undermining their authority as writers with their own purposes and ideas. Their argument is supported, in part, by an example from the authors' research with teachers that analyzes how 40 teachers responded to a student essay. The authors contend that teachers need to respond as readers and encourage students to develop their own purposes for communicating. Freed from any "ideal notions of text and revision," teachers can become better responders that help produce better writers.

Connors, R.J. & Lunsford, A.A. (1993). Teachers' rhetorical comments on student papers. *College Composition and Communication*, 44, 200-223.

Connors and Lunsford study whether or not teachers privilege form over content in response to student writing. They focus on teachers' global comments—rhetoric, structure, general success, and longitudinal writing development—in 3,000 papers from 300 teachers. They find that terminal comments are most common and the most common trope begins with positive comments and then turns negative. The most common tropes also took both rhetorical and mechanical elements into consideration. They conclude that teachers were both exhausted and disappointed with student writing, that most marking was concerned with correcting the paper rather than teaching students to avoid future error, and that grade sheets and lower grades were connected, as the grade sheets worked against a holistic response to student writing.

Edgington, A. (2005). "What are you thinking?" Understanding teacher reading and response through a protocol analysis study. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 2, 125-148.

This article reports on the results of a semester-long study of the reading and response practices of eight different instructors at four different institutions teaching four different courses (four instructors were teaching first-semester first-year writing courses, one was teaching a second-semester writing course, one was teaching an honors writing course, one was teaching a third-year business writing course and one was teaching a writing-intensive graduate-level teacher preparation course). Using textual analysis of written transcripts of teachers reading their students writing aloud (protocol analysis) and interviews with teachers, Edgington analyzed more than 500 teacher responses. Coding for 13 discrete reading behaviors, the researcher found that teachers were more likely to evaluate, clarify, and question while reading student writing. One of the major findings of this study is that teacher comments occurred within a larger framework of student-teacher interactions that stretched beyond the text teachers were reading for the study. Edgington notes that the majority of the literature on response focuses on the ways teachers respond

to students, and he recommends a new focus on the ways teachers read students writing with subsequent attention to reading student writing in teacher preparation programs.

Elbow, P. (1993). Ranking, evaluating, and liking: Sorting out three forms of judgment. *College English*, 55, 187-206.

In this article, Elbow defines ranking as summing up one's judgment of a performance into a single, holistic number or score. Ranking implies a single scale or continuum from which to judge performance. Evaluation, in contrast, means expressing one's judgment of a performance by pointing out the strengths and weakness of different features. Evaluation implies criteria. Thus, Elbow argues for less ranking and more evaluating. He sees three problems with ranking; unreliability, uncommunicative, and too much emphasis on scores and not enough on learning. He suggests the following to move toward more evaluation: portfolios, positive response, an analytic grid, peer response, and modified grading contracts. He argues that liking the paper should precede improving the faults.

Freedman, S.W. (1987). *Response to student writing*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

This book-length treatment of response to student writing reports on research that surveyed teachers and students and included detailed observations of two ninth-grade classrooms. Defining response as "all reaction to writing, formal or informal, written or oral, from teacher to peer, to a draft or final version" (p. 5), the researcher found that teachers prefer peer response more than students, and that students liked comments on final products. Although the classroom observations show effective teaching and responding, the survey data seem to indicate that students expect a more traditional approach. Although this study suffers from being nearly two decades old, it does provide interesting information and a replicable research methodology that might be useful in determine if the teacher and students attitudes still prevail after a couple decades of the proliferation of process pedagogy and the continuing importance test-based educational reform.

Gottschalk, K.K. (2003). The ecology of response to student writing. *ADE Bulletin*, 134-135, 49-56.

Gottschalk begins her article the way many others on response begin, citing the mundane and frustrating job of responding to students' "largely incorrigible essays." Her contribution is to suggest topic-based seminars to engage students in challenging ideas in hopes of soliciting more engaged and developed writing of their own. She also advocates shifting to more writing-in-the-disciplines so that experts in the students' area of concentration can help mentor and shape their disciplinary writing. In her view, writing production—specifically citing students' writing processes—is less important than the students' work or ideas. Teachers need to engage students in dialogue about their ideas in order for them to improve as writers, learning the appropriate genres, language, and expertise of their disciplines.

Greenhalgh, A.M. (1992). Voices in response: A postmodern reading of teacher response. *College Composition and Communication*, 43(3), 401-410.

In this article, Greenhalgh tackles the ethically complex issue of teachers appropriating students' voice and ideas through formative response on early drafts of student writing. When teachers use their responses to direct or control writing, they are in fact usurping the voice of the student writer. Instead, teachers should motivate students to take control of their own writing. To do this, teachers must take note of shifts in their own voice in their responses, talk to students about the power dynamic in response, and help students hear their own voices as they take or relinquish control of their writing.

Horvath, B.K. (1984). The components of written response: A practical synthesis of current views. *Rhetoric Review*, 2, 136-156.

Horvath notes that as valuable as written comments on student writing are, it is vexing due to its difficulty, the amount of time it takes, and often unhelpful for students. He distinguishes between summative evaluation that treats the text like a finished product and is used to justify a grade from formative evaluation that is intended to help students improve their writing. He advocates for formative comments, treating students as authors in process and making suggestions for future revisions. This allows teachers to prioritize their responses based on where the student is in his or her process. Horvath details several inappropriate responses, although notes that more positive comments do not necessarily exclude critique. He concludes by noting different roles the teacher plays—editor, reader, experienced writer, evaluator, and motivator—noting the balance that must be negotiated to effectively respond to student writing.

Huot, B. (2002). *(Re)Articulating writing assessment for teaching and learning*. Logan, Utah State University Press.

Although responding to student writing appears in multiple sections of this book, Huot most fully addresses response in his chapter “Reading Like a Teacher.” Instead of initially focusing on the written or spoken comment, Huot suggests that all response stems from the reading of a student text. Thus, he challenges his readers to take systematic note—not unlike the gathering of empirical data—of the text and the way meaning is derived from it, especially accounting for the context of the writer and the writing. He even suggests that a blind reading of a text may be detrimental to response because it leaves out important contextual features that might help the reader shape a useful response. He concludes the chapter with a figure of a response theory that includes context, reflection, dialogue, instruction, and transformation.

Jeffery, F., & Selting, B. (1999). Reading the invisible ink: Assessing the responses of non-composition faculty. *Assessing Writing*, 6(2), 179-197.

Jeffery and Selting collected data from seven faculty members across the disciplines who commonly assign writing in their courses. The cross-disciplinary faculty mostly identified themselves as disciplinary-specific guides, mentors, judges, and editors while they most closely identified the student writers as emerging, critical thinkers, students, and authors. The most common identities noted in this study are “assignment judges” for the teachers and “student” for the writers. The authors also found that although the faculty spoke at length about student writing, very little was written or communicated to the students about their writing.

Lawson, B., Ryan, S. S., & Winterowd, W. R. (Eds.). (1989). *Encountering student texts: Interpretive issues in reading student writing*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.

This collection, divided into four sections, focuses on teachers’ reading as an essential element of responding. Several of the essays are noteworthy, with contributors including Jim Corder, Janice Lauer, Tilly Warnock, Elizabeth Flynn, Charles Bazerman, and Richard Beach. Margaret Himley’s essay “A Reflective Conversation: ‘Tempos of meaning’” examines how communal reading of and responding to texts (a practice advocated by Patricia Carini) influences how teachers respond to student writing. James Zebroski’s “A Hero in the Classroom” uses Bakhtin’s theories to examine his multiple responses to a student’s essay.

Kynard, C. (2006). "Y'all are killin me up in here": Response theory from a newjack composition instructor/sistahgurl meeting her students on the page. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 33, 361-385.

This is a theoretically sophisticated, discursive article that talks about teaching writing and responding to students of color. Through narrative, numerous references to the literature and generous examples of her students' writing, Kynard illustrates what state-of-the-art response practices look like and what they can contribute to student writing. Looking beyond just what and how teachers can comment on students writing, this article argues for the importance of reading student writing in multiple ways that honor student purpose and intention. Responding to student writing is not limited to the teacher but includes having students read each other in order to discover their own purposes and values. Kynard's lesson in this article goes beyond teaching a specific population of students as her theoretical and practical understanding of responding to student writing illustrates that response, like teaching, is an ideological and political act. This article complicates any simplistic notion of student response, highlighting its importance not only to effective pedagogy but in providing access and opportunity for all students enrolled in writing classes.

Mathison-Fife, J., & O'Neill, P. (2001). Moving beyond the written comment: Narrowing the gap between response practice and research. *College Composition and Communication*, 53(2), 300-321.

This piece attempts to revise and update current notions of response for the teaching of writing. As Mathison-Fife and O'Neill note, although the field of composition has evolved, pedagogies that include students receiving response for their writing from each other and from sources other than the teacher, most of the research on response is limited to teachers' written comments on student texts. The current state of response also ignores the importance of the context within which students receive feedback on their writing. This article contributes a new understanding of the interconnectedness of responding to student writing and the classroom context. For Mathison-Fife and O'Neill, most of the literature about responding to student writing has limited pedagogical value because it is not situated or understood within a relevant pedagogical context. Understanding that response to student writing can only be meaningful for an individual in terms of his or her development as a writer has its roots in most of the language and literacy lessons we have learned over the last few decades. More importantly, however, this article's call for a more contextualized, dialogic conception of response goes beyond just the creation of better teacher commentary because it involves students learning a rhetoric that empowers them to talk authoritatively about their own writing. Looking beyond research conducted in composition, this article calls for a new research agenda for response to student writing that recognizes and understands the importance of context and the value of multiple responses to student writers.

Murphy, S. (2000). A sociocultural perspective on teacher response: Is there a student in the room? *Assessing Writing*, 7, 79-90.

Murphy emphasizes the disconnect between sociocultural perspectives on learning that define knowledge as something that cannot be handed down or known by an individual him or herself and the literature on response that focuses almost exclusively on what and how teachers respond to student writing. Murphy explores the way that students learn to write as opposed to the ways teachers teach students to write, challenging more traditional approaches to the teaching of writing as the mastering of particular forms and genres. The article situates teacher-response to a particular piece of student writing as just

one moment in an ongoing exchange between a writer and her audience(s). Murphy examines much commonsense about responding to student writing and warns that any principles for responding to student writing cannot be incorporated outside of a relevant sociocultural and instructional context. Murphy reminds us that the biggest shortcoming in most of the literature on response is a lack of attention to the student him or herself. She urges us to emphasize the role the student plays in the responses she receives to her writing.

O'Neill, P., & Mathison-Fife, J. (1999). Listening to students: Contextualizing response to student writing. *Composition Studies*, 27(2), 39-51.

This article reports on research into the commenting styles of two college composition instructors using portfolios in the classroom. Based on interviews with students, the authors argue that comments are read by students in the context of previous teachers' comments, through a student's perception of the teacher's ethos, as just one facet of a broader framework for response in the class. According to the authors, these findings call into question some of the recommendations and conclusions about responding to student writing that are only based on textual analysis of written comments. The authors conclude that more contextual studies are needed to understand how response functions in a classroom.

Phelps, L. W. (1989). Images of student writing: The deep structure of teacher response. In C. Anson (Ed.), *Writing and response; Theory, practice and research* (pp. 37-67). Urbana: IL: NCTE.

This lengthy book chapter draws on empirical research with teachers who have varying degrees of experience in teaching writing and responding to student writers. The stages Phelps describes teachers going through are perhaps the least useful section of this chapter. More importantly, Phelps emphasizes the crucial nature of the way teachers read student writing. She posits her conception of a practice to theory to practice (PTP) arc that describes a reflective methodology through which teachers learn to change their practice. According to Phelps, teachers revise their practice only when they become unhappy with a current practice and confront it on a theoretical level. This notion of a PTP arc changes the way we can describe teacher growth and design teacher preparation for responding to student writing. More importantly perhaps, Phelps' PTP arc provides a model for reflective practice that is applicable not only to teachers learning how to read and respond more effectively to their students but lays the groundwork for a reflective practice approach to teacher preparation in general.

Phelps, L.W. (1998). Surprised by response: Student, teacher, editor, reviewer. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 18, 247-273.

This piece continues Phelps' evolving theory of response. One of the main cornerstones of this theory is that theory and practice about responding to student writing needs to focus on the way teachers read that writing. Using Gadamer's theory of interpretation, which contends that a text's meaning comes out of the encounter of the reader and writer, Phelps argues that both author and reader need to be open to the surprise by the response. For Phelps, this notion of "surprise" encompasses the dynamics of indeterminacy that allow both teachers and students to learn from reading and writing for each other. In addition to Gadamer, Phelps also draws on Bakhtin in her appeal that response needs to be understood as a more complex and contextualized activity. She critiques much of the research on response, most notably Straub and Lunsford's text, *Twelve Readers Reading* because their methodology of having twelve teachers read a single piece of writ-

ing ignores the instructional context in which teachers can make meaning of their students' texts and use this meaning to craft instructional appropriate responses.

Phelps, L.W. (2000). Cyrano's nose: Variations on the theme of response. *Assessing Writing*, 7, 91-110.

In this article, Phelps laments the current state of the response literature, arguing that responding to student writing needs to be realized as one of the most important things writing teachers do in their teaching. This marginalization for the study of teacher response is based on the definition of response as the writing teachers draft in response to their students, usually in margins and a lengthy endnote on the student paper itself. Phelps calls for a new understanding of the act of teacher response that recognizes the central importance of the ways in which teachers read their students' writing. In advancing the need for a theory of response, Phelps separates the traditional focus on response to a more theoretically informed one. Traditionally, she argues, we have conceived of response as an act in which teachers read student writing and compose commentary, thus making a teaching move. In reconceiving response as an art, we are asked to foreground the act of reading student writing as a kind of pedagogical hermeneutics that recasts teachers' roles as connoisseurs who become more than just critics of student writing because they have a developed sensibility of what the attributes of this writing might mean for someone who is learning to write. This pedagogical criticism, then, works to create a reflective practice that can revise and focus the teacher toward the best possible pedagogy for that student.

Podis, J.M., & Podis, L.A. (1986). Improving our responses to student writing. *Rhetoric Review*, 5(1), 90-98.

Podis and Podis critique current practices (still current after 20 years) used in responding to student writing. Drawing on work in error analysis that was at the heart of germinal work in changing teacher attitude toward error in student writing, the authors offer a "deconstructionist" approach to student writing that emphasizes the importance of the ways we read student writing. Using three student papers as the general focus of this article, the authors model ways we can read and respond to student writing that recognize the underlying logic in the choices that students make. Teacher response, then, is organized around an understanding of student intent and purpose in their writing. Rather than teacher response focusing on evaluating or correcting, students need responses that understand what it is they are trying to accomplish and that help them toward the linguistic and rhetorical targets they have for their own writing instruction. This article does a nice job of synthesizing what it is we know about the way students write and applying sound, theoretical principles for responding to student writing.

Prior, P. (1995). Tracing authoritative and internally persuasive discourses: A case study of response, revision, and disciplinary education. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 29, 288-325.

This article is based on an empirical study that looked at response rounds (text-response-revision) in a larger qualitative study of writing, response, and disciplinary enculturation in a graduate-level sociology seminar. Using integrated intertextual analysis, parallel discourse-based interviews, and semi-structured interviews, Prior traces a series of drafts a graduate student in sociology composed for a conference paper and preliminary examination. Although the instructor responded multiple times to the student's writing, often rewriting parts of her text, the multiple methods Prior employs denies an acquiescence by the student or a dominance by the teacher. Instead, what emerges is a complex network of gradual change in which the student uses ideas and language that suit her purposes

while rejecting other responses and language. Prior maintains that the student continues to be an active agent in her writing and her gradual enculturation into the discipline of her choice. The researcher reminds us that this study of one student's evolving text and disciplinary-identity resists and any linear narrative of ownership and resistance or appropriation and assimilation.

Smith, S.L. (1997). The genre of the end comment: Conventions in teacher responses to student writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 48(2), 249-268.

In Smith's study of 313 end comments on student papers, she notices the emergence of several common features. From the data she found three primary end comment genres: judging, reader response, and coaching. She also breaks out her data to show in the judging genre that frequency of positive and negative comments in the defined subareas. Some of her findings are that teachers typically select four to five primary genres for the end note, that 83% of her sample end note began with a positive statement (although often it is insincere or weak), and that many move to negative evaluation in the latter parts of the end comment. She encourages teachers to resist generic conventions to improve the quality of their responses.

Sommers, N. (1982). Responding to student writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 33, 148-56.

In this Braddock Award-winning essay, Sommers suggests that because we want our comments on student papers to encourage students to think critically about texts, we should provide responses that demonstrate when ideas are communicated effectively. Sommers' study of 35 teachers showed that response to writing can take students' attention away from their own purposes. Also, teachers tend to comment on errors in usage, diction, and style on first drafts along with global comments, which treats the text as both fixed and not fixed. She concludes that teachers need to develop different ways to respond to student writing at different points in the life of a paper.

Sperling, M. (1994). Constructing the perspective of teacher as reader: A framework for studying response to student writing. *Research on the Teaching of English*, 28, 174-207.

Sperling notes that teachers respond to students in different ways. In this study, the two students at the extreme ends of grading range received very different responses to their writing. The student who received that higher grade was responding to as a peer while the student with the lower grade primarily received negative, didactic responses. She concludes that if students learn by reacting to response, those who need to most to learn get the least help. Sperling also found that assignment type also affects comments and that teacher responses to student writing were often at odds with the stated assessment goals.

Sperling, M., & Freedman, S.W. (1987). A good girl writes like a good girl: Written response and clues to the teaching/learning process. *Written Communication*, 4, 343-369.

Sperling and Freedman look at ways student (mis)read teacher comments to their writing. In this case study of Lisa and Mr. Peterson, the authors contrast the information, skills, and values of the student and teacher. They hypothesize that the student will have difficulty interpreting comments if she does not share information of skills with the teacher. The study looks at written comments of teacher and noted whether he made reference to those concepts in class. Mr. Peterson's aim was to teach students to think critically and creatively about their world and their readings. Lisa is a model student and thinks the teacher knows best, trying to do what exactly what the teacher wants even though his goal is to help students develop their own ability to judge their writing.

Straub, R. (1996). The concept of control in teacher response: Defining the varieties of directive and facilitative commentary. *College Composition and Communication*, 47, 223-251.

Straub opens with discussion of authoritative versus facilitative teacher response and questions this dichotomy, the either/or fallacy. He suggests that directive responses may very well be facilitative as well and that all comments are directive to some degree. He suggests that teachers should not look at response as though there are only two ways to comment on student writing and that we should not reject all directive styles. In addition he suggests that we should ask students to respond to our responses in order to see how they are reading and responding to our responses.

Straub, R. (1997). Students' reaction to teacher comments: An exploratory study. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 31, 91-120.

This article reports on the results of a survey that queried 142 first-year writing students' about teacher commentary on student writing. The results of the study indicate that first-year writers value response on various aspects of student writing including content, organization, and mechanics. Students were less pleased with teacher responses that did not seem directed toward improving student writing or were perceived by students to control or limit what they wrote. The results of this survey indicate that many students do not find common teacher responses including abstract evaluations like *awk.*, or *vag.* to be helpful. However, Straub is careful to draw the readers' attention to the limitations of this study because it was conducted outside of an instructional context and students were asked to comment on the responses that anonymous teachers had given anonymous student papers. Nonetheless, this study does give voice to student perceptions and preferences about the kinds of comments they most value on student writing.

Straub, R. (2000). The student, the text, and the classroom context: A case study of teacher response. *Assessing Writing*, 7(1), 23-55.

Straub begins his article by listing several important axioms about response that have become part of teacher lore, but also notes that response resists universal rules. He provides a rich description of a particular course and student (Sarah) he taught to illustrate the importance of local context in responding to student writing as he examines several general principles of response: response as dialogue, students owning their writing, a focus on "global concerns," limiting the number of responses to a manageable scope, directing comments to the specific student at a place in his or her process, and using positive response.

Straub, R., & Lunsford, R.F. (1995). *Twelve readers reading: Responding to college student writing*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

A book-length study of 12 readers (well-known composition scholars) responding to first-year composition writers. Supplying various well-known teachers with sample student papers, the researchers compare the kinds of response the teachers provide. This book provides practical guidance for teachers through the examination of the responses of the twelve readers. In addition to an examination of teachers' commentary, the authors also provide a rubric for analyzing comments, an analysis of the twelve reader's responding styles and a discussion of the common strategies used by the readers in the study. Theoretically limited because of the lack of any instructional context in the reading and responses of the twelve teachers, the book, nonetheless, provides valuable insights and commentary on the wide-range of response responses practices exhibited by the teachers in the study. A well known and well-used resource for studying and teaching teacher response.

Stern, L.A., & Solomon, A. (2006). Effective faculty feedback: The road less traveled. *Assessing Writing*, 11, 22-41.

In a replication of the landmark Connors and Lunsford study on teachers' rhetorical comments on student papers, Stern and Solomon found in their study of nearly 600 graded papers from across the disciplines that most teacher comments are on the micro-level: spelling, grammar and punctuation, word choice, etc. Additionally, over half of the papers (61%) had a comment that dealt with the "overall quality" of the completed assignment. Larger rhetorical comments on issues such as organization, idea development, and support for ideas were not nearly as common. Because the papers were collected from courses across the disciplines, they surmised that perhaps the comments of non-English faculty were more commonly on the micro-level; however, while English faculty provided twice the number of comments, they were no more likely to include macro- or rhetorical comment as faculty in other disciplines.

Zak, F. (1990). Exclusively positive responses to student writing. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 9, 40-53.

In response to an idea from her colleague Peter Elbow, Zak conducts an informal experiment with two basic writing ESL classes she is teaching during a particular semester. In one class she gives her regular array of responses, but in the other class she limits her responses to positive comments only. Zak describes her experiences while teaching the two classes and noting that writing positive-only responses seemed much more difficult to her, while at the same time, she began to like more and more the responses she wrote to the positive-only class. In comparing student progress over the semester, Zak found no substantive differences in the progress students made and the grades they received in the class. This article points out the importance for more exploration of the value of positive responses to student writing.

Zebroski, J.T. (1989). A hero in the classroom. In B. Lawson, S. S. Ryan and W. R. Winterowd (Eds.), *Encountering student texts: Interpretive Issues in reading student writing* (pp. 35-47). Urbana: IL NCTE.

This chapter features a student paper Zebroski reads in four different ways, what he calls the voices he hears while reading student writing. As Simon Newman, he is the strict grammarian who focuses exclusively on the grammatical and mechanical aspects of the students writing. As John Crowe Redemption he is the new critic who focuses on the paper's flawed structure as he guides the student toward a specific text. As Mina Flaherty, he focuses on the logic of the student's paper looking for the reasons why he made the linguistic choices he did. His last and obviously preferred reading comes from his voice of Mikhail Zebroski Bahktin who looks at textual traces that connect this text to other texts in the world and in the experience of the writer, highlighting the political nature of discourse and the act of responding to student writing. Zebroski's chapter highlights not only the importance of the act of reading in responding to student writing, but the complexity involved in reading student writing and providing the most appropriate pedagogical response.