

Helping Students Meet Your Writing Expectations

1. Assign a similar type of paper over several paper assignments so that students can grow in their skills using the feedback you give them.
2. Prepare students (and your grading system) for slow progress. As students say, "Professors already expect you to be at a certain level." College writing can be a catch 22: you have to be ready before you can do it, but you can't get ready until you do it.
3. Try co-constructing feedback with students. Use self-assessments, guided response, sharing models to create criteria together.
4. Use peer support groups to work on redrafting together. Students who have experienced a lot of failure as writers may learn best from peers. They can pick up strategies from someone in their "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky) more readily than they can from you in your office. "Maybe everyone else knows, but I don't know. I didn't even know how to ask. I needed to see other ways of doing it."
5. Hold students accountable for stylistic choices they are making over several paper assignments. Set style goals for each student. Otherwise, the student won't internalize them. The comments you make on style patterns and problems will be ignored.
6. Clearly tie style to your subject/discipline. Often students' sentences get muddled when they are trying to "reach" for a new style. Think about what you want to emphasize in terms of editing in your subject area.
7. Consider spending more time on typed end comments vs. in text comments. Students appreciate these more, and you can remain focused on the patterns and areas for improvement.
8. By focusing too much on sentence-level concerns, you may miss the bigger picture of the struggles of the writer in learning to think, read, research, and write in new ways. The sentence-level issues may not be the most important problem.