

BARDINE, BRYAN A., Ph.D., May 2004

CURRICULUM AND  
INSTRUCTION

TEACHER AND STUDENT ATTITUDES ABOUT RESPONSE TO WRITING: AN  
EXAMINATION OF TWO HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOMS (182 pp.)

Director of Dissertation: Nancy Padak

This study was conducted during one semester at two public high schools. One teacher from each school participated in the research. Both classes were Junior level American Literature courses, and within each class a “successful” and “unsuccessful” writer was selected from those that chose to initially participate. Participating students were interviewed three times during the semester, completed questionnaires for each of their marked essays, and submitted copies of each of their marked essays for analysis. The teachers were interviewed at the outset of the study and its conclusion, and their instruction was observed throughout the study.

After analyzing the data, several points can be made. First, both teachers praised their strong and weak writers, although the strong writers received nearly three times more praise commentary than the weak writers. Next, teachers need to be as exact as possible when responding to their student writers. Generic commentary like “good job” or “well done” should be avoided because students often misunderstand teachers’ intentions. Teachers must pay considerable attention to making sure that what they emphasize in the classroom is being emphasized in their written remarks on students’ essays. In the study, students said they used written commentary to help them improve as

writers, although there was very little evidence that the written comments were helpful for the students.

Teachers should consider how and why they respond to their writers, and they should focus on the number and kind of comments they write on their students' essays. Teachers should learn more about their own response tendencies by examining the types of comments they typically write on their students' essays. Teachers may also want to see how well students understand the comments written on their papers by giving them a questionnaire after the first paper has been marked and returned.

Further research needs to be conducted about the effect the types of comments students received had on their attitudes about writing as well as the effectiveness of student revisions.