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Editorial Introduction

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Editorial Introduction

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Welcome to the Spring 2020 issue of the *Journal of Response to Writing*. This year marks our 6th year of publishing, and this new issue contains five articles illustrating how our journal covers a wide range of topics of interest to scholars and teachers of first- and second-language writing.

We see in this issue a nice balance between studies looking at what *students* do and other studies considering what *teachers* do. The first feature article is Bruce Bowles's "The Texts Within the Contexts: Examining the Influence of Contextual Documents on Students' Interpretations of Teachers' Written Feedback." Bowles discusses the importance of considering more than just what teachers write in the margins of students' drafts when we think about what informs students' perspectives on the texts they write. In this study, the focus is on how students in first-year composition (FYC) make use of contextual classroom resources (e.g., assignments, student/teacher conferences, and grading materials) to understand teacher feedback. Bowles conducted case studies of six students throughout the course of an entire assignment sequence in two FYC classrooms. In interviews, the students explained how they interpreted their teachers' assignment instructions, grading rubrics, and other guidelines provided in

print documents and oral conferences. Bowles emphasizes the importance of conferences in helping students make sense of assignments and feedback. Bowles's findings provide teachers with points to consider as they construct assignment descriptions and rubrics, and comment on students' writing with those documents in mind.

In another feature article considering students' experiences with response to writing in a university classroom, Brice Particelli's "Student-Led Assessment: A Small Study on Classroom Rubric Development and Peer Grading Practices" looks closely at involving second-year college composition students in creating rubrics and assessing the writing of their peers. Particelli describes in detail how he framed a 7-week writing unit that guided students through genre analysis, rubric development, and peer assessment. In surveys administered before, in the middle of, and after the final grading, he asked students about their previous experiences with peer grading and how they felt about the process during the unit. Findings revealed that students were generally apprehensive going into the process of peer grading, but after completing the assignment, students reported satisfaction with the experience and a higher degree of self-confidence. This study raises important questions for further discussions of peer response, rubric creation, and grading by teachers and students alike.

The following two articles consider teachers' experiences in learning and implementing forms of response. In the article "The Effects of Informal Training on Graduate Teaching Assistants' Response Beliefs," Andrew Thomas-James Moos investigates the differences between formal training (e.g., what teachers learn about feedback from coursework, professional development, and theory) and informal training (e.g., what they learn about feedback from their own experiences as writers and teachers). Moos surveyed 15 graduate students who were teaching writing at a US university. Later, Moos conducted follow-up interviews with 10 of the respondents. Findings confirmed previous research showing that informal training has some influence on teachers' practices, although the difference in influence can be seen across participants. One interesting implication in Moos's study is that novice teachers need experience in order to make sense of theory presented in their formal studies. Moos suggests that those who educate writing teachers should draw more explicitly on

new teachers' prior experiences with feedback (informal training) in order to strengthen the new teachers' abilities to connect that with what they learn in the classroom (formal training).

The error-correction strategy of dynamic written corrective feedback (DWCF) has been considered previously in *JRW* in Hartshorn and Evans (2015) and Kurzer (2018). In this issue, Rachel Anna Messenger, Norman W. Evans, and K. James Hartshorn take up the issue of manageability, one core concern of the practice, in their feature article "Managing Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback: Perspectives of Experienced Teachers." Messenger, Evans, and Hartshorn spoke specifically with teachers who have been using the approach for several years (some since its conception); as a researcher-practitioner, Messenger also kept a log of her own experiences implementing DWCF during a semester teaching ESL writing in a university intensive English program. Findings reveal that most of the experienced teachers felt that DWCF was manageable, although one felt it took too much time. The teacher-participants offered recommendations for other teachers in the implementation of the practice.

We conclude the issue with a teaching article, Anthony Edgington's "Breaking the Cycle: Using Reflective Activities to Transform Teacher Response." Edgington focuses on writing teachers' reflection-in-action, defined as the reflection that teachers do while they are in the midst of providing feedback. Concerned that teachers too often practice a "pedagogy of severity" when providing feedback by focusing primarily on the negative in students' texts, Edgington suggests that teachers would benefit from stepping back and reflecting on their feedback practices. Providing cases from his own experience as well as examples from the literature, Edgington says writing teachers can reflect in the moment on their response practices by using his two proposed approaches: a written journal and audio-recorded reflections. He argues that these approaches work, even for teachers who do not see themselves as "journal people" or who do not have much time for extensive inquiry into their own work. Through reflection-in-action, teachers can identify ways that their own feelings may be interacting with their commentary, as well as ideas that they can bring into their teaching to help their students improve their writing.

In closing, readers may have noticed that the vast majority of articles in our journal to date have focused on English-medium, university-level writing classes in North America. While it is not our intention to ignore all the other contexts where people are responding to others' writing, we can only publish what we receive from authors. If you are investigating response to writing in other languages, other countries, or other contexts, please consider sending us a manuscript! We would love to include articles about how teachers respond to their students' writing around the globe, how children and adolescents learn to provide each other with feedback, and how professional writers interpret the comments they receive from editors, for example. The *JRW* editors are also interested in supporting authors who may have less experience with academic publishing. If you have an idea but are not sure how to approach writing about it, please email us: we would like to work with you to get it in shape for submission.

Finally, a reminder that you can follow us on Facebook (@JournalofResponsetoWriting), Twitter (@Journal_RW), and Instagram (@journal_rw). We share updates about the journal as well as calls for proposals for conferences and other projects that may be of interest to our readers. And if you see the *JRW* editors or editorial board at a conference, please come say hello!

References

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