

## Writing Response Protocols

- Focus on higher order concerns: thesis, ideas, paragraphs.
- Focus on three or four points; each paragraph should focus on and explain one idea. You can't and shouldn't comment on everything.
- Explain what you see happening or what you are experiencing as a reader and provide examples to back up your claims. It is not enough to say that something is really good. Why is it good? What does "good" mean anyway?
  - I agree/disagree with \_\_\_\_\_. Here's why....
  - The second paragraph changes focus. Here's what I see happening...
  - Based on your essay, I think your main point/thesis is \_\_\_\_\_. I think this is your thesis because...
    - Maybe you'll also want to point out that you see this as the main point but it doesn't match the thesis they have or maybe they don't have a thesis.
- Provide specific examples from the essay that back up your points. If you don't explain what you are experiencing, then the writer won't understand where you are coming from and won't know how or what to revise.
- Comment on both the strengths and weaknesses of the essay. If you can't find anything to improve, then focus on what exactly makes the essay so "good."
- Do not focus on lower order concerns: sentences, punctuation, spelling, grammar.
- **Higher Order Concerns/Global Issues (DO focus on in your responses):**
  - --The paper as a whole (dealing with ideas)
    - Is there a thesis or a main point?
    - Are the ideas insightful, thoughtful, critical, deep, (as opposed to obvious and surface-level)
  - --Are the ideas thoroughly explained and supported (through research/examples/explanation/analysis)?
  - ---Paragraph level
    - Does each paragraph focus on one idea and does that one idea in some way develop the thesis?
    - Does every sentence in the paragraph relate to the paragraph's main idea?
- **Lower Order Concerns/Local Issues (DO NOT focus on in your responses):**
  - ---Sentence level
    - Are there transitions between the sentences?
    - Are the sentences grammatically and mechanically correct?
      - Sentence boundaries (run-ons, fragments, comma splices and fused sentences)
      - Grammar (subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, syntax [are all the words in the sentence in the correct order])
      - Mechanics (using apostrophes to show possession, commas in the right place, periods, capitalization, quote marks)

- ---Words
  - Are word choices made correctly? (problems with homonyms [words that sound the same but have different meaning: there, their and they're; your and you're; whether and weather; affect and effect; through and threw.] )
  - Are words spelled correctly?
- ---Formatting
  - Is the formatting the teacher requested being followed? (APA or MLA or her own variations to these guidelines. It will include how to cite sources as well as basic formatting such as using 12 pt., Times New Roman, double spaced, etc.)
- ---Issues of Style
  - Sentence level
    - Is there sentence variety (using short and long sentences for effect and emphasis and using different sentence constructions and punctuation)?
  - Words
    - Is there variation between using bigger and smaller words?
- -Is the writer able to appropriately choose between using formal, informal, and slang word choices?