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Robert and Roy's Excellent Adventure

by
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Robert Tries To Change

I figured out in September that this year's Experimental Psychology class is my fifteenth. Somewhere about halfway through that succession of classes, the General Education Committee bestowed upon the course the designation W, publicly affirming something I had known from the start: this is the course where we are supposed to teach psychology majors to write like psychologists, that is, where we teach them to write research reports in APA (American Psychological Association) format. It's no secret that the students approach this aspect of the course with a dread and apprehension second only to their anticipation of the statistical aspect. Well, I've got news for them: the writing part of this course is no picnic for me either.

Fifteen years ago was long before WAC hit Plymouth. I had no training in teaching people to write. I figured, though, that no one was likely to produce a very good research report without putting it through more than one draft, and that students might not do that unless you made them. So right from the first year, I required submission of first drafts, which I would comment on and return to be revised. (Shouldn't someone have known way back then that I would someday grow up and become WAC coordinator?)

Boy, did I ever comment on those. I'd correct mistakes if that could be done quickly, circle other errors, cross out words, add words, improve format. I'd fill the margins with words like "awkward," "run-on" and (my

personal favorite) "frag." When I got that all done I'd write the kid a letter--here I would explain such things as just how to reorganize the introduction, what was missing from Method or what was in Results that belonged in Discussion. Mostly these letters were rather lovingly written, filled with good advice, oozing nurturance. Occasionally a little sarcasm might slip in when my patience ran thin at the tedium of the task, but not often. We martyrs to the cause of APA format have nothing if not patience. Typically it would take me an hour to write each one. Typically I had 15 students in the class.

In 1987 I went to my first WAC training workshop. The main effect this had on my approach to Experimental Psychology was to cause me to switch to green ink. I figured this WAC stuff was great for my other courses, but I was convinced that for the formal scientific writing I was teaching in Experimental, I had found the one true method. After all, every couple of years a student would write back from graduate school and say she was more familiar with writing in APA format than her fellow students, many of whom had prepared at more prestigious institutions.

When I'm having a flexible day, I will let go of scientific psychology long enough to acknowledge that there might be different levels of consciousness, and on some level, by 1987, I was questioning the method I was using. I'd occasionally worry that the students were too dependent on my comments. I'd make them write their final report without benefit of submitting a draft. Though those weren't awful, they were always disappointing. And every few years a student would come along who would turn in absolutely abysmal first drafts, drafts that were so bad I would suspect he or she had written anything at all just to get the comments and corrections. And then there was Bill, a student I will never forget. In every final report, Bill insisted on putting into quotation marks anything I had changed for him on the draft. I could not discourage him

from doing that--his sense of honesty and integrity wouldn't have it any other way. But most of the time I had myself convinced that this method worked well for the students.

Right there in total consciousness, though, was always the realization that for me it was a nightmare. I mean, really, the method was so time-consuming for the instructor it's only feasible if you have well-developed masochistic tendencies and no social life. I've been accused of both, but even for me it was pretty boring, and I would dread the weeks the drafts came in.

But for 14 years I persevered, because my method got results and I didn't know what else to do. This year I finally figured out there might be a better way.

The Adventurers Meet

Actually, last year some things happened that laid the groundwork for this breakthrough. I was invited to join the WAC Task Force, and I became one of the group who led the Sweat and Learn series in the spring. There were two important effects of this: I heard other faculty members talk about trying to help people learn to write, and I heard Roy Andrews talk about his experiences facilitating writing at the Reading/Writing Center. Slowly I began to realize that there are methods out there to be tried. I heard terms I didn't understand, like "process." I began to realize there were things to learn.

When I was chosen to become WAC coordinator this year, it occurred to me maybe I should learn some of them. I had come to WAC by way of its writing-to-learn theme--as coordinator I needed to know more about its other theme: learning to write. I mentioned this to Roy, and he offered to share articles with me that might help. I also decided that as WAC coordinator I should learn more about the Reading/Writing Center. I asked its director, Barbara Blaha, if I might visit and observe Roy and the

others at work there. She agreed. All that was to change at last my approach in Experimental Psychology.

Several of the articles Roy passed were helpful, but the one that really got to me was "Responding to Student Writing" by Nancy Sommers. I kept coming to statements in this article that caused me to recoil in a horror of recognition. "Teachers' comments can take students' attention away from their own purposes in writing a particular text and focus that attention on the teachers' purpose in commenting," I read. "After the comments of the teacher are imposed on the first or second draft, the student's attention dramatically shifts from 'This is what I want to say,' to 'This is what *you* the teacher are asking me to do.'" The fear I'd harbored all these years that my students were too dependent on my comments welled up, but I read on. "This appropriation of the text by the teacher happens particularly when teachers identify errors in usage, diction, and style in a first draft...such comments give the student an impression of the importance of these errors that is all out of proportion to how they should view the errors at this point in the process."

"Who is this Sommers' woman?" I wondered. "And how did she find out about me?" Maybe she knew Bill.

I wanted to change. But how? "Thoughtful comments create the motive for revising," the article said. Now what would constitute thoughtful comments?

The Excellent Adventure Begins

The next afternoon I made my first observations at the Center. Roy Andrews was working with a young man named Jim. I took an unobtrusive seat and watched. Jim was an impressive student, a little older than most, I decided. I gathered he had been visiting the Center regularly this semester. This had begun with a referral from his Composition instructor, but now, just a few weeks later,

Jim was aspiring to write for *The Clock*. On this day he had brought an article he wanted to submit.

While I watched, they worked their way through the article. Roy focused on content, telling Jim what he thought Jim was saying in particular passages. I realized Roy was focusing selectively on places that weren't quite clear. Sometimes Roy would try to paraphrase a particular sentence, and Jim would interrupt to explain what he really meant. Then Jim would rewrite the sentence. Jim would sometimes ask whether a comma was needed or misplaced. Roy would ask him what he thought. If Jim really didn't know, Roy would refer him to Hacker's handbook and wait while Jim looked up the appropriate rule and made the correction.

I was struck by three aspects of Roy Andrews' behavior during this interaction: his patience, his nondirectiveness, and his genuine interest in Jim and Jim's piece. "Oh my God," I thought, "this guy is Carl Rogers. We heard in psychology that old Carl died a few years back. He didn't die, he transmigrated, took over this younger body, and is working in Plymouth's Reading/Writing Center."

What Carl Rogers had taught us psychologists is that the way to do effective psychotherapy is to treat the client with respect, with genuine interest and positive regard, and to reflect back whatever the client says. "I really hate my boss," the client says to Rogers. "In fact, all week I've been fantasizing about cutting him up into little cubes and mailing him piece by piece to Outer Mongolia." Calm as can be, with that slightly furrowed brow and that gentle but steady eye contact, old Carl says, "I sense you're feeling angry with your boss." This kind of thing has for years led proponents of competing brands of therapy to make parrot jokes about Rogers, but I always thought he was onto something. Sometimes I don't think we quite know what we're saying till we hear someone say it back to us.

Maybe we just don't listen to ourselves as carefully as we do to others.

Anyway, here I am sitting in the Reading/Writing Center trying to decide whether this is really Carl Rogers reincarnated or maybe just his long-lost grandson, when I start imagining how I would be responding. I would need to inhibit, somehow, this overwhelming desire I'm always having to tell people the right answer. "Yes, you need a comma," I would no doubt say. "Here, give me that pen. I'll write it in for you." Instead Carl Jr. says things like, "I'm a little confused, but what I hear you saying is this." Or about the comma, "I'm not sure. I wonder if Hacker has a rule about this." My method has the advantage of efficiency. I could have edited Jim's article in ten minutes. Roy talked to him for an hour, during the course of which Jim figured out which several sentences needed to be restructured and how to correct his own punctuation. Roy's method seemed to have the advantage of working.

My scientific background trained me to be skeptical and trained me to demand replication. I would have explained away Roy's apparent success with Jim as due to Jim, who seemed to be unusually well-motivated and bright. But no sooner was Jim done than another student arrived who was neither of those, and I watched Roy make the same kind of responding work again. The secret seemed to be to show the student, in a non-evaluative, friendly manner, what experience a reader has with the student's work.

I wondered whether I could use Roy's method of responding in these conferences as a model for my written responses to first drafts in Experimental Psychology. A few days later the drafts were turned in and I got to try. I needed to draw a distinction between revising and editing. In the past I had responded on both levels to the first drafts. Now I decided I wanted only to instill in my students the desire to revise that Sommers had talked about, that Roy

seemed to instill with all those questions and all that reflection.

I decided to role play to get myself started. As I read the first draft, I asked myself, "What would Roy say to this student? What would Carl Rogers say? How about Nancy Sommers?" And maybe more importantly, "What wouldn't they say?" The green pen twitched in my hand as I read the first few drafts and struggled to inhibit the old habit of circling or correcting every little error. If a student had an enormous number of errors of some type--format on the reference page, for example, I would write a gentle marginal suggestion: "You need to review rules of format for reference citations." Otherwise I tried to play the reflective, non-directive facilitator. If the literature review worked backwards in time instead of forwards, I would write after a ways, "I wish you had introduced this idea sooner--it would be easier to appreciate the above knowing this first." If a student had said too little about a past study, I might write, "I would appreciate this study more if I knew what the findings were." If a student had omitted half the Method section, I'd just note, "I'm not sure I would know how to replicate what you did." If another left all the numbers out of the Results section, it would be, "I'd be more sure your conclusion is right if I could see the data for myself."

I decided to continue the practice I had been using for years of supplementing the marginal comments with a kind of overview of the whole draft in the form of a letter. In the past these had read as directives for how to redo it my way. This time I tried to maintain the supportive tone of the marginal comments. Whereas in the past, I might have written, "Until you get your introduction in order there is no chance the rest of the report will make much sense," I now wrote, "You will be amazed how easy it is to revise the rest of the report once you have revised the introduction." I started every letter with some positive

comment about the draft as a whole. In a couple of extreme cases I had to resort to, "You have begun, and that is always the hardest part of writing." I used to end these notes by wishing the student "good luck" with the revision, a comment which I now decided made all of this seem like some sort of game--see if you can guess how to do it my way. This time I ended each with the suggestion, "Have fun with the revision."

I won't say it was easy adopting this new style. Carl Rogers I'm not. There was always the urge to circle the errors and the regressive pull of the old do-it-this-way-next-time comments. But I think I carried it off, and it got easier as I worked my way through the 17 drafts. I noticed to my surprise that this method took considerably less time: an hour per first draft for the old method, about 35 minutes for the new. You can read faster when you're not rewriting every third sentence, and the general comments, being less directive, were shorter.

I decided to share with my students what I had tried to do. When I returned the drafts, I talked to them about the distinction between revision and editing. I warned them I had not edited because I felt they all still needed to revise, and because I was confident they could and would edit the final draft for themselves. I told them I had been visiting the Reading/Writing Center and that Roy Andrews had been advising me how I might better help them learn to write like psychologists. I urged them to visit the Center and seek Roy's help when they were revising. I even told them when I would be there and shared that it might be particularly helpful to me if some of them visited then so I could see Roy work with them. That was a Friday. The following Monday the first of the students, Julie, took my advice.

Roy's Account of Julie's Visit

Two years ago Julie visited the Center a few times. In my capacity as full-time writing consultant at the Center, I would sit and listen while she read a draft of her latest composition paper. I used to respond to the content of her papers, ask questions if I was confused or wanted to know more, tell her what I liked. She would listen to my feedback and from that form her own idea about what revisions were necessary: add a paragraph, adjust the focus. Julie was competent and disciplined. She didn't need our meetings to write adequate papers, but she valued what we were doing, and I always figured she was learning something important about how to write: she was learning to seek feedback on a draft in progress, a habit that would pay off for her throughout her life.

Now, two years later, I am asking questions of a different sort. My questions are about format, discipline expectations, what "availability heuristic" means and what the purpose of the experiment was. My questions are genuine because I have almost no idea what she's doing. It's a little uncomfortable for a moment: What if she realizes how ignorant I am? And how in the world can I help her when I don't yet know the format or the assignment or much of anything? Well, I know not to panic, and I know there's something about this kind of situation that I enjoy. This, I start thinking, is how most students feel: afraid to show how little they know and how confused they are. I will model a better attitude: There's no reason to hide my ignorance; ignorance is nothing for me to be ashamed of; admitting ignorance is the first step of learning.

I keep asking questions, and they all say, in one way or another, "I don't understand yet, teach me." When Julie understands, she teaches me and that gives her confidence. When she doesn't understand, she realizes what she needs to think more about.

The single-spaced letter from Dr. Miller to Julie is calm and friendly; it makes me feel a little more relaxed about not having a clue. And pretty quickly Julie's explanations and Robert's comments give me an understanding. My questions slow down. I observe Julie working with margin notes, end comments, and APA guide. She shows me how she studies the excerpts of sample papers in the APA guide to figure out documentation. I watch her shuttle between margin notes and end comment. Julie ponders a green margin note on her introduction section that says: "I wish you had introduced this idea sooner--it would be easier to appreciate the above knowing this first." She makes a note in the margin: "switch order." "That'll be easy," she says. I nod, though I'm still reading the part of Robert's end comment that says she needs to think more about the purpose of the experiment because once she figures that out and rewrites the introduction, she'll be amazed at how easy it will be to rewrite the discussion section.

I watch Julie try to edit the discussion section. When it comes to figuring out what should be in this section, her method of studying a sample paper doesn't work well. I suggest she look up "Discussion" in the index of the APA guide. She does, turns to the page that explains what should be in the discussion, and makes a note in the margin of her paper--"Hypothesis supported?" Julie stares at her next paragraph, stares and stares, then turns to me and says, "I think I have to rewrite the introduction first."

"Yes," I say.

"I think I have to start over on the introduction and get that right before I can do this."

"Yes," I say.

We shake hands, and she heads back to her dorm room to rewrite her introduction.

Roy's Account of Tom's Visit

Robert has been visiting the Reading/Writing Center, hoping to observe me working with one of his students. He misses Julie by about ten minutes, but he is here when Tom arrives. Tom has been in twice this semester with drafts of papers for assignments that required field work: one about buying condoms, the other about identifying the sexism in children's TV programs. Both of his drafts had awkward sentences, but though the first was basically sound and the paper became quite strong as he cleared up the awkwardness, the second paper did not improve. His revised sentences, though less awkward, were fraught with vagueness. When I questioned him for details, he laughed and said he hadn't really watched the TV programs but that his older brother had watched them for him. After that we worked a little longer, but since he had no TV viewing experience to write about, we both lost interest in straightening out his awkward prose.

Tom does not seem surprised to see Robert sitting in a chair in the corner observing, but he does seem nervous. I ask him who his paper is for and he laughs and says, "Dr. Miller."

"What's he like?" I ask, and he laughs again and says loudly, "Dr. Miller is awesome."

We both laugh at that, and Robert, laughing too, says, "Your grade just went up."

Tom wants to plunge right in on page one and try to clear up awkward sentences. I push a pencil in front of him and listen while he reads his paper, but I stop him when I can't understand something. Just by reading it aloud to me, he notices many awkward phrasings and edits them. When he misses an awkward phrasing, I explain how his wording confuses me, and that both helps him see it and motivates him to edit.

Near the end of his abstract, his phrasing gets vague. He's saying things like "the subjects pick movie

stars" when I know from working with Julie that the experiment had to do with estimating the number of males versus the number of females in a list that was read aloud.

I decide to let him explain. I ask, "What do you mean by 'pick movie stars'?"

He says, "Pick the ones they remember."

"What do you mean by 'pick'?"

He says, "They're supposed to see what they remember."

I ask another question. He answers. There's vagueness in everything he says. I keep asking questions, he keeps answering, and maybe he creeps just a little bit closer to a clear statement of the experiment's purpose. Maybe. Both of us can sense Robert in the corner cringing. Finally Dr. Miller can't stand it anymore. "Tom," he says, "you're not stating what the experiment was really about," and he goes on to explain what availability heuristic means and exactly what the experiment was trying to determine. Tom, red-faced, listens, jots some notes, then flips the page and says, "Let's go on to the introduction."

There are fewer awkward sentences in the introduction, and, surprisingly, he explains the experiment soundly. "Look," I say, "you have it right here." He nods, still tense.

As we move on into the Results section, Robert gets up, leaving his coat, and steps outside. As soon as he leaves, I tell Tom that I feel nervous about being observed, and I ask him how he feels. "Wicked nervous," he says. "I almost got up and walked out. I feel like I can't talk freely with him right here."

"About what?' I ask.

"About the abstract."

"What about it?"

"Well," he says, "Dr. Miller's comments say I'm supposed to be more specific, but my abstract is already 150 words long. I talked with another professor, and he said Dr. Miller is wrong if he wants more words. He said

APA says the abstract should be a maximum of 150 words."

Together, we look at Robert's comments. His end comment says that Tom needs to be more specific about the purpose of the experiment. The green margin comment says Tom should check his APA handbook. He does and reports that it says to use 100 to 150 words. I point out that Dr. Miller said to follow the APA handbook so he must not want more words. We discuss strategies and he decides he will condense some of his abstract so he can be more specific about the purpose of the experiment. He says he thinks he can do that on his own.

Robert Changes Further

Roy had told me about his meeting with Julie in much the way he writes about it here. In fact, it was our mutual enthusiasm about this meeting which led us to write this article. Roy didn't have to tell me about the meeting with Tom. I was there. Don't believe what Roy wrote about my presence making both of them uncomfortable. I'm charm itself; I'd never intimidate anyone. Besides, I'm a little wisp of a thing--sit me in a corner and I blend into the background--you'd never know I was there. And I'm sure I didn't audibly gasp more than once or twice at the things Tom said that revealed how little he understood about his topic.

Actually it was most enlightening for me to observe their conference, and were it not for the very real problem of the inhibiting effect of the presence of the instructor, I would advise other faculty to try to observe their own students at the Center. Perhaps you could disguise yourself as a potted palm.

Watching Roy work with Tom, I was once again impressed with his patience and with his ability to ask the right questions. At the time I thought he was playing dumb. He has since insisted it wasn't playing. Either way,

it works. By simply telling Tom what he didn't understand, Roy got him to talk about the ideas and to think about the words. He pushed Tom to the limits of his understanding.

The lack of clarity in Tom's writing reflected his thinking. In the past, I would have responded to the kind of unclear writing Tom had produced by blaming the student's writing skills. I would have found it easier on the ego to assume that the student fundamentally understood the psychology--how could he not, I had personally taught him that--than to entertain the possibility that he didn't yet understand. It's so much easier to trace all the communication problems to Composition class. But listening to Roy and Tom, I could deny no longer.

Two days later, I began Experimental Psychology with a review of what the experiment we had done was all about. I got the students to talk about heuristics, availability, and the study on which our experiment was based. I got the stronger students like Julie to help the weaker students like Tom understand. As we were winding up this discussion and I was secretly worrying that although they seemed to understand right now, they wouldn't in a week when they got around to revising their drafts, it occurred to me that WAC might be able to help. I asked the students to freewrite what they remembered of what we had said, and when they were done I suggested they refer to this when they sat down to revise.

During the ten days they were working on their revisions, I noticed more students than in past years approached me with questions, specific or general, about their drafts. One arrived at an hour exam with her second draft and asked me if I could read it during the exam. I agreed. I got the feeling that revising was a bit more of an active process than usual. I was disappointed, though, that altogether only three of the students visited the Reading/ Writing Center before the final version was due. The third

of these, like Julie and Tom, was someone who had been there before for another course and already knew Roy.

During this period Roy was advising me rather regularly about what was going on in this class. As the due date for the final drafts approached, he suggested I might want to take time in class that day to ask the students what the revision process had been like. He pointed out that students often profit from hearing about others' processes and from simply learning that others have to revise too. "Roy," I said, "rather than my leading that discussion why don't you visit the class and do it?"

Only half my motivation for making this suggestion stemmed from the fact that at this point I still didn't know what the hell this guy meant by this "process" I was supposed to get them to discuss. The other half was that I wanted the students to meet Roy. The three who knew him already had made use of the Center. The 14 who didn't, hadn't. Here was the solution.

Roy's Account of Visiting the Class

In Robert's class, standing at a lectern with final papers in a pile next to it and 17 nervous faces gazing up at me, I explain my respect for individualized writing processes. "We each write in our own way," I say, "but we can all improve our writing by learning techniques or writing stages from others."

Working with Julie and Tom, and one other student in Robert's class, I discovered how complicated the writing process is for anyone learning to write a lab paper in the APA format. Students face levels of concern that are similar to other writing projects, but especially difficult because so much is new. There is the challenge of comprehending new concepts such as availability heuristic; there's the challenge of getting all the pieces of an APA manuscript together (title page, introduction, method, results, discussion, and references) with appropriate content (and no other) in

each section; and there's the challenge of writing in the proper style in each section. This is the sort of multi-layered challenge that overwhelms writers, causing frustration and procrastination, unless they have learned to see it as a process, which means they know how to divide the writing into stages and reflect, as they work, on what they're doing at the moment and what they are purposely not doing until a later stage.

I pass out calendars and ask the students to write, on the back, the things they did to revise after they received their rough drafts back from Dr. Miller. I suggest they include the number of times they read over Dr. Miller's responses, and how they wrote. Did they write on the rough draft, on a separate paper, on the computer? Did they start over or edit what they had? Did they find a method that worked particularly well? At what points did they get stuck? (Putting the paper aside until the night before is a form of being stuck.) Did they visit Dr. Miller during his office hours? Did they visit the Reading/Writing Center?

As students finish writing, I start a brainstorming discussion. I ask for a volunteer to share his or her notes, and I encourage everyone to take notes of techniques or methods they might want to try when revising their next paper. A long, awkward silence ensues that I anxiously wait through, wondering all the while if this just isn't going to work.

At last, someone shares a well-developed writing process: she had 1) read over her paper, 2) read over all of Dr. Miller's response, 3) gone back over her paper writing her own margin notes about what was good and what needed changing, 4) worked off her own margin notes while writing, on a separate piece of paper, new and revised passages, and 5) incorporated her changes by word processor into her rough draft. I thank her for sharing her account and reveal to the class that I do something similar when I write: I seek feedback on works in progress, but

don't use it unless I can understand and agree with it and make it my own.

After another silence, someone else shares. And then more people share. The conversation takes off, and just about everyone is contributing. Someone brings up the struggle of figuring out what an availability heuristic is. This sparks much empathy. Someone else brings up the struggle of being concise, as is required in a scientific paper, and yet also being specific and saying enough. This is the liveliest moment of the discussion, because it turns out that everyone (not just Tom) experienced this struggle.

After the discussion, I have students move their notes from the back about what they did to revise onto the appropriate places on the calendar--thus making them further delineate the stages of the processes they used, as well as bringing to mind the issue of time management.

Finally, I pass out new calendars for the days of December when the students will be revising their next Experimental Psychology research reports, and I ask them to list on the back the stages of a writing process they would like to try when revising their second paper: perhaps things that worked well last time, perhaps things they heard others mention during the discussion, perhaps new ideas they had. They then shift their list of writing process stages they want to try onto the December calendars. "Should the new calendar be ideal or what is feasible?" ask several students, and, after a brief discussion, we all decide what is feasible will help most. Robert and I collect all the calendars: he will pass them back when he returns the rough drafts of their next papers with his written comments.

The calendars of what the students did when revising are, in general, what Robert and I expected. Most students looked at Robert's comments immediately and then did nothing until a night or two before the final draft was due. They got stuck getting started. On the proposed new

calendars, many students spaced out the stages and put down visiting Dr. Miller or the Reading/Writing Center as one of the first steps. As for their notes about the different stages of a writing process, they were mostly vague, which is typical for inexperienced writers. Inexperienced writers muddle along, unsure what they're doing, procrastinating because they don't know what to do next. When they finish writing, they're often not sure what they just did. This class exercise was a first step in getting them to think about their writing processes, a step that will lead to more awareness and reflection about writing, thus accelerating their improvement as writers.

Robert Reflects

I was astonished to hear Roy say he thought the discussion he led started slowly and he was worried at first whether it would work. Maybe I've been teaching too long without a sabbatical, but I thought the students were engaged right from the start. I mean, no one was asleep. Everyone did the written exercise as asked. Several of them talked spontaneously. They should be so cooperative with me! He's right, though, that it really took off as it went along. By the end of the hour 16 of the 17 had participated and seemed fully engaged. They seemed to like talking about writing. That's one thing I've learned from them and from Roy: talking about writing even in a psychology course is interesting and useful. I did get a sense they were learning from each other new ways of going about revision next time. And as they talked about how they revised, I finally felt I was understanding what is meant by process.

It turned out that several of the students had not completed the final draft on time, and I think it is telling that two of these visited the Center that very day and got help with the revision. Both were students who had never been to the Center before. Giving them a chance to meet

Roy did work to make them comfortable with this resource. I'm expecting Roy and the others in the Center will see a number of these students when they come to revise their second report. I will be returning the calendars they used to plan how they will do that, and I'm hopeful that will provide any reminder they may need that the Center is there.

But what were those final drafts like? Were they better than those of past years? I think so. At least in the important ways: organization and clarity. There wasn't a single terrible report among them, and that was unique. No F's, no D's. I don't think that's ever happened before. Of course, we didn't have blind grading here. I admit I wanted to see these as good. I did manage to resist the temptation to award them all the grade of A and end this article with the fact that the grades had never been so high. But I can't prove an utter absence of bias. I think the reports were on the whole easier to follow, more complete, better organized than in past years. They weren't better edited, though, and there may have even been more errors of format. But this would not be surprising given that in the past I've personally edited the first drafts. This year's kids got to pretty much the same level of correctness on their own--that may be a real gain.

What I can describe with more confidence is my own experience. I learned from hearing about Julie and observing Tom that I need to make sure they understand the psychology they are writing about. I devoted a whole class period to discussing in much greater detail than usual the theory and concepts involved in the second laboratory. I paused several times and had them freewrite their understanding of crucial ideas, and I pointed out to them these freewrites could be incorporated into their first drafts of this second report.

I can tell you with confidence that I enjoyed reading the first drafts and the final drafts more than usual, and that the new method of making comments takes less time

than the old. I can tell you I'm more excited about teaching writing than I have ever been before.

And I can tell you that this is one of my favorite Experimental Psychology classes ever, that rarely before have I had a class with whom I had such good rapport. I find myself respecting each of the students as individuals, being genuinely interested in their work, regarding them positively...unconditionally positively, in fact. Why, it all feels, if not Rogerian, at least Andrewsian.

Works Cited

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