Encouraging Productive Revision: Responsible Teachers, Responsible Student-Writers

Like any pedagogical decision, revision requires careful course planning. These recommendations reflect assumptions that genuine revision occurs only in classes that make revision a central tenet of class outcomes.

1. A Revision-Centered Course: revised drafts must be the focus, which means that “perfect” texts are less important than students’ attempts to seriously rework and reconsider their ideas and options as writers.

2. Student Ownership: although broad guidelines are often appropriate in (FYC), students are more likely to own and invest in their texts if they choose their own topics. Projects should have authentic audiences.

3. Revision Accountability: students must be required to demonstrate their revision processes, which means their keeping up with any peer responses activities and having their grades connected to how well they perform on peer response.

4. Contextual Revision: revision suggestions and decisions must be contextually purposeful, utterly connected to the specific essay/project. Teacher responses should also be audience-based, not teacher-based.

5. Productive Peer-Review Activities: activities that teachers choose should encourage students to look at broad issues (missing information, audience needs/concerns, relevance of topic to current situations/discourses) but also to focus on what “works” in the text. Students should learn to ask their own questions (see handout at http://personal.ecu.edu/banksw/eng1100/askingquestions.html)

6. Revision v. Editing: teachers should not confuse revision with copy-editing/sentence-level changes to texts; likewise, they must make this distinction clear to students.

7. Revision Reflection: teachers should engage students in meta-cognitive analyses of their revision processes (i.e., Writer’s Memos).

8. Evaluation: teachers should make reference to revisions from previous drafts as part of their evaluation comments/recommendations.