GIVING WRITING FEEDBACK THAT STICKS

BY JOE FORE
CTE Faculty Fellow; Professor of Law & Co-Director of the Legal Research and Writing Program, UVA School of Law

BEFORE COMMENTING

Establish clear feedback goals and priorities.
Reflect on what you want students to take away from your feedback. Then establish commenting priorities by creating a checklist of discrete issues that you’re looking for.

WHILE COMMENTING

Skim the assignment first.
Give the piece of writing a first pass to get an overview of the assignment (its length, topic, thesis, etc.) and identify the likely areas that you’ll be commenting on.

Teach—don’t edit.
Ensure that your feedback prompts genuine learning from students. You can do this by:
- explaining your corrections, edits, or comments.
- giving examples for how to improve.
- flagging common issues once.
- connecting comments to class content.
- showing students where they did it right.
- referring students to external resources.

AFTER COMMENTING

Write a "cover page" with 2-4 points, lessons, or themes.
Provide global comments in a "cover page" that summarizes your feedback into a few key points and identifies broader themes.