

## Practices that promote effective feedback

### Combine feedback and instruction

Effective feedback follows instruction. When student work does not demonstrate at least partial understanding of a concept or process, feedback is not usually effective and the problems are best addressed through further teaching.

Hattie & Timperley (2007) state that a simple clue that a student’s work is not ready for feedback is that you can’t find any legitimate success feedback to offer. When the work doesn’t demonstrate any understanding, don’t give feedback – reteach instead.

To combine feedback and instruction, teachers:

- select and sequence the learning experiences (instruction) and integrate with opportunities to gather information about the learning (assessment)
- intentionally design assessments to occur at ‘*checkpoints*,’ critical points during the learning where teachers and students engage in assessment to determine who is learning and who needs additional or alternative instruction prior to moving forward with the learning
- provide opportunities for feedback from the teacher, from peers, and from themselves (through self-assessment)
- encourage students to use the feedback to take further action to learn and improve.

Fisher & Frey (2012) believe teachers should identify patterns in student errors so they can target instruction or intervention on specific areas of student need. They suggest keeping a table to record student error patterns. For example:

**Learning intention:** To read and understand a primary source document

Error	Students who made the error
Skim and scan to preview text	JC
Sourcing: information source; author; type of document	JC JT DL MM SL ST ND CT
Draw conclusions	JC JT MM TA AA LR CM TR VR IB AV TM SO KF

*NB: Each set of initials represents a student who made an error.*

Information available from the error pattern analysis:

- all but one student demonstrated mastery of skimming and scanning
- a fair number of students did not engage in sourcing – and could need re-teaching
- in terms of drawing conclusions, it would be useful to re-teach the whole class.

By looking for patterns of errors, additional teaching can be designed for the whole class, small groups or individuals to address errors.

## Focus on the learning intention and success criteria

Whatever the form of the feedback, there should not be any feedback given that doesn't focus on the learning intention/success criteria. This involves the following.

### *Being explicit about the learning intention and success criteria*

- Ensure students know and understand the learning intention and success criteria
- Limit feedback to these
- Attend to surface features every now and again.

Try not to:

- Always focus on the elements of: presentation, quantity, surface features (spelling and punctuation) and effort at the expense of the learning intention and success criteria
- Write/talk about anything that is not related to the success criteria that you told students about at the beginning of the task.

### *Prioritising feedback*

- Address the most important needs first
- Limit to 2 - 3 specific recommendations linked to the learning goal(s)
- Adjust feedback based on individual students' readiness and learning preferences. An appropriate amount of feedback for one student might not be enough for another, and might overwhelm a third.

Try not to:

- 'Blanket mark' – mark every error
- Expect students to apply all the criteria that they have ever been taught for every task.

### *Focusing on key feedback questions*

- Ensure feedback focuses on:
  - What are the goal/s?
  - What progress is being made toward the goal/s?
  - What needs to be undertaken to make better progress?

Try not to:

- Mark errors without making improvement suggestions.

### *Providing 'closing the gap' feedback prompts (See Feedback Prompts table on page 5)*

- Provide prompts based on student needs:
  - Reminder prompts
  - Scaffolded prompts
  - Example prompts.

Try not to:

- Write too much. Too much information can be overwhelming and difficult for a student to take in.

#### *Checking the adequacy of the feedback*

- Ask the student what support he/she needs.
- Ask:
  - *Is that enough or do you need an example?*
  - *Do you know what to do next?*
  - *Is that enough help?*
  - *What will you do if you get stuck again?*
- Ask the student to tell you what they think you are trying to say to them.

Try not to:

- Assume that students understand your comments
- Assume that students know how to implement the feedback.

#### *Including peer feedback and self-feedback/reflection*

- Encourage students to question you and each other and so deepen their understanding
- Model and scaffold the types of questions you want students to use themselves
- Provide opportunities for peer and self-feedback prior to work being submitted
- Provide and work through models and exemplars of quality work – based on the learning intention and success criteria.

Try not to:

- Expect students to engage in peer and self-feedback without providing instruction and guidance.

#### *Intervening as soon as possible*

- Provide the most effective form of feedback in the most timely way
- Offer feedback during learning as well as at the end of a task/assignment
- Check-in with students as they engage in a task
- Formalise 'check-ins' – allocate times for 'check-ins' during learning
- Engage in a feedback cycle – feedback – action – feedback – action, etc.
- Limit marking and focus on one or two areas for improvement so that feedback can be provided sooner rather than later.

Try not to:

- Wait till the end of a task/assignment to offer feedback
- Leave too much time before offering feedback.

## Ensure feedback requires the student to do the thinking

Much of the feedback offered to students can be less about improvement and more about corrections of mistakes the teacher has spotted. Comments and questions such as: *You've missed something here: What should you have put there? What about these?* require students to do very little thinking about the learning process.

- Pose more open questions to stimulate student thinking:
  - *Is there anything you could change to make that a proper sentence?*
  - *Read through this sentence and tell me what you think would make the sentence more descriptive?*
- Avoid correcting/annotating errors for the student
- State/ write comments that students can understand and act upon.

## Allow time to enact feedback

All feedback requires action. If the teacher wants students to take the feedback on board, they need to provide the time to do this.

- Allow time, opportunity and support for students to act on the information they receive about their learning.
- Set up routines for feedback enactment. For example:
  - read the comments
  - clarify the comments
  - act on the comments
  - seek peer feedback
  - re-submit work.
- Break longer tasks into stages and provide feedback which is essential to the successful navigation of subsequent stages.
- Expect to see changes/improvements as a result of feedback.

## Feedback Prompts

The following table provides specific examples of the three types of prompts 'in action'. *Source:* (Clarke, 2003)

Range of prompts	Learning intention	Extract from writing	Reminder prompt	Scaffolded prompt	Example prompt
<i>Why...? (Justifying a statement)</i>	To write a letter giving reasons for things you say.	<b>'It was dismal.'</b>	Say why you thought this.	Why was it a dismal time? Why did you hate being there?	Choose one of these or your own: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It was dismal because I was bored all the time.</li> <li>- I found it dismal having only my grandad to talk to.</li> </ul>
<i>How did you/s/he feel?</i>	To retell a story showing people's feelings.	<b>'Nobody believed him.'</b>	Say how you think this made him feel.	How do you think Darryl felt about not being believed? Do you think he might have regretted anything he'd done?	How do you think he felt? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Angry that people did not trust him.</li> <li>- Annoyed with himself for lying in the past.</li> <li>- Your own ideas?</li> </ul>
<i>Add something</i>	To use effective adjective and adverbs in an account.	<b>'Jason was trying to distract him, but the dragon was too strong.'</b>	Use more adverbs and adjectives here.	Let's use some adverbs to describe how they fought. Fill in the words: Jason tried ___ to distract him, but the dragon ___ly used his strength to get past. Jason stabbed his sword ___ly into the dragon's nearest side.	Improve the fight by using one of these or your own: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The dragon's tail lashed viciously, cutting Jason's flesh.</li> <li>- Jason bravely lunged at the dragon, thrusting his sword fiercely into its side.</li> </ul>
<i>Change something</i>	To use effective adjectives in a description.	<b>'He was a bad monster.'</b>	Think of a better word than bad.	What kind of monster was he? Change bad for a word that makes him sound scarier. Write it in the box.	Try one of these or your own instead of bad: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ferocious</li> <li>- terrifying</li> <li>- evil</li> </ul>
<i>Tell us more.</i>	To introduce a character in a story opening.	<b>'James went to school.'</b>	Could you describe James?	What type of boy is James? Good, bad, kind, shy, excitable, loud, naughty? Try to help us know him. James was a ...	Describe James's character. Perhaps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- James was a kind, likeable boy with a great sense of humour. For instance ...</li> <li>- James was often excitable and noisy but would be quiet and serious when he was working.</li> </ul>
<i>What happens next?</i>	To write a middle and end from a given start.	<b>'At last the merman saw the mermaid.'</b>	How is your story going to end?	What do you think the merman said to the mermaid before they went home together?	Write one of these or your own ending: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'I love you' said the merman. The mermaid took his hand and they swam away.</li> <li>- The merman looked embarrassed as he explained to the mermaid why he had taken so long to find her. She forgave him with a smile.</li> </ul>

## References

Clarke, S. (2003). *Enriching Feedback in the primary classroom*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2012). Making time for feedback. *Educational Leadership*, 70(1), 42-48.

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112.