



HANDOUT 5.3.1 – Your Turn

Feedback

Directions: Read the following excerpted text on feedback to learn more about the characteristics of effective feedback. After reading, you will apply what you have learned about feedback to identify effective and ineffective feedback examples.

Excerpted from Heritage, 2010

What Experts Say About Feedback

“One of the most important roles in assessment is the provision of timely and informative feedback to students during instruction and learning...” (NRC, 2001, p. 87)

“Feedback to students should be about the particular qualities of their work, with advice on what they can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons with other students” (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 143).

“Good feedback to students relates to explicit criteria about expectations for learning, making the learning more transparent” (OECD, 2005, p. 50).

“In order for learners to gain insight into their learning and their understanding, frequent feedback is critical: students need to monitor their learning and actively evaluate their strategies and their current levels of understanding” (NRC, 1999, p. 78).

Ineffective Feedback

For feedback to be effective, it must be used and lead to new learning. Although it is generally accepted that feedback can assist learning, not all types of feedback have positive results. The kinds of feedback that can have *negative* effects on learning are:

1. Feedback that is critical (Baron, 1993)
2. Feedback that is comparative and indicates a student’s standing relative to peers (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam, 2007)
3. Feedback that is vague and lacks specificity (Kluger & De Nisi, 1996)
4. Feedback that is too complex (Kulhavy, White, Topp, Chan & Adams, 1985)
5. Feedback that draws attention to the student rather than the task (e.g., praise for individuals vs. their performance) (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996)
6. Feedback provided in relation to a poorly defined goal (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)

Effective Feedback

There is a significant body of research on the *positive* effects of feedback on learning. Key guidelines about the kind of feedback that helps learners improve are listed below.

1. Feedback should provide information to the student relating to the task or process of learning that fills a gap between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)



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2. Feedback to students should be about the particular qualities of their work, with advice on what they can do to improve (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik & Morgan, 1991; Black & William, 1998)
3. Feedback should be specific and clear and be related to learning goals (Hoska, 1993; Song & Keller, 2001)
4. Feedback should provide the learner with suggestions, hints or cues for how to improve rather than correct answers (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991; Butler, 1987; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Narciss & Huth, 2004)
5. Feedback should match the student's cognitive needs – not too complex and not too vague (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991)
6. Feedback should include both verification and elaboration; verification is “the simple judgment of whether the answer is correct and elaboration is the informational aspect of the message, providing relevant clues to guide the learner toward a correct answer” (Shute, 2008, p. 158)
7. Feedback should be given after a student has responded to initial instruction; in the case when no learning has occurred it is better to continue with instruction rather than provide feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)

Feedback Timing

Research has also shown that the timing of the feedback can have both positive and negative consequences. Below are some general considerations about the timing of feedback.

1. It is better to avoid providing feedback to students while they are actively engaged in the task (Corno & Snow, 1986)
2. Immediate feedback (i.e. immediately after the student's response) is better for supporting procedural or conceptual knowledge (Dihoff, Brosvic, & Epstein, 2003; Corbett & Anderson, 1989, 2001)
3. When a student is learning a new task, immediate feedback is better (Clariana, 1990)
4. In the case of more difficult, extended tasks, involving greater amounts of processing, delayed feedback (i.e., feedback after several minutes, hours or weeks) provides more opportunity for students to process (Clariana, Wagner & Rohrer-Murphy, 2000)
5. Low-achieving students benefit greatly from immediate feedback, particularly when they are learning new concepts or skills they find difficult (Gaynor, 1981; Mason & Bruning, 2001)

While these considerations can be helpful for teacher decision-making about when to give feedback to their students, ultimately, teachers will need to decide when feedback is appropriate for their students, based on the learning goal(s) and their knowledge of students and how they learn best.



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Feedback Activity Chart

Directions: Read each example of teacher feedback in the left column below, and identify specific features of the feedback that are effective or ineffective. Complete the right column by describing the characteristics of effective and/or ineffective feedback evident or implied in each statement.

<i>Examples of Teacher Feedback</i>	<i>Characteristics of Effective or Ineffective Feedback</i>
“Your design shows that you are clear about what you want to measure, and you have listed four factors that should remain constant in your test and one that will change.”	
“For your test to be fair there is one other factor that must remain constant. You are planning to measure the time parachutes of different sizes take to fall to the ground. With this in mind, can you review your plan and think about what else needs to be constant? I'll be back in a few moments to hear your ideas.”	
“This work is very poor. You have not tried hard enough.”	
“You did a very good job of using your strategies to read the text accurately. Let’s keep on reading and while you are reading think about: is what you are reading making sense, and does what you are seeing match with what you are reading? – just like you did when you noticed that water could not be the right word because it began with the letter ‘s’.”	



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<i>Examples of Teacher Feedback</i>	<i>Characteristics of Effective or Ineffective Feedback</i>
<p>Student Question: “There are a lot of different kinds of vegetables in the market.”</p> <p>Teacher Feedback: “Do you remember when we talked about the difference between a question and a statement? Look again at what you have written and think about whether it is a statement or a question. (Child responds). “Why do you think it is a statement and not a question?” (Child responds). “I agree, now see if you can turn your statement into a question.”</p>	
<p>“You are not paying sufficient attention to the features of narrative in your writing. Revise your work, paying attention to the fact that the features of narrative structures can include orientation, complication and resolution, as well as descriptions of characters and settings. You are emphasizing character and setting without employing a structure that represents the other, important features of narrative. Use all of the features I have indicated above in your next draft.”</p>	
<p>“Remember, the success criterion for this task was that all your conclusions should be backed by evidence. I’ve used a check mark to indicate the statements that are backed by evidence. Now, you each find the statements that are not supported by evidence and provide it.”</p>	
<p>“Your understanding of this idea is much weaker than the other students in the class. You will need to redo the work to catch up.”</p>	