

Effective Feedback Policy (2023)

Context

The goal of the NSW Department of Education is that every student is known as a learner, every student improves every year, and every student is engaged and challenged to continue to learn. One of the best ways that teachers at Sydney Technical High School (STHS) can know, improve, and engage their students in the learning process is through effective feedback methods during both formative and summative assessments.

We are committed to providing all of our students with effective feedback as part of their learning process. For a selective high school such as STHS, we know the importance of high expectations in a positive school climate as they, together, cultivate an environment of excellence underpinned by high expectations, explicit teaching, quality assessment, individualised support of wellbeing and effective feedback.

Why it matters

Feedback is widely recognised and promoted by the teaching profession as an effective practice. It constitutes a core component of AITSL and 78 per cent of NSW teachers surveyed as part of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) reported that they always or almost always corrected assignments and gave feedback to students. However, all teachers can give more, as well as more effective, feedback. International and NSW data sets show that students who are provided with feedback tend to perform better than students who are not. Feedback is a critical means by which teachers convey and communicate their expectations to their students. Feedback should focus on students' performance on a task, identifying where and why mistakes have been made and emphasising opportunities to learn and improve. Such feedback supports the development of positive feelings of self-efficacy, providing motivation for continued effort and engagement. Feedback is consistently found to be one of the most important classroom factors that can impact students' academic outcomes.

What the evidence says

Feedback impacts student performance. Timperley defines feedback as information provided by an agent (usually a teacher) to a student about aspects of performance or understanding and is 'among the most powerful influences on achievement'. One meta-analysis found that the average effect size of feedback was 0.79, an effect size comparable to that of students' prior cognitive ability (0.71). PISA data from 2009 shows that Australian students whose teachers provided students with feedback after they had finished tasks in most or all classes, performed better than students whose teachers did so hardly ever or in some cases.

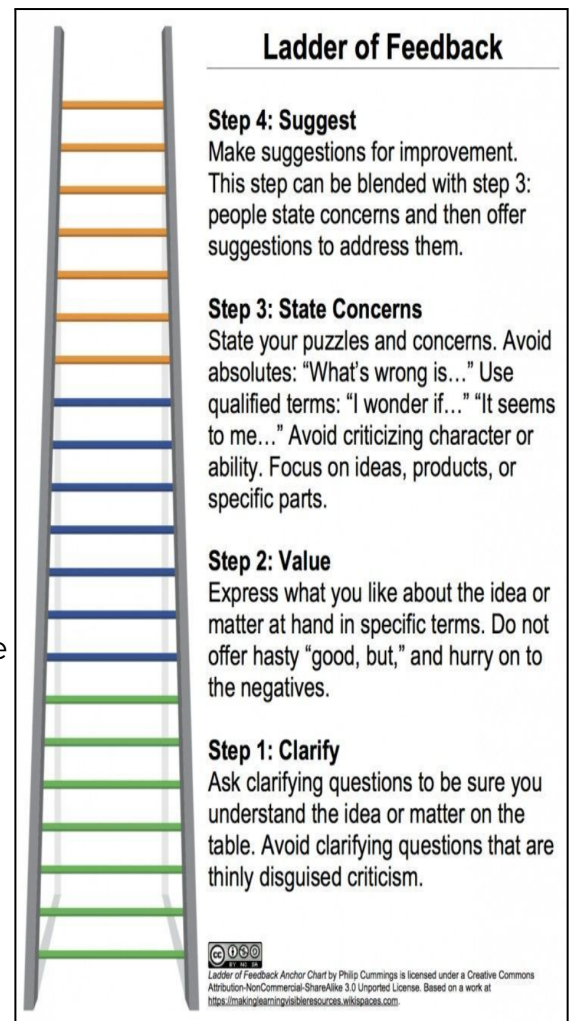
What ensures effective feedback?

Feedback that focuses on tasks, processes and student self-regulation is the most effective. Feedback on how a task is processed by a student and feedback that develops skills in self-regulation are more easily applied to a student. One study on goal-setting found that process feedback informed the ability of the study's subjects to develop their own strategies. Good feedback practice helps students take control of their own learning by becoming self-regulated learners thus promoting an emphasis on autonomy and student control over their learning process. Students who ask questions, take notes, and allocate their time and resources effectively are self-regulated learners who create 'internal feedback' and 'cognitive routines' in their learning. Feedback about the self - such as 'good boy' - tends to be less effective because it does not provide enough information on the task, and is 'too influenced by students' self-concept'.

Feedback principles at STHS

To teachers at STHS, it's a familiar challenge: every period, accomplish a significant amount while facilitating learning for 24-plus HPG boys with varied instructional needs. With time being such a precious commodity, our teachers know they need to focus on feedback practices that can make the biggest difference to their students. Timely, accurate, strategic and accessible feedback for students is a hallmark of quality teaching and a requirement of all teachers at STHS.

1. All STHS teaching and learning programs must identify opportunities for students to seek and obtain quality feedback at a **formative assessment** level.
2. Effective, individualised feedback is a minimum requirement of all teachers for every student following each **summative assessment** task.
3. Teachers' academic report comments must also provide feedback on student performances including strategies for improvement.
4. STHS will support all staff in their mastery of effective feedback through professional learning opportunities.



TEACHING DOMAIN:

In schools that excel, all teachers are committed to identifying, understanding and implementing the most effective explicit teaching methods, with the highest priority given to evidence-based teaching strategies.

EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICE	THEMES	DELIVERING	SUSTAINING AND GROWING	EXCELLING
DATA SKILLS AND USE	Lesson planning	Teachers regularly review and revise lesson plans and sequences, ensuring that the content is based on the curriculum and the teaching practices are effective. Teachers regularly use student progress and achievement data to inform lesson planning.	Teachers collaborate across faculties/stages/teams to share curriculum knowledge, data, feedback and other information about student progress and achievement, to inform the development of evidence-based programs and lessons, which meet the needs of all students.	All lessons are systematically planned as part of a coherent program that has been collaboratively designed. Accommodations and adjustments are made to suit needs as they arise. Lesson planning references student information including progress and achievement data, curriculum requirements, and student feedback, and provides continuous improvement for all students, across the full range of abilities.
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS	Explicit teaching	Explicit teaching is the main practice used in the school, reflecting the current evidence base. Teachers	Teachers are skilled at explicit teaching techniques such as questioning and assessing to identify	A whole school approach ensures the most effective evidence-based teaching methods optimise learning progress for all students, across the full range of abilities.
LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	Feedback	Teachers respond promptly to student work. They check that students understand the feedback received and the expectations for how to improve.	Teachers provide explicit, specific and timely formative feedback related to defined success criteria. Teachers' feedback supports improved student learning.	Teachers routinely review learning with each student both in class and on work submitted, ensuring all students have a clear understanding of how to improve. Student feedback is elicited by teachers and informs their teaching. Student errors and misunderstandings are explicitly addressed until teachers and students are confident that mastery is demonstrated.
	Classroom	Teachers maintain orderly	A school-wide approach to effective	All classrooms and other learning environments are well
	environment for learning.	teachers where needed, ensuring optimum learning.		can engage in productive learning, with minimal disruption. Teachers model and share a flexible repertoire of strategies for classroom management and promotion of student engagement and responsibility for learning.

Types of effective feedback during the learning cycle:

Formative Assessment

1. Feedback during learning

Feedback during learning allows students to take feedback on board immediately and to try to realise improvement during the learning process. This is often more effective and productive to the learning experience than end-of-task feedback measures (usually summative), which require students to remember the feedback and apply the recommended strategies to a future task.

2. Peer feedback

The use of structured peer conferences can provide students with the opportunity to give and receive feedback about ongoing work, especially when the focus is on improvement rather than grading. A positive aspect of the peer feedback process is that students get to see other students' work which can also deepen their understanding of the learning goals. Left to their own devices to give feedback many students will use the time to chat, criticise the other students' work or get nothing done.

Teachers need to:

- model and role-play how to give feedback in a constructive way
- explicitly teach students how to provide effective feedback to each other
- hold students accountable for the comments, suggestions and feedback they give one another

- use scaffolds like peer feedback forms, which can be checked by the teacher to provide more structure to peer conferences. This also keeps students focused on giving the right kinds of feedback and lets them know what the expectations are for peer conferences. Once students have had time to practise, know what the requirements are, and are aware of expectations, peer conferences can be an integral part of the feedback process.

As with teacher feedback, peers can offer suggestions and comments on:

- what has been done well in relation to the learning intention/success criteria
- what still needs to be done in order to achieve the learning intention/success criteria
- how to achieve that improvement.

3. Self-feedback

This is the ultimate goal of feedback for learning. During the provision of feedback, teachers have the opportunity not only to provide direction for the students but to teach them, through explicit modelling and instruction, the skills of self-assessment and goal setting, leading them to become more independent.

To help students reach autonomy teachers can:

- explicitly identify, share, and clarify learning goals and success criteria
- model the application of criteria using samples
- provide guided opportunities for self-feedback
- teach students how to use feedback to determine the next steps and set goals
- allow time for self-feedback/reflection
- explore the self-assessment goals set by students in response to their report comments

4. Verbal feedback

Verbal feedback usually occurs during a task. It is sometimes underestimated because it is less formal, but it can be a very powerful and effective tool as it can be provided easily in the 'teachable moment' and in a timely way. Asking "What do you notice about _____?" or "How does this match the criteria?" stimulates students' thinking about their learning.

5. Informal feedback

Informal feedback 'Check-ins' are vitally important to providing effective feedback. 'Check-ins' occur when the teacher visits students as they are engaged in a task to make sure they are on the right track. 'Check-ins' can quickly and effectively steer students in the right direction or enhance learning. 'Check-ins' can also occur when students approach the teacher to seek feedback. For longer projects, these could be determined in advance with allocated times for students to 'check in'.

Summative Assessment

6. Written feedback

Written feedback is to be given after an **assessment** task. Effective written feedback provides students with a record of what they are doing well, what needs improvement and suggested next steps. Students and teachers might use a log to monitor whether and how well the student has acted on the feedback. Written feedback needs to be:

- timely so that it is paired as closely as possible with the event
- written in a manner that is understandable for the student
- actionable so that the student can make revisions.

Written feedback needs to include:

- where the student has met the learning intentions and/or success criteria
- where the student still needs to improve
- a way to think through the answer for themselves.

7. Evaluative feedback

Evaluative feedback, in the form of grades or brief general comments, (e.g. "well done"), provides some information about learning, but does not convey the information and guidance that students can use to improve. It can make the good students feel better (and at times complacent) and the less able students feel worse (and more certain that they will never be able to succeed). In attempting to create a positive climate for learning, many teachers increase the level of praise that they give during feedback sessions. Research shows, however, that praise needs to be realistic if the feedback is to be more meaningful. Regular, excessive praise often does more harm than good, leading to delusion or even frustration and resentment. To be really effective, praise needs to confirm a child's own sense of reality. The impact of feedback on learning achievement has been found to be low when it is focused on praise, rewards and punishment (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

8. Descriptive feedback

Effective feedback provides students with detailed, specific information about improving their learning.

This descriptive feedback is:

- linked to the learning that is expected (Where am I going?)
- addresses faulty interpretations and lack of understanding (How am I going?)
- provides students with visible and manageable 'next steps' based on an assessment of the work at hand and an image of what 'good work looks like' so that they can begin to take on the responsibility of self-assessing and self-correcting. (Earl, 2003). (What do I need to do to improve and how do I do it?).

An example of descriptive feedback: That's a good introduction because you have covered the main points we discussed at the

beginning. Now ... which points do you think you should expand on?

9. Formal feedback

Formal feedback can be provided through structured conferences with specific goals. Teachers can meet with a few students a day or a week depending on specific projects, deadlines, and individual student needs. It is important to set up these conferences in a structured way with a focus on individualised goals so both teacher and student make good use of their time.

Hints for student-teacher conferences:

- Look at student work beforehand
- Use a checklist or feedback form that students can use as a reference for making revisions
- Focus on two to three items that need work and show how to improve them
- Make time for the student to ask questions and give input.

When teachers use formal conferencing along with informal feedback, students are better protected from failure and set up for success.

Strengthen effective feedback

1. Feedback after learning

Too often feedback that is provided to students after learning has concluded is not used by the students to improve their work. This often results in teachers making the same comments over and over again and wondering why the student has not transferred the information to another context. For such feedback to influence subsequent learning, students must remember it, translate it into advice that is transferable across tasks, and apply it the next time they encounter a task to which this learning could apply. Generally, while strong students can often do this, struggling students find it more difficult.

2. Feedback during and after learning should:

- focus on what is being learnt (learning intention) and how students should go about it (success criteria)
- provide information on how and why the student has or has not met the criteria
- provide strategies to help the student to improve.

The characteristics of good feedback

Evidence shows consistency in the characteristics of effective and ineffective feedback.²

Area	More effective feedback	Ineffective feedback
Setting a goal	A specific and challenging goal is set, often with criteria for a high quality performance on a task.	Goals are vague or not used.
	The goal is communicated so that students understand it.	Students do not understand the goals or the success criteria.
	Feedback addresses task goals directly.	
Kind of feedback	Feedback draws attention to positive elements of the performance: for example, the details of correct responses.	Feedback is focused solely on incorrect responses.
	Feedback includes constructive criticism: advice that provokes the student to improve task performance.	Feedback that does not provide information or support to improve performance or understanding.
	Feedback refers to changes in performance from previous efforts.	There is a focus on comparisons with other students, or marks and grades.
	Feedback includes an element of self-assessment by students (including peer assessment) as part of the process of encouraging student autonomy and responsibility.	A reliance on extrinsic rewards (stickers, stars). Feedback includes punishment.
Level of feedback	Feedback provides information about a task, how well it was performed and how to do it more effectively.	Non-specific feedback is given: e.g. praise or criticism for task performance without detail.
	Feedback at the process level: how can the student improve the learning processes needed to understand and perform the task?	Feedback at the self level: comment on personal qualities of the student, either positive or negative that provides little or no information about processes or performance.
	Feedback at the self-regulation level: how can the student do a better job of planning, monitoring and managing their actions and using strategies in approaching the task? This is also described as "metacognitive" feedback.	

Teacher reflection questions

- What opportunities for feedback do I provide to individual students and the whole class?
- How do I know if students have understood my feedback?
- How well do my students reflect on their work and detect their errors?
- How do I know if students have acted on my feedback?
- How does my feedback link to the identified learning intentions and success criteria?