Assessment Appetiser
For Module 3:
Student Reactions
to Feedback

Purpose:
To show that students’ perceptions of feedback sometimes differs from their teachers’ perceptions.

How do students react to our feedback?

What you need:
• a copy of pages 1 & 2 (back-to-back) for half the pairs of teachers
• a copy of pages 1 & 3 (back-to-back) for the other half of pairs of teachers.

Step 1:
• READ the handout in pairs (either page 2 or 3 as distributed).

Step 2:
• DISCUSS the questions at the bottom of the reading with your partner.

Step 3:
• SHARE with another pair who have read the other page (i.e. 2 or 3).
• DISCUSS: What are the issues that emerge for us in our context?

Step 4:
• As a whole group, IDENTIFY instances where students’ perceptions of feedback might differ from teachers’ perceptions in this school.
**Student COMMENTS on Teacher Feedback**

“‘Good’ doesn’t help much – he’s just saying that it’s not really very good. I’d like it if he just told the truth.” (Year 3 student) p. 102

“‘Not very good work’ doesn’t help me to know how to do it better.” (Year 3 student) p. 102

“If it’s a tick I’m quite happy because it means it’s good work, but if it’s two sentences at the bottom it means it’s quite bad.” (Year 6 student) p.101

“If they give you tips on how you could improve and say what you did, well, it’s a lot nicer. It boosts your confidence more.” (Year 9 student) p. 102

“Comments make you think about the other things you’ve got to put in next time to get a better grade – it’s good to know what you’ve done wrong.” (Year 10 student) p. 101

“Once she said, ‘You’re not very good at spelling’. I don’t really want to hear that because I already know that.” (Year 10 student) p. 102

Student comments are extracted from Paul Weeden et al. 2002, pp. 101-102.

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“If the feedback does not recognise what they have achieved and simply focuses on what they have not then pupils can find it difficult to see much point in trying harder. Feedback that offers them suggested steps to improve their work encourages them to take those steps.”

(Weeden et al. 2002, pp. 112-3, original emphasis)

“Exactly why school policies and practice on feedback in the classroom have focussed on rewards, rather than extended dialogue about the quality of the work produced, is an interesting issue.”

(Torrance and Pryor 1998, p. 40.)

**Discuss:**

1. Do any of these comments reflect things your students might say about your feedback to them? Do they perceive your feedback the way you do?

2. What differences are there in the nature and the usefulness of oral feedback (in class) and written feedback (later)?

3. Do students read your written feedback? Do they understand it? Do they act on it?

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Sources:

Student REACTIONS to Teacher Feedback

“A classroom incident …

The children had been asked to do some book research. This involved choosing a ‘mini-beast’ from those that had been discovered in the school grounds, drawing it, reading about it in the books and then writing about it. The teacher had made clear to them that she was most concerned with the finding out … she also said she did not want copying from the book.

Craig had chosen to write about snakes (not discovered in the school grounds) and produced a piece where he had chosen two small pieces of text from the book and copied them down almost word for word. His writing did not make a great deal of sense, partly because he had ignored the punctuation … but also because the second of his extracts about how snakes move was originally the caption of one of a series of linked diagrams. Craig received public praise for his work and was given a good work sticker. The teacher’s comment to the researcher at the time was that précis was a difficult skill and he had done well.

Claire had chosen to write about a butterfly. Her writing was much less scientific in style but when compared with her source it could be seen to be original … When she brought her work up to the teacher she was not given any positive feedback, but had spelling errors pointed out to her and was sent away to correct them. At this point she was asked by the researcher what the teacher had thought of her work; she said: ‘Not very good’, and added that the reason she knew this was that she had been asked to do something more to it. She put right her mistakes and went to show her work again to the teacher. Unfortunately she had missed one rogue capital letter and the teacher sent her back again to put it right. Claire went back to her place and started to cry. When the teacher’s attention was drawn to this she asked her why she was crying. Claire replied, ‘Because I can’t do it.’ At this point … the teacher reassured her that she had produced a lovely piece of work and that her crying was unnecessary. She was asked to get the sticker box, although the force of this was rather diminished because the teacher then gave a sticker to every pupil because they had worked so well during the session.

… it demonstrates that ostensibly similar feedback … has actually been provided in different ways and with differing impact for the two children involved. Claire produced a piece of work which demonstrated understanding of the task and a capacity to carry it out. It met the teacher’s expectations and so she suggested further improvement could be made by focusing on spelling and presentation. Claire, however, interpreted this as not improving on something that had already been done well, but rather as ‘I can’t do it’. Craig, by contrast, received very public praise and a public reward, even though it might be argued that his effort barely met the … [standard], if at all, and the strength of the positive feedback he received reflected more about what the teacher thought he needed, rather than what he actually achieved.” (pp. 37-8)

Discuss:

1. What are the short-term consequences of this feedback for Craig? For Claire?
2. What might be the longer-term impact of this feedback for Craig? For Claire?
3. How can a student’s sense of themselves as learners be affected by feedback?

Source:

Office of Learning and Teaching, DE&T