ICT - Providing Students with Feedback on Progress

PEEL in Practice: 1300 ideas for quality teaching
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A few years ago, I had a Year 11 Information Technology class that had quite a reputation for not handing in their work. For most students, completing the task was often more than enough, and I found myself constantly reminding them to hand in their work after completion. I tried a number of strategies, including writing the tasks and dates on the board, getting the students to write dates in their diaries and endlessly checking with individuals to inform them of what was due and when. After several weeks they had trained me to do the monitoring for them. How could I change this and get the students to be responsible for monitoring their own progress?

I experimented with a few ideas with mixed success but eventually found a system that worked well for this class. I have since seen a similar system used successfully with some Year 9 and 10 classes at one of our junior campuses. This strategy encourages the students to play an active role in checking their own progress and enables the teacher to do more teaching during the lessons. However, it is worth mentioning that a significant disadvantage is the time required to maintain another record of class progress and ensure that it is always up to date. If you cannot ensure that the record of class progress is kept current, then don't attempt to use this system.

I was fortunate that my Information Technology class had access to the computer network during each timetabled class. With my laptop plugged into the network at the front desk, I created a simple Web page with a large table listing each student, the tasks to be completed and due dates. I uploaded this page to a directory on the network that I knew the students had only "Read Only" permission to view. This page did not replace my normal assessment spreadsheet of class results and, for reasons of privacy, did not include any grades for students to view or compare. As students handed in their work during each lesson I would record a tick against their names and the task on the grid. Once or twice a lesson I would re-save the updated page to the network so it was current by the time the class finished.

Students quickly learnt the directory location and I started "building in" a regular time near the end of each lesson for the students to check the page and review their progress. After a few weeks, I could see students beginning to view the page themselves without reminders. Work began to flow in more regularly without the effort of needing to constantly talk to students about outstanding work. A simple reminder to some students to check their progress often resulted in the appearance of the completed work.

Students appeared to enjoy the instant access that this system provided. It meant that they could check their progress in this class at any time of the day and confirm whether I or not I had received the work they thought they had handed in. The best thing about this system was they didn't need access to me to check their progress.

As the year advanced I began to use this page as an access point for other tasks and class related activities. Pages on the college network were linked using hyperlinks on
the class Web page and URLs to Internet sites were recorded for quick student access. The development of this simple page became a successful way of encouraging my students to navigate around the college network and to check their progress in the subject. This was a good example of how ICT allows the construction of products that can not only be re-used, but also be extended and built on.

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