

The Marks Free Class! Feedback Assessment in Action

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Rationale: To remove the invisible un-motivational and mysterious standard, to remove the comparative and competitive aura in the classroom, to improve student autonomy which includes motivation, investment in their own learning, collaboration skills, critical eye, development of students' own standards for success, the development of a sense of voice and confidence in that voice...To ease my own correcting burden.

The Nature of Feedback: According to Alessandra and Hunsaker (1993) in *Communicating at Work*, there are four basic kinds of feedback:

1. *Verbal / Written feedback* is used to clarify meanings, give praise or criticize, and/or give suggestions to help others.
2. *Non-verbal feedback* is the use of body language . It should be in sync with verbal feedback.
3. *Fact feedback* is using various questions (clarifying, expansion, direction, information-seeking, feeling-finding, and open) to elicit specific information.
4. *Feeling feedback* is the use of empathy to understand the underlying feelings, emotions, and attitudes of the message. (Impact and personal voice)

Feedback assessment is a response system involving: feelings, attitudes, facts, information seeking, verbal and non-verbal cues. Any system of response to student work must address all 3 of the following (Cazden, 1988):

1. *Propositional:* content, structure, and procedures
2. *Social:* interpersonal, sharing of ideas (peer editing/revision), audience awareness
3. *Expressive:* identity and attitudes (self assessment and intent)

Feedback should be:

- supportive
- understanding
- timely
- pointed
- specific
- consistent

Strategies:

- modeling (peer, class, teacher),
- conferencing (peer, teacher),
- having students articulate intent(s) of their messages,
- having students develop curriculum,
- self assessment,
- de-mystefying and actually teaching procedures (how to peer edit, to write a poem step by step, brainstorming, finding topics, journaling, self-evaluating...),
- teaching active listening,
- forcing students to revise their work - multi draft process,
- using rubrics - specify criteria, give them all the tools they need to be autonomous.

Believe me your job becomes easier.

To make this work as a system of evaluation, students need to:

- know the rules
- have initiative and responsibility to sustain this kind of discourse be given strategies and feedback through observation, participation, modeling, and questioning
- be given opportunities to scaffold their learning, to challenge their thinking and make connections (Bruning, Schraw, and Ronning, 1995)

Interesting Connections: So far in my readings there has been a lot done on the effectiveness of teacher responses to student work and a lot on the value of conferences - the link is as follows.

In order for teachers to avoid appropriating the message,

1. students should be encouraged to articulate their intents - rubrics help here too, and
2. students should lead the conferences discussing what they need to know from you.

The point is that for students to be this invested they need to care about the message they are sending. It has to be authentic. Donald Graves says that the root of revision is in the child's voice, the urge to express. If the task is authentic, then they will want to revise and work it until it is exactly the way they want it and effective to their audience. The teacher has to collect less work (portfolio style) and talk with students more during the process of their work. The students become much more keenly aware of audience. When the teacher sets the assignment, we've done all the work for them - the task is inauthentic".

Some ways to avoid this are:

- to have students use rubrics which show what they intended to do
- self evaluations where they write out what they intended to do
- rough drafts in two columns where in one column is the text and in the other their intent per paragraph of the draft
- conferencing throughout the writing process
- student chosen texts, assignments, and curricula

Effects: Evaluation affects everything you do - so changing methods for me meant that I had to reevaluate everything I do and why. This project is continually evolving. Feedback assessment involves elements from portfolios, criterion referencing, performance and outcomes based work, you name it. It just means removing the marks and then looking at what needs to be done for students to really learn and to understand where they stand themselves in relation to success.

Portfolios: Portfolios are my evidence or record of progress. I no longer keep a mark book, only a record of who I've seen in a conference and over which piece, and who has handed in which work, late assignments and the like. This is all anecdotal and symbolic, the shorter the better. The other evidence is in my comments on student work and in their self-evaluations.

Other things you can include to show evaluation could be:

- conference notes
- rubrics
- term reflections
- progress papers
- checklists
- anecdotal comments

Day to day classroom operations vary. They can include:

- lessons or mini-lessons on format, grammar, presentation...
- class discussions
- modeling
- time for writing, revising, peer editing
- conferencing
- journaling
- reading
- researching
- collaborative projects

Authentic assessment:

1. grows out of our own and our students' values and plans
2. is woven into the fabric of the school day

3. informs teacher and student learning
(Calkins, 1994)