

Effective approaches for giving and receiving feedback

Fostering understanding, motivation, and change

Joseph Levitan, Assistant Professor, McGill University

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Definition and Goal of Feedback

- **Working definition:** Feedback is any communication directed towards an individual or group in response their activities, products, or behaviors with the intention to influence future actions. Feedback can be positive (reinforcing the behavior/product, etc.), negative (discouraging the behavior), or modifying (refine, redirect, or change some aspect of the behavior).
 - This can include:
 - verbal feedback (e.g. X behavior was inappropriate because YZ)
 - written (e.g. X lesson plan could have an activity here to illustrate YZ)
 - non-verbal feedback (e.g. frowning when watching someone student teach)

Why is feedback especially important?

- In learning science research feedback has been shown to be the most impactful factor for deep learning (reading and consumption of information is much less effective for changes of behavior AND understanding) (Deans for Impact, 2016).
- So, your feedback is essential for pre-service teachers to become quality instructors

Questions?

- Anyone have any questions about this definition or the importance of feedback?

Activity Preamble

- Please find a partner who does not teach the same subject that you teach
- Then, please write a lesson plan for the subject **that your partner teaches** (not your own). Please use the McGill lesson plan handouts (which are required for your supervisees)
- You have 10-15 minutes
- After we talk about feedback strategies you will be giving feedback on your partner's lesson plan, and they will be giving feedback on your lesson plan.

Principles for effective and productive feedback (1)

In order to motivate change create comfort and safety

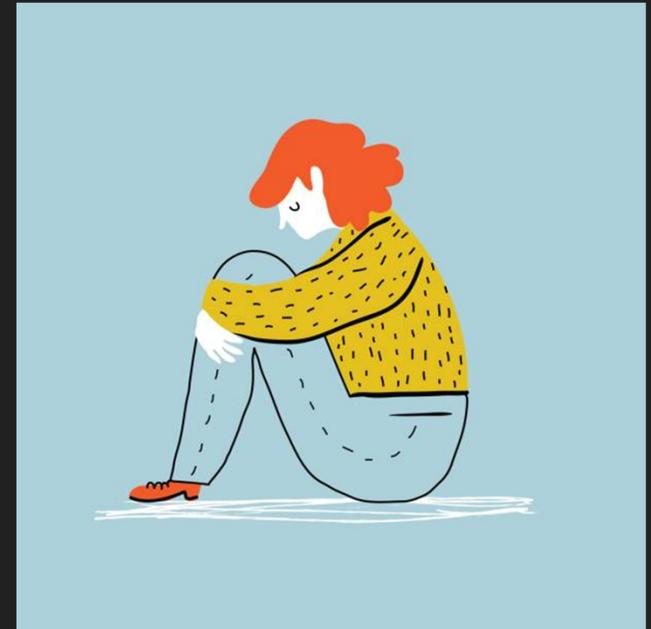
- People who receive feedback apply it only about 30% of the time (Ochsner).
- However, people who feel comfortable are more likely to implement feedback.

Principles for effective and productive feedback (2)

- **Positivity facilitates change.**
 - Positive feedback stimulates reward centers in the brain. This helps the recipient be open to taking new directions.
 - In contrast, negative feedback done improperly can trigger a threat response, which often leads to defensiveness.
 - This does not mean avoid negative, or corrective, feedback altogether. Instead, make sure to follow up with a suggested solution.

How a student might feel....

"All my supervisor does is tell me what I am doing wrong! At least tell me how I can fix the problems. They never tell me if I have done anything right. I must have done at least one thing good. I'm still learning!"



Principles for effective and productive feedback (3)

- **Be clear, concise, specific and focus on context.**
 - Generally, people are more likely to respond well to specific, positive direction.
 - “For example, say I’d like to hear your valuable opinions at least once per meeting,” rather than “You are too quiet”.
 - This also provides clues as to where/in what situations this person might speak up (e.g. maybe they are very loud in other contexts, which could be confusing.)

Principles for effective and productive feedback (4)

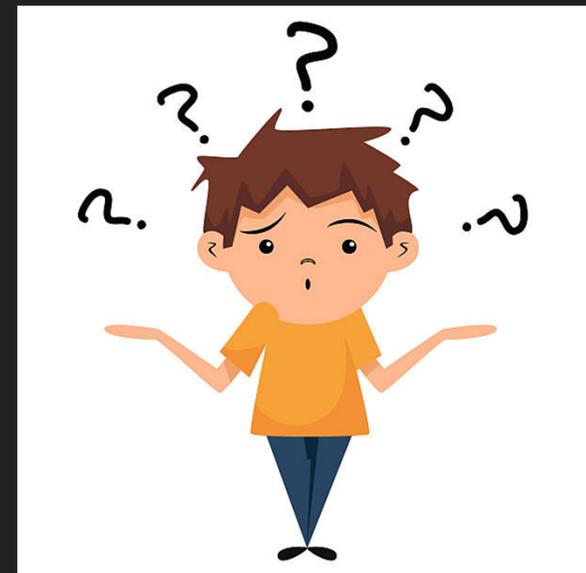
- **Timing, Repetition, and Timing.**
 - The adult brain learns best in action. If you wait, feedback becomes too ambiguous and relies on memory.
 - Productive feedback requires giving it frequently.

Principles for effective and productive feedback (5)

- **Be tough, not mean.**
 - When/if someone drops the ball and you have to provide negative feedback, start by asking their perspective on what happened.
 - Resist casting aspersions.
 - Instead offer direct, clear, and firm feedback.

How a student might feel....

"My supervisor told me that some student teachers have 'it' and some don't. I guess she means I'm one of the ones who doesn't have 'it' but I don't even know what that means."



Questions?

- Anyone have any questions about these principles for effective feedback?

Feedback Strategies

- *Negative feedback*, or corrective comments about past behavior. These are things that didn't go well.
- *Positive feedback*, or affirming comments about past behavior. These are things that went well and need to be repeated.
- *Negative feedforward*, or corrective comments about future behavior. These are things that don't need to be repeated next time.
- *Positive feedforward*, or affirming comments about future behavior. These are things that would improve performance in the future. (Eikenberry, 2011)
- *Modifying feedforward*, these are suggestions to change certain aspects of a behavior or product to make it more effective

Suggestions for Giving Feedback Well (1)

Prepare before giving feedback

- This includes getting in the right emotional (empathetic, supportive) and mental (insightful, discerning, thoughtful) state (Fast Company)

Establish criteria and norms.

- For example, make sure that you and the receiver understand and agree upon the criteria for success in order to give helpful feedback (alternatively, you may need to inform the receiver in what ways you are evaluating them, if agreement cannot be reached).

Suggestions for Giving Feedback Well (2)

- **Attune your emotional radar to both yourself and the person receiving feedback**
 - –i.e. pay attention and recognize when you or the receiver is getting agitated, defensive, or hurt and respond accordingly

Suggestions for Giving Feedback Well (3)

- **Constructive feedback includes commenting on both good work and areas for improvement.**
 - Tip: limit the amount of feedback to what is useful, rather than all of the feedback you may want to give (Oxford Learning Institute)

Suggestions for Giving Feedback Well (4)

- **“Sandwich” feedback when possible**
 - I.e. start with something positive and end with something positive

Suggestions for Giving Feedback Well (5)

- **Focus on outcomes or behaviors, not the person**
 - Example: "I think that the draft you've given me needs more thorough editing here, and here", rather than "Your writing is really shoddy." (OLI)

Suggestions for Giving Feedback Well (6)

- **Be specific and clear about problematic behaviors and if possible make concrete suggestions for improvement**
 - Example: This sentence has four clauses and no punctuation, which makes it difficult to understand. Commas or conjunctions should be placed here and here, and this clause should be its own sentence.

Suggestions for Giving Feedback Well (6)

- Be considerate with pronoun use (own the statement)
 - Use 'I' statements instead of 'you' statements (e.g. "I find this sentence confusing" rather than "you sound confused here")

Suggestions for Giving Feedback Well (7)

Timing and Repetition are important:

- The sooner you can give feedback the better
- Be sensitive to and recognize that immediate responses to feedback are likely to be negative, and plan for ways to help the receiver hear and listen to the feedback in order for the feedback to be effective.
- Repeat feedback in the moment if it is very important—this will ensure people understand that you feel that it is important

Suggestions for Giving Feedback Well (8)

- Ask for self-assessment (but be thoughtful about timing).
 - Some people find self-assessment most beneficial at the beginning of a feedback session, while others find it most beneficial at the end. If you are feeling creative it may be possible to do self-assessment at the beginning.

Suggestions for Giving Feedback Well (9)

- Recognize the individual's mindset and tailor feedback accordingly
 - Tip: when talking about a problem (especially with a student or employee), demonstrate that you have been guilty of that behavior as well, to build rapport (but do so **cautiously**).

Suggestions for giving feedback well (10)

- **Take on a growth mindset approach to motivate the person to change the behaviors you highlighted**
 - e.g. I can tell that you are a hard worker and a thoughtful person, those two qualities will allow you to learn and make this and future lessons even better.
 - e.g. I know you really care about kids and want to see them succeed—harnessing this in your classroom management approach will help you learn how to better engage kids and make sure that they are not disruptive.
 - e.g. When I was a first year teacher, I really struggled with X, but after some practice it became one of my strengths.

Questions and discussion

- What do you think of these strategies?
- In groups of 3-4 discuss whether you have used these strategies before, and if you have found any particularly helpful. Do you have other strategies aligned with the principles mentioned earlier that you would like to share?

Common Feedback Approaches

- Formally (planned, during a meeting, or via email)
- Informally (in passing, in the hallway)
- From an outside consultant
- From data analysis

Tips for giving a boss feedback:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/dailymuse/2013/02/18/giving-feedback-to-your-boss-like-a-boss/#43a976c53b80>

<https://hbr.org/2010/03/how-to-give-your-boss-feedback>

On receiving feedback (1)

Prepare yourself:

- Receiving feedback can be challenging, so make sure to prepare yourself emotionally as well as prepare the person giving feedback (providing context) through structuring the feedback session.
- Structuring a feedback session well allows you to *hear*, the feedback and find actionable suggestions. (Remember, the person giving you feedback is trying to help you improve, so make sure you let them know the best ways for you to understand and put into action their feedback—assuming you agree with it).
- *Put yourself into a growth mindset while listening to feedback, if possible.*

On receiving feedback (2)

- **Listen to the feedback:**
 - Avoid interrupting, unless you are asking a clarifying question. Hear the person out--listen to what they are really saying and not what you may assume they are going say.
 - You can absorb more information by concentrating on listening and understanding than thinking about a response.

On receiving feedback (3)

- **Be aware of non-verbal responses.**
 - Body language and tone of voice can speak louder than words. Ensure that you are providing the right non-verbal cues that you are paying attention and value what they person has to say.
 - *If possible, utilize your non-verbal cues as a mode of communication as well, to try to help steer the conversation in a way that will help you hear what the person really means in terms of improving performance.*

On receiving feedback (4)

- Try to stay in an open, problem-solving, and growth mindset.
 - Think about feedback as a way for you to solve a problem, and take the person's feedback as a tactic towards solving the problem.
 - This allows for a considerate receptiveness to new ideas.
 - Make the feedback not about *you* as a person, but instead about strategies and tactics for being better at certain activities.

On receiving feedback (5)

- **Make sure you understand the message.**
 - Make sure you understand what is being said to you, especially before responding to the feedback.
 - Ask questions for clarification, if necessary.
 - Listen actively by repeating key points so that you know you have interpreted the feedback correctly.
 - In a group environment, ask for other's interpretations.

On receiving feedback (6)

- **You don't have to agree.**
 - Feedback is an intersubjective experience and sometimes the person giving feedback is not always right.
 - If you think that the person giving feedback has missed an important consideration, make sure you bring it up.
 - But, think about ways to bring the discussion towards continuing improvement, not as excuses or passing blame on others.

Activity

It's now time to practice giving and receiving feedback

- Here is what I'd like for you to do:
 1. Please give the lesson plan you wrote earlier to your partner and they will write you feedback and give you verbal feedback and written feedback (you will do the same with your partner's lesson plan)
 - You have 10 minutes to read and write feedback
 2. Be sure to remember some of the techniques—particularly the emotional and affective techniques to motivate change (also think about non-verbal feedback when giving your verbal feedback).
 3. We will then de-brief and give each other feedback on our feedback.

Example