

## AER GAINS Video Series – *Descriptive Feedback* Transcript

### Segment 1 - *Feedback - The Most Powerful Tool* (6:56)

Narrator:

*Feedback is information students and teachers share during learning so that students can close the gap between their current level of performance and the learning goals. Feedback engages teachers and students collaboratively in learning, where students and teachers are continuously giving and receiving meaningful feedback about learning.*

*This video shows teachers learning about feedback; what it is, what makes it effective, and how providing feedback during learning helps students reach their learning goals.*

*The practice of providing feedback to students has been highly investigated in educational research. Black and Wiliam, in their landmark study on formative assessment, state that “descriptive feedback is the most powerful tool for improving student learning” (2003).*

*The way teachers provide feedback to students determines how effectively the feedback can be used by students to improve. When teachers provide feedback to students about what they are doing well, what they need to improve, and how to improve, student achievement improves significantly.*

*Has this ever happened to you? You’ve designed a task to assess student’s learning; spent time grading their work and writing comments to guide student’s improvement. When you return this work, your students focus entirely on their grades and pay little or no attention to your comments. Some calculate their percentage; others immediately want to compare their grades to see how others have done; and still others wish to keep their achievement confidential.*

T: I notice often times kids get essays back and they don’t even read my comments. And look, I spent an hour on these comments, why aren’t you reading them? But now because they are learning that those comments directly go to what they are going to do to succeed, they actually read them...and that’s a good feeling.

*Research tells us that frequent evaluation and grading can have a negative impact on students’ motivation to learn. Using assessment for learning has been shown to increase student engagement in the learning process.*

T: They’re, I think, a little bit hesitant when they realized they weren’t getting marked on everything, um, but seeing the final results, I mean my students did fabulous on the measurement unit, they really, really did well so I think seeing those final results is helping them to realize that this is a process and that we have to go through this process in order to get the results that they wanted.

*There is conclusive evidence to show that when students receive specific, timely, descriptive feedback, their achievement does in fact improve. Descriptive feedback helps the learner answer the questions; **where am I going, where am I now, and how can I close the gap?***

*When teachers are involved in assessment for learning, they:*

- *share their learning goals and success criteria with their students*
- *use questions to determine what students are thinking*
- *provide meaningful feedback during the learning*

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- *and engage students in peer and self assessment.*

*These practices work together in an integrated fashion to help students learn and improve.*

*While viewing this video, you may wish to reflect on the following questions:*

- *Do you give your students clear, concise feedback related to the learning goals?*

T: OK, that's fair. So you've got some good org[anization] going on here. You start with sort of an overall statement which is who he is, he's the chairman, and you go into all your specific characteristics, making sure that you have at least three (which you do). And then you're going to talk about why those characteristics would make him come for a romantic dinner with his wife, or for a business dinner with his colleagues, right?

- *Do you identify what they have done well, and what needs improvement?*

T: OK Patricia, I've had a chance to look at your work and you've done a lot of things well. There's good detail in here, good description, talking about specifically like what his education is, talking about character words like "generous". These are all really good words that I'm glad you took the time to include. What I would like to work on improving is talking about why characteristics like being married would draw him to a place like *Luxury*.

- *Does your feedback include how they can improve?*

T: So what do you think we could take out of this silhouette to make it more focussed to your restaurant?

S: The fact that she has red curly hair and black stilettos.

T: OK good, so why doesn't that...

S: Because it's describing, it's again describing her. It's not really describing the restaurant.

T: OK that's very good. So we'll modify your silhouette to remove details that don't connect to your restaurant. What I want you to do is to connect the details that you have in this to the type of restaurant, the atmosphere of your restaurant.

- *Are your students expected to act on your feedback?*

T: So I'm going to give you some time now Patricia to go over these suggestions and this feedback in our discussion and actually put it into place.

- *Do you provide the necessary time for them to act on the feedback?*

T: Take some time, look through the feedback, read through my notes and take some time - maybe 15 minutes or so - to start putting that feedback into place and improving the next draft of your profile or monologue.

- *Do you follow up on how students have responded to your feedback?*

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T: OK Hiva, I've provided you with some suggestions on how you could improve your responses to me. Have you had an opportunity to look at what I've written?

*In this video, you will learn how to;*

- 1. provide effective, descriptive feedback*
- 2. relate feedback to learning goals and success criteria*
- 3. plan opportunities for providing and acting on feedback*
- 4. increasingly engage students in their learning*

*A viewer's guide has been developed to enhance your professional learning while viewing this video. You might begin by reflecting on your current feedback practice by using the feedback inventory provided in the viewer's guide.*

Quote on screen: The most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback. (Hattie, 1992)

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### Segment 2 - *What Constitutes Effective Feedback?* (5:32)

Narrator:

*Feedback is information students and teacher share during learning so that students can close the gap between their current level of performance and the learning goals.*

Quote on screen:

It's the *quality* of the feedback rather than its existence or absence that determines its power. Stiggins et al (2004)

*While feedback is a crucial component of the learning process, not all feedback helps learners. The way teachers provide feedback determines how effective it is and whether students can use it to improve. In fact, assessment feedback can actually have a negative impact, particularly on low-achieving students, who are led to believe that they lack 'ability' and so are not able to learn.*

Text on screen: What make for **effective** feedback?

*The structure, focus, and amount of feedback are all factors that determine whether feedback will support learning.*

Text on screen: structure

*When telling students what you have observed about their learning, structure your comments to identify:*

- *what was done well,*

T: An excellent thing that you did was to identify a lot of details about your customer.

*Identifying what students have done well first sets a positive tone. However, the strengths you highlight must match the criteria for success and show how well the student is learning.*

T: I really like starting with highlighting all the things they've done well. Even if something is what we would consider to be not a successful piece of work, even if you can highlight a few things they did well, it just gives them encouragement.

- *what needs improvement,*

T: Connect to the details you have in this to the type of restaurant and the atmosphere of your restaurant.

- *and how to improve.*

T: First we want to take out the details that don't really connect to what your restaurant offers or what your restaurant is about.

*Feedback can also be posed as a question, requiring students to think about their learning and to consider next steps.*

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T: So what do you think we could take out of this silhouette to make it more focused to your restaurant?

Text on screen: Focus

*All feedback should relate to the learning goals and the success criteria which have been shared and clarified with the student at the outset of learning.*

Text on screen: Learning goal: I can profile target audiences by specific characteristics, such as age, gender, income, culture and lifestyle.

*The feedback provided in this instance focuses on the task, “to profile the audience for a media piece”, not on the learner. All of the teacher’s feedback is related to the student’s learning demonstrated by her work, rather than commenting on the student’s behaviours or personal attributes.*

*This kind of “descriptive” feedback is very different from “evaluative feedback”. Descriptive feedback is **anecdotal**, and provides students detailed, precise information about their **progress toward the learning goal**, and suggestions for **next steps in learning**. Evaluative feedback consists of a **judgment about the learning**, and is communicated as a **grade, a mark or symbol**.*

Quote on screen: Students who are given comments only - rather than marks or marks and comments - make more gains in achievement and feel more positive about the experience. (Butler, 1998)

T1: So how have your students reacted to the change in assessment strategy?

T2: Well, initially a few of them couldn’t really understand why I wouldn’t be giving marks anymore and how they could possibly even have any gauge of how they were doing if there was no mark. But you’re spending more time with them providing feedback and I think that they understand. And they’re realizing that it’s more useful to them than an actual grade on the paper that they didn’t really necessarily understand anyway.

Text on screen: Amount

*We want to avoid overwhelming students by addressing all of their learning needs at once. Prioritize your comments by commenting on the aspects of student learning needing immediate attention.*

Text on screen: At any one time, try to limit the feedback to 2 or 3 specific recommendations related to the learning goal.

*Here the teacher points out one thing the student has done well:*

T: Let’s start with the things that you’ve really done well here. I like that you’ve included the formula at the beginning.

*And provides two suggestions for improvement:*

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T: The only thing I would suggest is telling me that this is volume that you're calculating, OK? So volume equals the area of the base multiplied by the height, OK? Now with your conclusion here at the end, you've got the right answer, yes they do have two different volumes, but you really need to communicate to me with your words that you understand. I really want you to expand upon what part of the formula is impacting the volume the most, and I'll follow up with you in a couple of days.

*A viewer's guide has been developed to enhance your professional learning. Please refer to the guide for more detailed information about planning for effective feedback, research references, and access to a variety of learning activities.*

Quote on screen: Feedback which focuses on what needs to be done can encourage all to believe that they can improve. Black et al (2003)

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### Segment 3 - *Effective Feedback Requires Purposeful Planning (6:26)*

Narrator:

*Feedback is information students and teachers share **during learning** so that students can close the gap between their current level of performance and the learning goals. Effective feedback requires intentional planning. In this segment, we'll look for ways to plan assessment and instruction to create the conditions for effective feedback.*

*The continuous flow of information between teacher and student about learning has sometimes been described as a feedback “loop”. The feedback loop begins with an instructional activity related to a learning goal. While students practice, teachers gather ongoing information about the learning, using assessment strategies such as observation and oral questioning. **Teachers** use this feedback to adjust and target their instruction to meet student needs. **Students** use feedback to reflect on their learning, and make adjustments to progress toward the learning goal.*

*When planning, teachers need to carefully consider **when** and **how** feedback will be given during the feedback loop, and build in designated time for student action and follow-up on the feedback. For example, you could give students a task and provide ongoing feedback as you observe and assess.*

T1: So, the identified learning goal for this lesson could be that students should solve problems involving the surface area of prisms and pyramids.

T2: What instruction and assessment are you going to use to address that learning goal?

Text on screen: Planning Instruction (changes to) Planning assessment

T1: Well I could provide them with different 3-D nets, and they could identify what the 3-D shape is based on what the base is, they would have to identify the base and then identify if it's a prism or a pyramid, and I guess as they're working in groups on identifying what those different shapes are I could walk around and observe and see who's having difficulty with that task.

Text on screen: Planning feedback

T2: Mm hmm. We want to ensure that the students are getting quality feedback instantly, so as you're circulating, you can certainly do that.

*Research shows that feedback that comes soon after the performance is most effective, particularly when the learning is focused on facts and concepts. Brookhart calls this feedback “just-in-time”.*

Quote on screen: Feedback needs to come while students...still think of the learning goal as a learning goal - that is, something they are still striving for, not something they already did. (Brookhart, 2008)

Text on screen: Planning Instruction (changes to) Planning assessment

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T2: And then you could give them a word problem to look at and they could peer assess each other's solutions using the problem solving checklist we've provided.

T1: Their solution and this checklist could be their exit card as they're leaving for that day.

Text on screen: Planning feedback

T2: The next day you could have a discussion with the whole class based on the information you gathered from the exit cards you could address the entire class or work with students individually.

*Think about how students will record the feedback, and how you will monitor that students have acted on it. Teachers have developed a variety of ways to monitor and track students' response to feedback. Some samples are included in the viewers' guide.*

*The mode of delivery is also important to consider when planning feedback.  
Feedback can be oral:*

T: OK, and how many xs do you have? This is x here, and these are done now. How many xs, all our xs here?

S: Four.

T: Four - it's 3 and 1.

*Or written:*

Text on screen: I like that you included pictures. Why does the short, fat one have a larger volume?

*When deciding, consider the type of assignment - some tasks, such as a written report, lend themselves better to written feedback, while others, such as an investigation, may be more appropriate to oral feedback. Learning conversations with students can also be very effective.*

T1: It's good, Roshana, how you have identified that centimetres need to be cubed in calculations for volume because you have centimetres times centimetres times centimetres. Now I want you to think about...

T3: Oral feedback was really good...like just going around as they're working on the task, and helping them as they work on it worked well.

Quote on screen: Feedback as dialogue means that the student not only receives initial feedback information, but also has the opportunity to engage the teacher in discussion about that feedback. (Nicol & McFarlane-Dick, 2006)

*Deliberately planning when and how feedback will be given can help alleviate some of the demands on teachers' time.*

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*Here are some practical suggestions for addressing the challenges of balancing feedback with classroom assessment and instruction:*

- *Provide feedback at critical checkpoints in the learning*
- *Model how to provide effective feedback. As students become more familiar with the feedback process, they can give meaningful feedback to each other, and to themselves.*
- *Provide feedback to groups of students with similar strengths and needs*
- *Design a way to record the feedback for reference by students and for your own records.*
- *Maximize the use of classroom observation and feedback logs*

T1: So basically for every lesson what we want to provide is an opportunity to give feedback to the students, for them to act on that feedback, and then for us to follow up to ensure that they are using that feedback appropriately.

*A viewer's guide has been developed to enhance your professional learning. Please refer to the guide for more detailed information about planning for effective feedback, research references, and access to a variety of learning activities.*

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### Segment 4 - *Connecting to Learning Goal and Success Criteria (6:34)*

Narrator:

*Feedback is information students and teachers share **during learning** so that students can close the gap between their current level of performance and the learning goals.*

Quote on screen: Students can assess themselves only when they have a sufficiently clear picture of the targets their learning is meant to attain. (Black and Wiliam, 1998)

*The way teachers provide feedback in dialogue with students determines how effective it is and whether students can use it to improve. Feedback must pertain to the learning goals and to the criteria that describe what success looks like. This segment shows teachers planning their lessons and connecting their feedback to learning goals and success criteria. As they are planning “with the end in mind”, they identify what students are to learn, using the curriculum as a starting point.*

T1: So what is it that we want our students to have learned by the end of this math unit?”

T2: What I would like to look at is determining the relationships among units and measurable attributes including the area of a trapezoid and then specifically the volume of a right prism. So we’re using what we built on in the first term and...

*Next, they “unpack” the expectations by identifying clear **learning goals**.*

Text on screen: Learning goals are brief, concise statements, **in student-friendly language**, that describe what students are to know or be able to do at the end of a period of learning.

T2: What I’m going to ask you to do is to copy this learning goal into your math journal and as you’re doing that I want you to think about it because I’m going to ask you to tell me what it means. I’m going to ask you to share with a partner, and then share with the whole class, what this learning goal actually is - what does it really mean?

*Similarly, they plan how students will demonstrate what they know and are able to do, determine the criteria for success, and identify ways to ensure students understand this criteria. As part of their instructional planning, they determine ways to ensure students understand the criteria for success.*

T2: Well, we could develop a rubric.

T1: And we could have the students actually come up with some of the criteria for the rubric.

T2: Yeah, and we can show them strong and weak work from their solutions with problems involving area from the previous unit and how they can build on it for the volume.

T1: I think I also have some exemplars and that would really help to clarify the criteria for the students.

*Encouraging students to ask questions helps clarify their understanding.*

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T: So make sure when you're putting your learning down in your journal, that you are using the right word at the right time.

S: What's the difference between terminology and notation?

T: That's related to what we were just talking about. So terminology means...

*Exemplars, anchors and samples are particularly useful for developing, describing and clarifying success criteria, while being accessible at different points in the learning cycle.*

T: Now, what makes a good math journal? Well, it's a good question. So what we're going to do is we're going to look at examples of student work. We're going to look at stronger examples that and try to determine from those stronger examples what makes it a strong example, what criteria have been met, what criteria have they met in order to make it strong. And then we're going to look at weaker ones and see how they can be improved to meet that expectation.

*Having students analyze samples of strong and weak work helps them come to a common understanding of what success looks like.*

T: I'm just going to start a list of what you have identified as things that are making this a strong journal entry. So it's neat, they have examples, labels, what else do you think? Kiana?

S: They're explaining themselves straight through.

*The same exemplars help students when assessing what they have learned.*

T: So we have looked at different examples of stronger and weaker math journals in order to determine criteria that you need to meet in your math journals to make sure that your communication of your understanding of the learning goal is very clear. I'm going to write a checklist on the board that I want you to include in your journal that you can use to self assess as you're going through your math journal entry. You can also use it to peer assess when you're looking at a colleague's work.

*Whether feedback is oral or written, it is most effective when it pertains directly to clear learning goals and success criteria.*

T: You've included pictures. You've clearly identified for me which one is the short cylinder, and which one is the tall cylinder. I like the way that you've put the formula at the top and then you're showing me that you've substituted in the values. Your answer is expressed in cubic centimetres which is great. You're correct that I would like you to flesh out a little bit your explanation as to, now that you've figured out that they do have different volumes, what is it that's changing that allows them to have different volumes?

S: What I thought that I can do better is I could explain why this one is larger than the other one.

T: Why the volume is larger?

S: Yes.

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*As a final step in their planning, they identify critical checkpoints in the learning cycle; points at which assessment, feedback and action are required to determine who is learning, and who needs additional or alternative instruction.*

*Feedback during learning allows students to make the appropriate adjustments “en route” to the learning goal. It is feedback that supports students in the act of production.*

*A viewer’s guide has been developed to enhance your professional learning. Please refer to the guide for more detailed information about connecting feedback to learning goals and success criteria, research references, and access to a variety of learning activities.*

Quote on screen: Students can hit any target that they know about and that holds still for them. (Stiggins et al 2004)

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### Segment 5 - *Using Feedback to Develop Students' Self-Assessment Skills (6:27)*

Narrator:

*Feedback is information students and teachers share during learning so that students can close the gap between their current level of performance and the learning goals.*

Quote on screen: In giving students descriptive feedback, you have modeled the kind of thinking you want them to do as self-assessors. (Chappuis, 2005)

*When teachers use an assessment for learning approach, they are not only helping students to learn. They are also helping students to learn **how to learn**. They are building students' ability to **monitor their progress** toward achieving a learning goal, using self-assessment, or "self-feedback", to determine where they are and what to do next. They are actually teaching students to become **less dependent** on the teacher in monitoring their progress. Feedback is a **critical skill** that students need to successfully engage in peer- and self-assessment.*

*When students engage in peer- and self- assessment, they:*

- *know the **learning goal***
- *understand what **success** looks like,*
- *provide **feedback** in their own language and*
- *present alternative perspectives on **next steps**.*

*However, students need to be taught these assessment skills. You can begin by:*

- *Modelling descriptive feedback and the assessment process*

Text on screen: What was done well (changes to) What needs improvement

T: As I reviewed the journal assignments, I noticed that you both have a pretty good grasp of the definition section, where you're looking at variables, coefficients, polynomials, monomials, trinomials etc. However it seems that you're still having a little bit of difficulty, and particularly in subtracting polynomials... »

- *Having students look at exemplars of work together*

T: First we're going to look at exemplars of good and maybe journal entries that could improve a little bit, and I'm going to ask you to tell me what makes this journal entry good, what makes this one maybe not so good.

- *Increasing the use of self assessment tools such as feedback templates and checklists*

T: I guess one of the things I learned was to come up with a template for assessment. It starts with the kids writing down the learning goal in their own language, and then the look fors or the criteria for success on the project. And then while they're working they can check to see, ok, am I following through with these look fors that I'm supposed to do. And then I give them the feedback and say ok which is right directly beside it, comparing what was being looked for to what was actually done, and then the third stage is for them to say what they did to implement my feedback. So they can sort of see it across from the stage of alright here's

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what I was supposed to do, here's what success looks like, here's where I need to improve, and then this is what I did to make those improvements.

- *Having students work in pairs to peer assess and discuss what and how to improve*

Text on screen: What was done well

S1: Some of the things that were done well were, the layout was good, like the formula was first and then there were steps taken instead of going for the answer quickly. And there was a diagram to show to make sure that the reader understands what the shape is and what the volume is like what the formula is actually talking about so that the reader doesn't get confused.

Text on screen: How to improve

S2: What they could have done for the diagram is they could have labelled each side because if you say base you know it's the bottom one, but the sides and stuff you can't actually tell so if they like label each of the face you could tell like what exactly they're talking about.

- *Using strategies such as traffic lighting to self-assess their work against the criteria for success. Students use a green, yellow or red traffic light to indicate their level of understanding.*

T1: If you're kind of getting it and you're still having trouble in some areas, just put a yellow circle, and if you really understand everything, just put a green circle at the top, and that means you're ready to go to the next lesson. OK?

T1: When the students were doing the stop light exercise with their math journals, I really noticed that they really just stopped for a second, and I think that pause there helps them a lot to sort of OK what do I really understand and what do I not really understand and because of that pause normally they don't do that, so they just get right into the work. But because they had to think about which colour they had to put on the paper, they stopped. And I think that was very effective.

T2: That pause, it shows that they are doing some self assessment and thinking about their own learning in a way that's constructive...stepping outside the actual task and thinking 'how am I learning, how am I approaching this?'

- *Encouraging students to act on feedback for homework with home support*
- *Having students maintain a feedback or learning log to monitor their progress*

T: The second part of the assessment is a little bit different. It will involve a journal assignment and it's just a short journal assignment consisting of two questions: the first question is 'how well did you understand the concepts behind adding and subtracting polynomial expressions giving specific examples?' and the second part is 'what do you still have difficulty with?'

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- *Asking students to complete an exit card at the end of a lesson. Using exit cards, students assess their progress towards the learning goal by commenting on what they have learned and what they still need to learn.*

Quote on screen: The most important instructional decisions are made, not by the adults working in the system, but by students themselves. (Stiggins et al, 2006)

*Please refer to the viewer's guide for more detailed information about these and other strategies for using feedback to engage students in learning.*