

# Descriptive Feedback

## *Assessment for Learning Video Series*

### VIEWING GUIDE

A resource to support the implementation of *GROWING SUCCESS  
Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools*  
First Edition, Covering Grades 1 – 12, 2010



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## Introduction

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This video shows teachers learning about and implementing effective feedback practices. It presents research-based information about providing students with descriptive feedback — an *assessment for learning* practice – and provides resources to support your professional learning in this area.

In this video, you will learn how to:

- provide effective, descriptive feedback
- relate feedback to learning goals and success criteria
- plan opportunities for providing and acting on feedback
- engage students in assessing their learning

This viewers' guide provides learning activities to facilitate reflection and discussion about effective feedback practices, and to provide support for trying new practices. While teachers can use this resource to learn independently, by learning collaboratively with teaching colleagues they can provide each other support and feedback through the learning process.

## Planning Your Professional Learning

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### a. Self-Assessment and Goal Setting

Before viewing the video, use the self-reflection tool, Appendix A: *My Feedback Practices*, to identify what you are already doing well, and an area of feedback practice that you would like to implement or improve. You might revisit this tool at regular intervals to monitor your professional learning over time.

### b. Viewing the Video

Each segment of the video focuses on specific aspects of providing feedback in the context of *assessment for learning*. Each segment is organized as:

**Introduction and Key Question:** Sets the context to focus your viewing activity.

**What's in this Segment:** Presents additional information about the segment's content. Time signatures relate the information to specific points in the segment. "After Viewing" activities promote reflection and discussion, and suggestions for applying new learning in planning.

**Extending Learning:** Includes a selection of post-viewing activities that extend learning about the segment's content.

A suggested organizer for recording your thoughts and observations:

What I Already Knew...	
What I Hadn't Thought of...	
Next Steps	

### c. Action and Feedback

The activities provided in "Extending the Learning" are intended to help you implement the strategies. Consider inviting a colleague to provide feedback as your "critical friend" (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Critical friends observe and ask questions to explore the reasons for your instructional decisions. They provide support as they challenge you to grow professionally.

### d. Reflection and Goal Setting:

Once you have reached a level of comfort in using the new practice, revisit the self-reflection tool to plan next steps. See Appendix A: *My Feedback Practices*.

## Setting the Stage

*Feedback Quotes* in Appendix B can be used before viewing to activate prior knowledge and engage the viewer(s) in reflection and/or discussion; and to make connections to their own feedback practices.

In a learning community setting, distribute one copy of Appendix B: *Feedback Quotes* to each participant. Give the participants time to read the quotes, and then pose the question: "Based on these quotes, what do you think are the characteristics of effective feedback?"

## Segment 1 Feedback – The Most Powerful Tool

Feedback provides information to students and teachers about learning. It helps to reduce the gap between the student's current level of understanding and/or performance and a desired goal. Depending on the nature and delivery of the feedback, it can have powerful positive effects on student learning and engagement. (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)

Feedback is an essential practice of *assessment for learning*, "a process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there" (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). A substantial body of research identifies *assessment for learning* as a powerful tool for improving students' learning (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & Wiliam, 2003).

**Descriptive feedback is the most powerful tool for improving student learning.**

Black, Harrison, Lee & Wiliam (2003)

*Assessment for learning* differs from *assessment of learning* in that the information gathered is used for the specific purpose of helping students improve *while they are still gaining knowledge and practising skills*. Teachers who view assessment as integral to learning engage students as collaborative partners in the learning process. This

assessment provides precise and timely information so teachers can adjust instruction in response to individual student needs, and so students can adjust their learning strategies or set different goals.

### Key Question

*How does feedback impact student learning and motivation to learn?*

### What's in this Segment?

#### **The Research** (0:37 - 2:58)

There is a significant body of research on the impact of feedback on student achievement and motivation to learn.

- Feedback can have a significant impact on learning, but this impact can be positive or negative depending on the type, delivery, and timing of the feedback. (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)
- Feedback affects students' motivation to learn and their perceptions about their intelligence and their ability to learn. (Black & Wiliam 1998, Butler, 1988)
- Evaluative feedback, (e.g., percentage marks, letter grades) and frequent evaluation can have a negative impact on learning and motivation. (Tunstall & Gipps, 1996, Black & Wiliam, 1998). Even praise, when focused on characteristics of the learner rather than on the characteristics of the work, can have the opposite of the intended effect. (Dweck, 2007)

- Descriptive feedback helps students to learn by providing information about their current achievement (Where am I now?) with respect to a goal (Where am I going?) and identifying appropriate next steps (How can I close the gap?) (Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis & Chappuis, 2004, Sadler, 1989).

### Assessment for Learning practices (3:00 – 3:40)

When teachers use assessment to promote student learning, they:

- share **learning goals** and **success criteria** with students
- elicit evidence of student understanding, (e.g., using effective questioning strategies)
  - provide descriptive **feedback** during the learning, and
  - model and provide opportunities to develop peer and **self-assessment** skills. (Black & Wiliam, 2009)

The most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback. (p. 9)

Hattie (1992)

These practices work together to help students become better able to monitor and direct their own learning.

### Reflecting on feedback practices (3:44 – 6:11)

Consider the following questions as you reflect on your current feedback practices. You may wish to reflect on or discuss each of these by pausing the video at appropriate times.

- Do you give clear, concise feedback related to the learning goals? (03:38)
- Do you identify what was done well, and what needs improvement? (04:16)
- Does your feedback include *how* they can improve? (04:47)
- Are your students expected to act on your feedback? (05:28)
- Do you provide the necessary time for them to act on the feedback? (05:39)
- Do you follow up on the feedback? (05:58)

## After Viewing

### Activity 1

Reflect on one or more of the following:

- How are you currently providing feedback to students?, (e.g., in writing, orally, or through modelling; individually or in groups)
- What is the nature of the feedback?, (e.g., information about learning, error corrections, judgements about learning)
- How do your students respond to your feedback?

In a learning community setting, use a Think-Pair-Share strategy (Lyman, 1981) to give participants time to reflect and share with a partner before responding in a whole group context.

### Activity 2

Use the self-reflection tool, Appendix A: *My Feedback Practices*, to identify what you are already doing well, and an area of feedback practice that you would like to implement or improve. You might revisit this tool at regular intervals to monitor your professional learning over time.

### Activity 3

Appendix C: *Reading List* provides an annotated list of readings about providing effective feedback to students.

- For an overview and a summary of the research on descriptive feedback, see Brookhart, S. M. (2008) *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. P. 1 – 4.
- For information about the impact of grades as feedback, see Chappuis, J., (2009). *Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning*. Portland, OR: Educational Testing Service. P. 65 – 67.

## Extending Learning

### Activity 4

Think about a lesson you have taught recently.

- What knowledge and/or skills were students to learn?
- Did students receive descriptive feedback:
  - during the lesson? How?
  - after the lesson? How?

### Activity 5

As a follow-up to the reflection/discussion in Activity 1, you could have a discussion with your students to determine their thinking about feedback. What makes it effective? How do they use it?

## Segment 2 **What Constitutes *Effective* Feedback?**

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Research indicates that not all feedback supports learning. (Stiggins et al, 2004). This segment provides information about what makes feedback effective.

### Key Question

*What kind of feedback is most effective in helping students to learn?*

### What's in this Segment?

Studies on the nature of feedback that is most beneficial to learning indicate that the structure, focus, and amount of feedback are important considerations. Certain types of feedback during the teaching-learning cycle, (e.g., evaluative, comparison to others) can actually have a negative impact on learning and motivation, convincing students that they lack ability, and thus reducing their desire to put forth effort to learn. (Black & Wiliam, 1998)

**It's the quality of the feedback rather than its existence or absence that determines its power.**

Stiggins et al (2004)

### **Structure of feedback** (1:01 – 2:20)

Structure feedback to identify what was done well, what needs improvement, and how to improve (Black et al 2003, Dixon 2005, Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This information can be conveyed orally,

in writing, or as a question that causes students to reflect. In the video, the teacher asks students to self-assess, based on the following questions:

- What did you learn about adding and subtracting polynomial expressions?
- What do you still have questions about?

## After Viewing

### Activity 1

Select an upcoming class or lesson to experiment with providing feedback, using the three-part structure – done well, needs improvement, how to improve. Start by providing oral feedback to students while they are practising an assigned task. Using this structure, provide feedback to individuals, groups, and the whole class.

## Activity 2

Clarke (2001) identifies three types of prompts teachers can use when identifying next steps:

- A *reminder prompt* draws the learner's attention to the learning goal.
- A *scaffolded prompt* helps learners focus on specific aspects of the learning, extend their understanding, and make improvements.
- An *example prompt* gives suggestions or provides examples of possible improvements that the learners could make.

For a specific example of each, see Earl, L. (2003). *Assessment As Learning: Using Classroom Assessment to Maximize Student Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc. p. 92. or <http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/assessment/pages/assessmentstrategies/gap/?reFlag=1> p. 33

Once you are comfortable with the three-part structure introduced in Activity 1, focus on using the three kinds of prompts for formulating next steps.

### Focus of feedback (2:20 – 3:56)

#### Linked to Learning Goals and Success Criteria (2:20 – 2:54)

Effective feedback should relate to the learning goals and success criteria identified for the task. Even when identifying what was done well, the comments should reflect the goals and criteria. Chappuis (2009) emphasizes the importance of directing praise to the characteristics of the student's work or performance, rather than to the characteristics of the student.

Feedback that focuses on what needs to be done can encourage all to believe that they can improve.

Black et al (2003)

"Praise can have a negative effect on learning because it directs students' attention away from the learning and onto what the teacher thinks of them: "The teacher thinks I'm smart/not smart." "The teacher likes me/doesn't like me." ... Work-related feedback does a much better job of developing students' belief that effort will lead to success." (p. 63)

Hattie & Timperley (2007) identify four levels of feedback focus, and state that "the level at which feedback is directed influences its effectiveness." (p. 90)

Level of Focus	Clarification	Examples
1. Feedback about the task or product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• information about how well a task is accomplished</li><li>• may focus on building surface knowledge and having correct information</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identifying whether work is correct or incorrect</li><li>• providing suggestions for improving the level of detail</li></ul>
2. Feedback about the processing of the task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• information about the processes used to perform the task or develop the product</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• commenting on students' choice of strategies, application of strategies</li></ul>
3. Feedback about self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• information about the students' ability to self-monitor and direct their learning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• feedback on students' decisions to seek help, quality of their self-assessments, choice of goals and next steps</li></ul>
4. Feedback about the self as a person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• positive or negative information about the student as a person</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• praise about the self ("You're great", "Good")</li></ul>

Feedback about the task, the processing of the task, and self-regulation can all have powerful positive impacts on learning. Feedback about the self as a person is least effective as "it usually contains little task-related information and is rarely converted into more engagement, commitment to the learning goals, enhanced self-efficacy, or understanding about the task." (p. 96)

### Activity 3

Reflect on feedback you have provided recently to a student or group of students (oral or written).

- What was the focus of the feedback?
- Was the feedback specifically connected to learning goals and success criteria?
- To which of Hattie & Timperley's four levels of feedback did the feedback relate? (e.g., to the student's achievement of the goals? to the student's use of a process such as thinking skills, research skills etc.? to the student's ability to monitor their learning and self-assess? Or, was the feedback about the student's ability or other personal characteristics?)

#### *Descriptive rather than evaluative feedback* (2:54 – 3:20)

Effective feedback provides students with detailed, specific information about improving their learning. This *descriptive* feedback is "linked to the learning that is expected. It addresses faulty interpretations and lack of understanding. It provides students with visible and manageable 'next steps' based on an assessment of the work at hand and an image of what 'good work looks like' so that they can begin to take on the responsibility of self-assessing and self-correcting." (Earl, 2003). Evaluative feedback, in the form of grades or brief general comments, (e.g. "well done"), provides some information about learning, but does not convey the information and guidance that students can use to improve.

In their study of the different kinds of feedback teachers provide to students, Tunstall & Gipps, (1996) emphasize the connection between *descriptive* feedback and a 'learning goal' orientation, and *evaluative* feedback and a 'performance goal' orientation. A learning goal orientation is associated with "mastering and understanding content," and a "willingness to engage in the process of learning."

Rodgers (2006) asserts that descriptive feedback should involve the teacher and the learner in "active dialogue about differences of interpretation (analysis) and observation (description) of the events by those who had participated in them."

### Activity 4

Examples of feedback shown in the video (0:36 – 0:48) are listed below. Decide whether each is descriptive or evaluative. Which ones provide students with the information they need to achieve their learning goals, or, describe how to improve their learning? Which are more effective? less effective? Why?

- Level 3
- Well done!
- 49%
- You made the same mistake again!
- Provide 3 supporting details from the text.
- B+
- 7/12
- Details?
- Your topic sentence is clear and engaging.

Think about the type of feedback you have provided to students recently. Was it descriptive or evaluative?

**...giving marks alongside the comments completely washed out the beneficial effects of the comments.**

William (2005)

#### *The Impact of Grades* (3:20 – 3:56)

Grades are an integral part of the reporting process at the end of a period of teaching and learning. Butler (1988) found that students' achievement and motivation *during learning* improved when they received feedback in the form of comments, rather than grades, or even comments accompanied by grades. Black et al (2003) note that the benefits of descriptive feedback during learning are

diminished when it is accompanied by a grade, and providing evaluative grades to practise work can have a particularly negative effect on students who are struggling.

### Activity 5

Review the video sequence that shows teachers discussing their students' responses to providing more descriptive feedback instead of grades. (3:30 – 3:55) "So how have your students reacted to the change in assessment strategy?"

- How might your students respond to increased descriptive feedback and reduced grading?
- How might you explain this change in your assessment practice?

### Amount of Feedback (3:56 – 5:00)

- Prioritize feedback to address the most important needs first.
- Limit to 2 - 3 specific recommendations linked to the learning goal(s).

Just as teachers differentiate instruction and assessment based on students' needs, the amount of feedback provided at any given point during the learning also needs to be adjusted based on an individual student's readiness and learning preferences. An appropriate amount of feedback for one student might not be enough for another, and might overwhelm a third. Try to prioritize the feedback so that students receive enough to help them improve their most significant area of weakness.

Lunsford (1997) suggests that three feedback comments is an optimal number if it is expected that students will act on the feedback. (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

### Activity 6

Consider the teacher's oral feedback provided to the student at 4:21- 5:00. How does this example demonstrate some of the characteristics of effective feedback? Examine the written feedback. Neither the teacher feedback nor the peer assessment addresses the spelling errors. Does this reflect good feedback practice for this task?

## Extending Learning

### Activity 7

Look for opportunities to provide feedback to students *while they are still learning or practising a skill*. Consider the following:

- What is the most effective mode of delivery – oral? written?
- How will the feedback be recorded?
- How will you ensure that students are aware of and understand the learning goal(s) and success criteria?

When providing the feedback, consider:

- Did you identify something that was done well, something that needed improvement, and provide specific suggestions for how to improve?
- What kind of improvement prompt did you provide? (reminder, scaffolded, example)
- Did the feedback focus on the most important aspects of the work/performance that needed improvement?
- Did the feedback focus on product, process, or self-regulation?
- Was the information useful to help the student progress in his/her learning?
- Were each of the comments specifically related to the success criteria?
- Was the feedback descriptive or evaluative?

## Activity 8

Work with a colleague to look at student work. You might use a process similar to moderated marking; however the focus of the activity is not to provide a grade, mark, or level, but rather to determine what feedback would be most effective in helping the student to improve.

For more information about teacher moderation, see *Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat. (2007).*

*Teacher Moderation: Collaborative Assessment of Student Work. Capacity Building Series.* [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Teacher\\_Moderation.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Teacher_Moderation.pdf)

## Segment 3 Effective Feedback Requires Purposeful Planning

If students are to close the gap between their current level of knowledge and skills and the learning goal, they need feedback information *while they are still learning* (Sadler, 1989). Students also need to have the time, opportunity, and support to act on the information they receive about their learning.

Feedback needs to come while the 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)

### Key Question

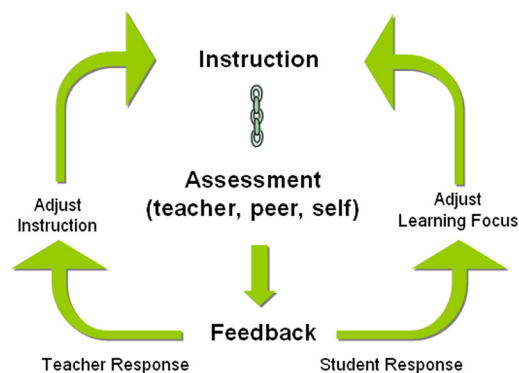
*When planning, how do we ensure that each student receives the descriptive feedback needed to improve?*

### What's in this Segment?

#### **The Feedback Loop** (0:30 – 1:34)

This graphic representation shows the role of feedback in the learning process, and

how it is used by the teacher and the learner. The process is iterative and relies on assessment providing information to the teacher and the learner, through feedback, so each can take appropriate actions to support learning. A critical requirement of this model is that assessment is ongoing, woven seamlessly with instruction into the learning experience.



## After Viewing

### Activity 1

Reflect on a recent lesson.

- At what point(s) in the lesson might students make use of teacher feedback?
- What feedback could be gathered from students to inform your instructional decisions?
- Do students have opportunities to give and receive feedback through peer- and self-assessments?

#### **Planning assessment and instruction concurrently** (1:34 – 3:23)

When planning, teachers design the learning experiences to address the learning goals. They use a variety of instructional strategies to initiate learning, and assessment strategies and tools to elicit information about what students know and still need to learn. This sequence shows teachers planning instruction, assessment, and feedback concurrently so that students receive information about their learning *while they can still improve* – “just-in-time” feedback (Brookhart, 2008). In their planning, they determine how to gather assessment information at critical points during the learning, so that students can give and receive feedback and take corrective action.

## Activity 2

Review the clip of teachers planning assessment and instruction. (1:34 – 3:12)

- How do the tasks that students were asked to perform generate the kind of feedback that would:
  - allow the teacher to make appropriate instructional decisions?
  - help students identify where they need to focus their learning?
- What kind of assessment tools are teachers using to gather and record information to be used as feedback? The checklist provided to students is included in Appendix D: *Sample Templates*.
- How are students and teachers able to monitor that students have acted on the feedback?

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)

### **Oral feedback vs. written feedback** (3:23 – 4:43)

Choosing to provide oral or written feedback depends on a number of factors. Oral feedback can be highly effective because it can be provided easily in the ‘teachable moment’ and in a timely way. Learning conversations with students afford excellent opportunities to provide feedback, as well as to receive feedback, particularly when teachers ask students questions that have them reflect on their learning. Asking “What do you notice about \_\_\_\_\_?” or “How does this match the criteria?” stimulates students’ thinking about their learning.

Written feedback provides students with a record of what they are doing well, what needs improvement, and suggested next steps. Students and teacher might use the log to monitor whether and how well the student has acted on the feedback. (See Appendix D: *Sample Templates*)

## Activity 3

Reflect on a recent lesson and identify one learning experience that lends itself to each of oral feedback and of written feedback. Is there a strategy you could use to engage your students in identifying and applying the criteria using descriptive feedback?

### **Balancing feedback, classroom assessment, and instruction** (4:43 – 6:00)

Providing timely descriptive feedback to all students can be a time-consuming commitment. This sequence provides strategies for managing the demands of feedback:

So basically, for every lesson, we want to provide 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.

Teacher participant

- Provide feedback at critical points during the learning
- Model providing feedback for students to help them become better able to peer- and self-assess
- 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. (Appendix D: *Sample Templates*)

It is critically important that teachers model feedback, and explicitly teach students how to provide effective feedback to each other (peer assessment) and themselves (self-assessment).

## Activity 4

Consider the list of suggestions provided in this segment. Select one, and make it the focus for planning feedback for a future lesson.

## Extending Learning

### Activity 5

Consider a lesson you have taught recently. Reflect on the following:

- Where might there be opportunities for feedback?
- Was there a point in the lesson where it was critical for students and teacher to check for understanding? If so, where? Why would it be considered critical to the learning?
- How was feedback provided?
- How can feedback best be recorded for future reference by students?

### Activity 6

Use Appendix E: *A Checklist for Planning Feedback During Learning* to determine opportunities to apply the 'feedback loop.'

## Segment 4 Feedback - Connecting to Learning Goals and Success Criteria

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Effective feedback is directly connected to what students are to learn and to the criteria for successful learning.

Students can assess themselves only when they have a sufficiently clear picture of the targets their learning is meant to attain.

Black & Wiliam (1998)

To ensure that *students* have a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn, teachers state the learning as *learning goals* - brief, concise statements, in student-friendly language, that describe what students are to know or be able to do at the end of instruction.

Similarly, students need to share with the teacher a clear understanding of what constitutes successful achievement of the learning goals. These *success criteria* also need to be expressed in student friendly language.

When feedback is linked to the learning goals and success criteria, it contains the information that students need to progress in their learning. Further, by expressing what students are expected to learn, and what it looks like when they've learned it in language meaningful to students, we empower them with the ability to monitor their progress and set individual learning goals.

### Key Question

*How can students gain a clear understanding of the learning goals and the success criteria?*

### What's in this Segment?

#### *Planning assessment and instruction* (0:40 - 0:55)

The teachers are using an approach to planning called 'backward design' (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005). Based on the concept of planning backwards from the desired results, this approach consists of three stages that help teachers plan assessment and instruction in an integrated way. The teachers use three questions to frame their planning:

- What are students expected to learn?
- How will we know they have learned?
- How will we design the learning so all will learn?

## After Viewing

### Activity 1

What connections are there between the three guiding questions used for planning and the concepts of learning goals and success criteria?

#### **What are students expected to learn?** (0:55 – 1:48)

The Ontario curriculum identifies the knowledge and skills that students are to demonstrate by the end of each grade/course.

The teachers begin by identifying an overall expectation, and the related specific expectations in the curriculum. Through discussion, they decide on the learning goal.

Overall expectation	Learning goal
<i>Determine the relationships among units and measurable attributes including the area of a trapezoid</i>	<i>I can identify the height as the third dimension and determine how height is used in calculating volume.</i>

### Activity 2

Consider a lesson that you will be teaching, or have taught recently.

- What knowledge and/or skills are students expected to learn?
- How can you state the learning goal(s) so that students have a clear understanding?
- How do the teachers in the video share the learning goal, and ensure that students begin to reflect on what it means?

#### **How will we know they have learned?** (1:48 – 2:32)

The teachers plan how they will gather evidence of student learning, as well as what criteria they will use to determine how well students have learned. Teachers also plan how they will ensure that students know the success criteria, and how they will use the criteria in peer and self-assessment.

#### **Developing students' understanding of the success criteria** (2:33 – 3:05)

Teachers can use a variety of approaches to help students understand the success criteria, including asking them questions about their understanding, encouraging them to ask questions, showing them examples of strong and weak work, and collaboratively developing the criteria with students.

Stiggins et al (2006) suggest these and other strategies help students answer the question, "Where am I going?"

**Students can hit any target that they know about and that holds still for them.**

Stiggins et al (2006)

#### **Co-creating criteria** (3:05 – 4:11)

The teacher and students work together to develop the criteria for success on the journal task. Students are asked to examine samples of journal entries to determine what makes them more or less effective. The teacher initially accepts all brainstormed criteria from

the students, and then, guided by the success criteria she has developed in her planning, she leads a discussion to develop clear success criteria in language meaningful to the students.

### Activity 3

Consider an assessment task that your students will be asked to complete.

- How will students demonstrate that they have achieved the learning?
- What criteria will you use to determine their success?
- How can you share these criteria with your students?
- How can you develop students' understanding of these criteria?

### **Feedback based on success criteria** (4:46 – 5:34)

Both the teacher’s feedback to the student and the student’s self-assessment are clearly connected to the success criteria.

#### **Activity 4**

Think about an assessment task that you will use in an upcoming lesson. Gather a variety of samples of student work. You might use anonymous work from a previous class or from a colleague’s class. Another alternative is use to samples from the Exemplar documents, or prepare samples yourself.

After identifying the success criteria with students, use a ‘think-aloud’ strategy to model providing feedback on this work. Be explicit as you model, pointing out to students how you are structuring your comments to identify something that was done well, an area for improvement, and a suggestion for how to improve. As well, emphasize that all of the feedback you are giving is connected to the success criteria.

#### **Activity 5**

When modelling feedback for students (see Activity 4), ask them to give you feedback on the quality of **your** feedback. You might purposely give some weaker examples of feedback, (i.e., you might give feedback that is not connected to the success criteria) so that they can identify the importance of linking feedback to criteria.

### **How will we design the learning so all will learn?** (5:34 – 5:48)

Teachers select and sequence the learning experiences (instruction) integrated with opportunities to gather information about the learning (assessment). They intentionally design assessments to occur at ‘*checkpoints*,’ critical points during the learning where teachers and students engage in assessment, to determine who is learning and who needs additional or alternative instruction prior to moving forward with the learning.

It is at these points where students receive feedback from the teacher, from peers, and from themselves (through self-assessment), and use the feedback to take further action to learn and improve.



#### **Activity 6**

Consider a lesson that you will be teaching, or have taught recently.

- Is there a point in the lesson at which students and teacher would benefit from assessment?
- What strategy could be used to quickly gather information about who is making progress toward attaining the learning goal(s), and who requires additional or alternative instruction?
- How might the instruction be differentiated as a result of this information?

## **Extending Learning**

#### **Activity 7**

- How do the teachers explicitly involve students in classroom assessment?
- What is different about the approach to teaching and learning taken by teachers in this video segment?

## Segment 5 Using Feedback to Develop Students' Self-Assessment Skills

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Effective feedback helps students to improve their learning by providing them with specific information on what needs improvement and how to proceed. As students begin to understand the powerful effect that feedback has on their learning, they increasingly request teachers to provide this information.

**In giving students descriptive feedback, you have modelled the kind of thinking you want them to do as self-assessors.**

Chappuis (2005)

Teachers can help students become increasingly less dependent on external sources of feedback (from teachers and peers), and gradually become more autonomous (self-assessment). By teaching students how to develop descriptive feedback based on learning goals and success criteria, teachers promote students' ability to monitor their own progress, determine next steps, and set appropriate goals.

### Key Question

*How can teachers use feedback to help students to develop self-assessment skills and become independent learners?*

### What's in this Segment?

#### **The role of feedback in developing students' self-assessment skills** (1:04 – 1:24)

The ability to identify what is being done well, what needs to improve, and how to improve is critical to self-assessment. These skills are dependent on the student knowing the goals of the learning, and what success looks like.

Early in their development as autonomous learners, students will rely more heavily on the teacher for feedback, and may need help from the teacher to identify next steps in their learning and set goals. *It is during the provision of this feedback that teachers have the opportunity not only to provide direction for the students, but to teach them, through explicit modelling and instruction, the skills of self-assessment and goal setting, to become more independent.*

To help students become skilled at self-assessment, teachers can:

- explicitly identify, share, and clarify learning goals and success criteria
- model the application of criteria using samples
- provide guided opportunities to peer- and self-assess
- provide students feedback on the quality of their peer- and self-assessments
- teach students how to use feedback to determine next steps and set goals.

(Adapted from Rolheiser & Ross, 2000).

#### **Using feedback to help students become more independent learners** (1:24 – 6:02)

The following clips show teachers using feedback and other *assessment for learning* practices to develop students' ability to monitor and improve their learning:

- Modeling descriptive feedback and the assessment process (01:27)
- Looking at exemplars of work together (01:52)
- Developing and using self-assessment tools, (e.g., templates and checklists) (02:14)
- Having students peer assess and discussing what and how to improve (02:58)

- Having students use strategies to self-assess their work, (e.g., traffic lighting, targeting or thumbs up) (03:43)
- Encouraging students to act on feedback for homework with home support (04:48)
- Having students maintain a feedback or learning log to monitor progress (04:59)
- Asking students to complete an exit card at the end of a lesson (05:38)

## After Viewing

### Activity 1

Consider a lesson that you will be teaching. Examine the list of suggestions for teaching students the skills of peer- and self-assessment. Select one of the strategies, incorporate it into a lesson plan and try it with your students. Ask students for feedback on the impact of the strategy.

## Extending Learning

### Activity 2

Now that you are familiar with providing descriptive feedback as part of *assessment for learning*, take some time to reflect on your learning, and to determine next steps.

- What have been some of the key learnings for you?
- What has been the impact on your students?
- What aspect of feedback will be the focus for future professional learning? (You may wish to revisit Appendix A: *My Feedback Practices*)
- What do you need in order to do this? Where can you get what you need? Whose help do you need to engage?
- How will you know that you have improved? (e.g., What will you see? What evidence will you gather?)
- What are some of the next steps in order to further develop effective feedback? For you? For your students?

### Activity 3

Consider taking an *assessment for learning* approach to learning about feedback. Work with colleagues to develop your 'success criteria' for using feedback effectively to promote learning. In doing this, you might:

- re-read the quotes about feedback in Appendix B
- individually list what you think might be the attributes of effective feedback
- share your lists as a group, and come to agreement on the criteria
- refer to the criteria when planning and teaching
- meet with colleagues to reflect on the criteria and make any necessary additions or revisions.

## Appendix A My Feedback Practices

<b>Consider each of the following statements, and indicate R (Rarely), S (Sometimes) or U (Usually).</b>			
<b>A. Gathering feedback FROM students about learning</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>U</b>
I use a variety of assessment strategies, (e.g., traffic lighting, thumbs up, exit cards, learning logs) to gather feedback about students' learning during each instructional period.			
I note where students need further instruction or a different approach, and adjust instruction accordingly.			
<b>B. Providing feedback TO students about their learning</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>U</b>
Feedback includes three components: what was done well, what needs improvement, and specific suggestions for how to improve.			
Feedback relates to the learning goal(s) which I shared and clarified with students at the outset of the learning cycle.			
Feedback is based only on the criteria for success which I shared and clarified with students at the outset of the learning cycle.			
Feedback is prioritized to focus on the aspects of student learning that need the greatest attention.			
Feedback is focused on the product or task, the processes used, or student's self-regulation, not on the student as a person.			
Next steps are incremental and specific enough so that students know what to do, but without doing the improvements for them.			
The amount of feedback at any one time is manageable for the students' readiness, (e.g., limited to 2 or 3 specific items).			
Feedback is expressed in a respectful, positive tone and in language meaningful to the student.			
Feedback is descriptive, (i.e., it provides information that students can use to improve), rather than evaluative (a mark or grade).			
The timing of my feedback (oral or written) provides students opportunities to use the information while they are still learning and practising the requisite knowledge and skills.			
I use strategies to monitor students' response to feedback, (e.g., feedback log).			
<b>C. Considering feedback when planning instruction and assessment</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>U</b>
I identify and share incremental learning goals, based on the overall and specific expectations which describe in student-friendly language what students are to know and be able to do.			
I identify the criteria for successful achievement of the learning goals, and plan how to develop and/or share those criteria with the students at or near the outset of the learning.			
I identify critical points in the learning where the students and I engage in assessment and feedback to determine who is learning and who needs further instruction.			
I plan activities that provide students the opportunity to practise and demonstrate their learning so that feedback can be given and received .			
I plan opportunities for students to act on feedback with my support.			

## Appendix A **My Feedback Practices** (continued)

C. Considering feedback when planning instruction and assessment (continued)	R	S	U
I look for ways to maximize feedback to students while helping them take on greater responsibility for providing peer feedback and for self-assessing:			
- provide group feedback to students who share similar strengths and needs			
- provide oral feedback during conversations and observations			
- gather feedback “on the run,” using a variety of strategies, (e.g., traffic light)			
- schedule weekly conferences to provide feedback on their learning			
- ensure major assignments are staged to permit time for feedback and action			
D. Developing students’ ability to monitor their own learning	R	S	U
I explicitly make connections between the purpose of a task and the learning goal(s).			
I encourage students to think continuously about the criteria for success, and to look for the criteria in their demonstrations of learning.			
I involve students in defining and applying success criteria.			
I use a variety of strategies, (e.g., a think-aloud) to explicitly model providing descriptive feedback.			
I have students use criteria to provide feedback to peers and to self-assess.			
I provide students feedback on the quality of the peer- and self-assessments.			

## Appendix B Feedback Quotes

Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement, but this impact can be either positive or negative.

**Hattie & Timperley (2007)**

Feedback can be the information that drives the [formative] process, or it can be a stumbling block that derails the process.

**Brookhart (2008)**

To craft teacher feedback that leads to learning, put yourself in the student's shoes.

**Brookhart (2007)**

Learning is more likely to be fostered when feedback focuses on features of the task (success criteria) and emphasizes learning goals.

**Kluger & DeNisi (1996)**

It's the quality of the feedback rather than its existence or absence that determines its power.

**Stiggins et al (2004)**

When students know that there are no additional opportunities to succeed, they frequently take teacher feedback on their performance and stuff it into desks, back packs, and wastebaskets.

**Reeves (2004)**

In giving students descriptive feedback, you have modeled the kind of thinking you want them to do as self-assessors.

**Chappuis (2005)**

The most important instructional decisions are made, not by the adults working in the system, but by the students themselves.

**Stiggins et al (2006)**

[Sadler] argued that it was insufficient simply to point out right and wrong answers to students. For assessment to be 'formative,' a student must:

- come to hold a concept of quality roughly similar to that of the teacher
- be able to compare the current level of performance with the standard
- be able to take action to close the gap.

**Shepard (2005)**

## Appendix B Feedback Quotes (continued)

Kluger and DeNisi (1996) found that one-third of the studies showed negative effects – feedback about performance actually harmed learning outcomes ... positive outcomes were more likely when feedback focused on features of the task – such as how the student could improve in relation to the standards – and emphasized learning goals instead of lavishing non-specific praise or making normative comparisons.

**Shepard (2005)**

A major role for teachers in the learning process is to provide the kind of feedback to students that encourages their learning and provides signposts and directions along the way, bringing them closer to independence.

**Earl (2003)**

Praise addressed to students is unlikely to be effective, because it carries little information that provides answers to any of the three questions: Where am I going? How am I going? and Where to next?, and too often deflects attention from the task.

**Hattie & Timperley (2007)**

Good feedback systems produce a stream of data to students about how they're doing – a flow of pieces of information that is hourly and daily as opposed to weekly and monthly (which is the rate of feedback produced by systems that rely on tests).

**Saphier et al (2008)**

For feedback to have maximum effect, students have to be expected to use it to improve their work and, in many cases, taught how to do so. This is where student self-assessment and goal setting become part of the package.

**Saphier et al (2008)**

Our goal in assessment reform is thus not merely to design more engaging and authentic tasks but to build in the kind of frequent feedback and opportunities to use that feedback that are found in all effective performance systems.

**Wiggins (1998)**

It was only when I discovered that feedback was most powerful when it is from the *student to the teacher* that I started to understand it better. When teachers seek, or at least are open to feedback from students as to what students know, what they understand, where they make errors, when they have misconceptions, when they are not engaged – then teaching and learning can be synchronized and powerful.

Feedback to teachers helps make learning visible.

**Hattie (2009)**

## Appendix C Reading List

- Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Wiliam, D. (2003). *Assessment for Learning: Putting It Into Practice*. New York, NY: Open University Press. 42 – 49.  
*Reports on a study of teachers implementing assessment for learning practices. Chapter 4 includes a focus on feedback, its benefits and the challenges teachers overcame in implementing 'feedback by comments without marks.'*
- Brookhart, S. M. (2007) Feedback That Fits. *Educational Leadership*. 65(4). 54-59.  
*Provides an overview of effective ways to deliver feedback. It includes a student writing sample, modelling ineffective and effective feedback.*
- Brookhart, S. M. (2008) *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.  
*A comprehensive treatment of how to provide effective feedback, including the research on feedback, examples, and practical strategies for implementing effective feedback in the classroom.*
- Chappuis, J. (2009). *Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning*. Portland, OR: Educational Testing Service.  
*Discusses the impact of formative assessment, outlining seven related strategies. Chapter 3 describes the characteristics of effective feedback. Provides numerous examples and suggestions for implementation, including reproducible resources.*
- Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*. 77(1). 81-112.  
*This article provides a conceptual analysis of feedback and reviews the evidence related to its impact on learning and achievement. The authors propose a feedback model that identifies the characteristics of effective feedback, and discuss some related issues.*
- Moss, C. & Brookhart, S. (2009). *Advancing Formative Assessment in Every Classroom: A Guide for Instructional Leaders*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.  
*Identifies feedback as one of six elements of formative assessment. Chapter 3 provides specific strategies for teachers to consider in framing and delivering feedback to students.*
- Nicol, D. & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*. 31(2). 199-218.  
*The authors identify seven principles of good feedback practice that support student self-regulation.*
- Rodgers, C. (2006). Attending to Student Voice: The Impact of Descriptive Feedback on Learning and Teaching. *Curriculum Inquiry*. 36(2). 209 – 237.  
*Examines descriptive feedback as a "conversation between a teacher and his or her students." The author provides questions teachers can pose to help students reflect on their learning, and six 'caveats' for receiving feedback from students.*
- Saphier, J., Haley-Speca, M. Gower, R. (2008). *The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills*. Acton, MA: Research For Better Teaching, Inc. 460 – 473  
*The chapter on Assessment (Ch. 19) describes ways for providing an ongoing "stream" of feedback to help students improve.*
- Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005) *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.  
*Focuses on "developing and deepening understanding of important ideas" (p. 3) The authors offer an approach to designing curriculum, instruction, and assessment.*

## Appendix D **Sample Templates - Feedback Cue Card** (Segment 4 - 2:14)

<b>Task:</b> _____ <b>Unit:</b> _____		
<b>Name:</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____		
<b>Look Fors</b> Below is a list of success criteria to use as you complete the activity.	<b>Teacher Feedback</b> Compare this feedback with the Look Fors on the left.	<b>Student Actions</b> List specific ways you responded to teacher feedback.
<b>Metacognition:</b> Look at the feedback provided, and identify two specific steps to improve next time.		
Adapted from L. Johnston, 2008		

## Appendix D Sample Templates - Problem Solving Checklist

(Segment 3 – 2:48)

Steps	Criteria	√
<b>Understand the Problem</b>	I re-read the question.	
	I underlined important words.	
	I put the question in my own words.	
	I identified the information that was given.	
	I identified what I need to find out.	
	I explained the problem to a partner.	
<b>Make a Plan</b>	I thought about how this problem is similar to problems I have solved before.	
	I thought about different strategies from our class strategy list.	
	I chose one or more strategies from the list.	
	I discussed my ideas about why the strategy would work with a partner.	
<b>Carry Out the Plan</b>	I tried the strategy until I solved the problem.	
	If necessary, I tried a different strategy or I asked for help.	
	I used words, pictures and/or symbols to show the steps I took to solve the problem.	
<b>Look Back at the Solution</b>	I checked to see if my answer makes sense.	
	I checked to see if there is a better way to solve this problem.	
	I wrote a short explanation describing how I solved the problem.	

*Adapted from The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8, Mathematics*

## Appendix D Sample Templates - Feedback Log

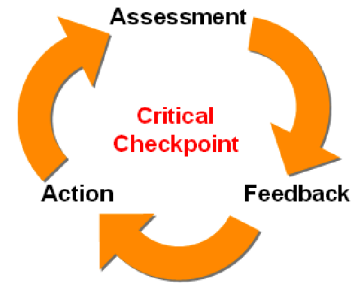
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Learning goal(s):

Success Criteria	Date	Feedback	Action Taken (to be completed by student)	√
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">                     R Y G                 </div>		
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">                     R Y G                 </div>		
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">                     R Y G                 </div>		
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">                     R Y G                 </div>		
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">                     R Y G                 </div>		

# Appendix E A Checklist for Planning Feedback During Learning

Creating an effective, collaborative learning environment requires careful planning so that students and teachers have the feedback they need to move learning forward, and so that students have the time and support to act on the feedback. The cycle of assessment, feedback, and action must occur at critical points in the learning.



The checklist below is designed to help you think about when and how feedback should occur to create an effective learning environment.

Criteria for Planning Feedback during a Teaching-Learning Cycle	√
Have we developed learning goals and success criteria?	
Have we identified critical points in the teaching-learning cycle when students and teacher require feedback?	
Have we decided how teacher and/or students will gather information about learning (what task, strategy, recording tool will be used)?	
Have we determined how feedback will be given (oral/written; individually/small group/whole class)?	
Have we developed a way for teacher or students to record the feedback?	
Have we provided instructional time to follow up on feedback and allow for revisions?	
Have we incorporated a way to monitor student responses to feedback, (e.g., feedback log, conferencing)?	

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