

“How to provide Adult Students with Feedback”

Beatriz Solino

Feedback: The First Secret John Hattie Revealed

When John Hattie reviewed over 500,000 research studies, he found that feedback had more impact on student results than any other teaching strategy. Feedback is a potent part of evidence based teaching.

By the time he conducted his latest review, published in Visible Learning, he had added an extra 300,000 + studies to his database, and **feedback still comes out on top**.

In all aspects of life, feedback is the breakfast of champions.

It lets you know how you are going while also telling you how you can improve.

You can use feedback to improve how well your students do at school. In fact, research shows that feedback has double the impact that regular teaching strategies have on student achievement.

You may have heard that “practice makes perfect”. It is true that practice is essential for learning. Therefore, if what they are doing is incorrect, people internalise the wrong thing. Feedback lets students know how they are doing while there is still time to adjust and improve their efforts.

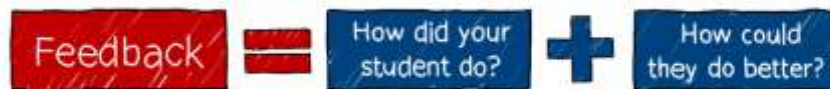
But the question of how to give effective feedback to your students remains?

How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students: The Basics

The goal of feedback is to provide students with insight that helps them to improve their performance.

The answer to the question, *How to give effective feedback to your students?* involves two steps:

1. Tell your student about their current level of performance
2. Tell them what they could do to improve



How To Give Effective Feedback To Your Students: The Options

There are four ways that you can use feedback to help your students. These are:

1. Affirming what they did well.
2. Correcting and directing.
3. Pointing out the process.
4. Coaching students to critique/analyse their own efforts.

With this in mind, deciding how to give effective feedback to your students becomes a little more complex. When making your choice, you need to consider:

- The nature of the task
- The ability and experience level of the student.

And to do this, you need to know a bit more about each of the options.

How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students:

Option 1 – Affirm What They Do Well

You should **let your students know what they have done right** as well as what they have done wrong.

This holds true for all learners, from the child who is struggling to the student who excels. However, affirmation is different from praise. Personal praise, such as “good girl”, “well done”, “you’re so smart”, or “I’m proud of you” is not feedback as it focuses on the person instead of on their work. At its most basic level, affirmative feedback tells your students that what they have done is correct.

Taken and adapted from: <http://www.evidencebasedteaching.org.au/crash-course-evidence-based-teaching/how-to-give-effective-feedback-to-your-students/>

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Whenever you give your students tasks, whether in class or as homework, you must mark their work so that they can see that they are on track.

Of course, some tasks, such as writing a story, cannot be right or wrong. In these cases, affirmative feedback involves telling your students what they have done that makes their work better than it used to be.

The specifics will vary from task to task, and student to student.

How to Give Feedback to Your Students:

Option 2 – Correct & Direct

Remember: Making mistakes is part of learning.

However, you need to do more than just tell them they are wrong. You also need to **direct them to the right answer**. You *correct* and *then direct*.

For simple tasks or more basic levels, you can do this through providing the answer. You could highlight a misspelling and write the correct spelling above it, or mark a question wrong while also providing the right answer.

Giving ‘correct and direct’ feedback about more complex tasks, or more advanced levels, often involves telling your students what they could add.

How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students:

Option 3 – Point Out the Process

By adding the point out the process approach to your repertoire, you can also help students to do better on similar tasks in the future by showing the students the connection between *their result, what they did to get that result and what they need to do to get a better result*.

This can be as simple as showing them what step they messed up and modelling the steps again using a sample problem. Just be sure to give your students time to do more practice problems afterwards.

How to Give Feedback to Your Students:

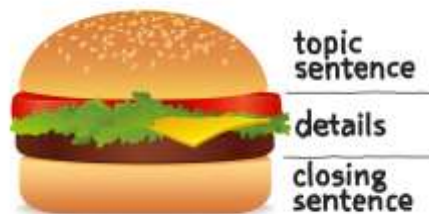
Option 4 – Coach the Student to Give Feedback to Themselves

Coaching is the art of using questions to help students help themselves.

It is a potent strategy to use when giving feedback to more experienced and advanced learners. However, coaching is not effective with learners who are inexperienced at what you have asked them to do or with students who generally struggle with the subject.

Coaching is powerful because it eases students into meta-cognitive strategies, such as monitoring their own performance, evaluating how they approached the task and adjusting the strategies they are using before continuing.

This is the hamburger model:



Initially, I would give *correct and direct* type feedback. Yet, as the weeks went on, we started exploring other aspects of writing. The students knew how to structure paragraphs; however, as their focus was elsewhere, they often forgot to do so in their writing.

This was the perfect opportunity to use coaching.

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When conferencing with a child who had not structured a paragraph properly, I would ask them:

- What is the structure of a paragraph?
- What aspects of this structure have you used in this paragraph? Which one/s have you forgotten?
- What do you need to do to improve your work?

This encouraged the students to take ownership of the whole process by highlighting that they were capable of:

1. Evaluating their own work
2. Using their insights to improve it

These are the two central aspects of feedback, but you are helping your students to give feedback to themselves.

References

1. Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Routledge.
Note: Hattie lists many factors that influence student achievement – not just teaching strategies. Feedback is the most potent teaching strategy he lists that can be applied across all subjects.

2. <http://www.evidencebasedteaching.org.au/crash-course-evidence-based-teaching/how-to-give-effective-feedback-to-your-students/>

About the author:

John Allan Clinton Hattie (born 1950, New Zealand). He has been Professor of Education and Director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne (Australia) since March 2011. He was previously Professor of Education at the University of Auckland.

His research interests include performance indicators and evaluation in education, as well as creativity measurement and models of teaching and learning. He is a proponent of evidence based quantitative research methodologies on the influences on student achievement.

Hattie undertook the largest ever synthesis of meta-analyses of quantitative measures of the effect of different factors on educational outcomes. His book, “Visible Learning”, is the result of this study.

Hattie finished his PhD thesis at the University of Toronto in 1981.