Chapter 3

Advancing

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

In Every Classroom

A Guide For

Instructional Leaders

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Shifting from Correcting to Informing.

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SHIFTING FROM CORRECTING TO INFORMING
Feedback That Feeds Forward

Educators have been studying feedback for almost 100 years. The first studies and theories about feedback grew out of the psychological perspective called behaviorism. Positive feedback was "reinforcement," and negative feedback was "punishment." As the heyday of behaviorism waned, researchers tried to understand more about why feedback worked. Several reviewers found little support for the behaviorist notion that feedback was simple reinforcement but definite support for the idea that correcting errors was an important way in which feedback worked (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik, & Morgan, 1991; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Kulhavy, 1977).

We now know that error correction is an important feedback function but not the only one. More recently, studies and theories about feedback have found a place in cognitive psychology, especially in the notion that feedback helps students with self-regulation of learning (Butler & Winne, 1995) by helping them understand the learning goal, how close their current work comes to it, and what should be done next (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Of course, you recognize these as the three components of the formative assessment cycle.

More current feedback research and feedback practice recommendations focus on interpreting students' thinking and providing *elaborated feedback* that describes their current understanding—as demonstrated in the work in question—

and makes suggestions for next steps (Mason & Bruning, 2001; Ruiz-Primo & Brookhart, 2018; Shute, 2008; Van der Kleij, Feskens, & Eggen, 2015). An example of one of the few situations where this would not be the case would be when students are trying to memorize the multiplication facts, where error correction is precisely what is needed. For student work on most intended learning outcomes, especially those that require students to apply their knowledge, elaborated feedback is more effective.

What Is Feedback?

Hattie and Timperley (2007) define *feedback* as "information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (p. 81). Shute (2008) defines *formative feedback* specifically as "information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behavior to improve learning" (p. 153). So feedback can come from many sources. In this chapter, we focus on feedback as a teacher's response to student work with the intention of furthering learning. Such feedback can be written or oral, or it can be a demonstration. In Chapter 4, we focus on students' feedback to themselves (self-assessment) or to peers (peer assessment).

Teachers can give feedback about many different things, but in this book we focus on feedback to students on their academic work: classroom activities and assignments, written work, homework, tests, projects, and so on. We focus on feedback to students about this work that can be part of the formative assessment cycle—that is, it is based on the criteria from specific learning goals, descriptive of where the student's work falls in this regard, and suggestive of ways to improve or learn more.

In the language of the self-regulation theorists, feedback is "external regulation"—external to the learner. Feedback from a teacher becomes part of the information students use for "internal regulation" and learning. Thus, no matter how good a teacher's feedback is, it doesn't guarantee that students learn. However, feedback creates opportunities for students to grow by giving them insights about their work that they might not be able to come up with on their own.

Effective feedback is a teacher's response to student work using the criteria for good work that were part of the learning target. Effective feedback observes where

the work did a good job of meeting the criteria and where it did not. Effective feedback suggests ways students could go about understanding the reasons for these observations, building on strengths and improving weaknesses. Effective feedback episodes result in students' learning about where they are now and where they need to go next *as well as* in the *teacher's* learning about students' current understandings. Finally, effective feedback episodes include deliberate and intentionally planned opportunities for students to use the feedback, either in revising work or in undertaking new related work. A metaphor of lenses (Brookhart, 2017) can help educators remember: A microscope lens reminds us to look at the feedback message itself. A camera lens reminds us to see if the feedback is a snapshot of learning for both the students and the teacher. A telescope lens reminds us to check whether students had an opportunity to use the feedback and if that resulted in improved learning.

How Does Feedback Affect Student Learning and Achievement?

Effective feedback affects student learning in two ways. First, information from clear, descriptive feedback supports achievement. As the students better understand where they are in relation to the learning target and take the next steps, their work improves. Feedback supports cognition because it helps students realize which knowledge and skills are strong and which are weak. More subtly, feedback can help move students from misconceptions to clearer understanding through targeted explanation of particular points and suggestions about what (or how) to study or practice next. Feedback also supports metacognition—students' awareness about their own thinking and their use of this self-awareness to regulate their thinking. Feedback shows students their work from an outsider's point of view. Effective feedback shows students how to look at their work using criteria from the assignment and thus, by modeling, helps teach them self-assessment skills.

Second, information from clear, descriptive feedback supports motivation. Students who see that improvement is something they can control—because they understand what to do next—are motivated to take those steps. Feelings of competence and autonomy are powerful motivators to productive action for all of us (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and especially for students. We say

"especially for students" because many school assignments put students in the position of being told what to do. Effective feedback that helps *them* decide what to do can feel particularly liberating.

What Common Misconceptions Might Teachers Hold About Feedback?

Teachers typically hold at least two common misconceptions about feedback.

Misconception #1: Returning graded work is providing effective feedback. Some teachers view feedback as grading or marking (as expressed in the comment "I marked and returned their papers"). It is true that knowledge of results, sometimes called "outcome feedback," is a basic kind of feedback. With this kind of feedback, however, many students are more interested in how many questions they "got right" than in understanding the reasons behind their performance. Successful students may try to figure out why certain answers were wrong or why they got a certain grade—but successful students usually get good grades and few wrong answers. The effective feedback we discuss in this book is not grading.

Besides, when feedback is provided on graded work at the end of a unit, there is no opportunity for students to use it. In fact, such feedback wastes teachers' time. When teachers ask how they will get the time to provide effective feedback, the first thing we suggest is to *stop* providing feedback on graded work, when it is too late to be useful. The time gained by doing this can be put to much more effective use by giving feedback on practice work during the learning process—during the formative learning cycle.

Strategic talking points school leaders can use to address this misconception include the following:

- Some students will look seriously at the feedback on graded work, but many will just look at the grade.
- In the typical classroom sequence of learning activities, by the time a graded assignment is due to be turned in, the optimum time for feedback has passed. It is too late.
- Teachers can save a lot of time by not providing feedback on graded work and instead use that time more productively by providing feedback during the learning process.

- Students experience grading as evaluation and judgment. To be most effective, feedback must be experienced as information and description.

Misconception #2: Detailed correction is effective feedback. Did you ever have an English teacher whose feedback on your essay looked like copyediting? All the spelling, punctuation, and usage errors were corrected, and all you had to do to have a "perfect" paper was recopy the essay using your teacher's corrections. In addition to removing student thinking from revisions, detailed error correction on written work conveys to students that mechanics are the main criterion for writing quality, and for most writing assignments, this is not the case. There are usually other, more important criteria, such as taking a position and supporting it or developing a thesis about an aspect of a reading and supporting it with details from the text, depending on the type of writing and the intended learning outcomes.

In math, problems that are corrected without explanation—so the student knows what the answers are but not why—have the same effect on students. Such detailed correction implies that getting the right answer is the only success criterion, when in fact most mathematics assignments also intend to help students learn problem solving and other mathematical processes and mathematical communication. In any subject, feedback that supplies the "right" answer for students instead of inviting them into some learning process that will help them understand the work is not effective.

Strategic talking points school leaders can use to address this misconception include the following:

- When a teacher "fixes" all mistakes or copyedits written work, the student does not get an opportunity to figure anything out.
- Students can revise work according to teacher corrections without actually understanding why the corrected versions are better.
- Effective feedback describes types of strengths and deficiencies in work and suggests strategies the student might use to take next steps.

What Is the Motivation Connection?

As described in the overview in Chapter 1, effective feedback enhances students' cognitive processing, increases students' autonomy, fosters resiliency and

persistence, and provides students with specific strategies for next steps in their learning. Here is a simple example. Instead of inserting a period on a student's paper, a teacher might ask, "Where does this sentence end?" This question tells the student what needs to be figured out next and implies the student can do it. That may be all the student needs. Or if not, a next question could be "What punctuation mark goes at the end of that sentence?" The principles for good feedback are easy to see in a simple example, and they generalize to more complex work.

Feedback enhances cognitive processing by providing needed information. For example, feedback may inform a successful 5th grade student that his teacher knows he included many details in his paragraph comparing and contrasting two characters in a story. Feedback may inform an unsuccessful 5th grade student that she did not report facts from the story accurately. Knowing these things will help both students in their next comparison/contrast assignment.

Feedback provides students with specific strategies for next steps in their learning. Once students understand the next steps, they are more likely to take them. Knowledge is power, as the saying goes. For example, the teacher may suggest that the unsuccessful student reread the story and use underlining as a strategy for identifying details and reporting them accurately. If the student knows how to underline, she might think, "Oh, I could do that."

Feedback increases students' autonomy and persistence in their work by giving them the evidence they need to believe that they are, in fact, competent—and where they are not yet competent, giving them the means to become so. The successful 5th grader in our example, after reading his teacher's comments, knows that his use of detail is serving him well. This will make him more likely to repeat that kind of performance in the future. Even the unsuccessful student, who may take a while to develop into a successful reader and writer, will have more direction next time because she is now armed with some suggestions (check facts, reread, underline details) that give her somewhere to start. The next assignment may seem like an easier task for this student, one that she may feel will work out better for her, than it would have been if the teacher had simply disapproved of the work and not provided that feedback.

What Specific Strategies Can I Share with Teachers?

Teachers have various choices about the methods they use when they deliver feedback and about the content of that feedback.

Methods of Feedback

The choices about methods relate to the following areas:

- Timing—when given; how often
- Amount—how many points are made; how much about each point
- Mode—oral; written; visual/demonstration
- Audience—individual; group/class

Timing. Students should get feedback while they are still mindful of the learning target and while there is still time for them to act on it. Feedback should be given as soon as possible for right/wrong questions and as soon as feasible for more complex products like papers or projects. Feedback can also be given after cumulative observations. For example, if many or most of the math problems a student turns in contain careless errors, it would be worthwhile for the teacher to say something such as this: "George, I see you read right over this question. I have noticed you doing that on previous papers, too. What can you do to slow down your reading and make sure you do your work completely?"

Amount. The right amount of feedback to give is different for different students and assignments. The idea is for students to get enough feedback that they have a sense of the teacher's response to the work against the assignment's criteria and enough feedback so that they know what to do next. The right amount of feedback for one student might overwhelm another. A teacher should select a couple of main points for comment and then take stock. Is that enough? Is there more that should be said to this student? For example, if a teacher has been working all week with a student on careful work habits and the student turns in a carefully done paper, the teacher should tell her she noticed.

Comments should be made on at least as many strengths as weaknesses. Teachers should make sure to comment on "teachable moment" points, too. Even for unsuccessful students, the teacher should name and notice at least one good thing the student did.

Mode. The most appropriate feedback may be written or oral, or even a demonstration. It depends on the learning target, the assignment, and the age and verbal abilities of the student. Oral feedback works best for very young students or for students who are not likely to read what is written, or if the teacher has so much to say that the effect of seeing it in writing would be overwhelming.

By contrast, written feedback is more permanent than oral feedback. Students can keep it and refer to it as they do their work. Written feedback works well for students who can use it as they revise essays, papers, or projects. Written feedback can be inserted at specific points in written work, in margins, using arrows or underlining, and so on, so the student knows where the comments apply. For these reasons, it makes sense for teachers to use written feedback as often as possible and *also* to use oral feedback. Even students who read well will respond to good feedback delivered orally as a teacher walks around while students work in class, for example.

For some things, demonstration is the best mode. Physical skills, of course, cry out for demonstration—for example, for young children learning to hold a pencil or tie shoes or music students learning how to hold an instrument. Demonstration in the form of modeling is also a good way to "show" a student how to exercise cognitive skills. For example, if a student's writing would benefit from more vivid vocabulary, a teacher could say, "Use more vivid details." Or she could demonstrate: "Instead of just saying the boy fell off his bicycle, it might sound more interesting if you added details. How about, 'The boy clutched the handlebars helplessly as he lost his balance and fell from his bicycle to the hard street below'?"

Audience. Feedback can be delivered to one, some, or many students. Specific, personal critiques should be delivered to individual students. Individual feedback has the additional value of communicating that the teacher read and responded to the student's work. If feedback feels "just for me," it can communicate that the teacher values that student's learning and cares about her progress, as well as communicating the content of the feedback words. Individual feedback should start with comments about what the student did well and then give comments about what needs improvement.

Whole-group feedback that is really aimed at only a few students is usually ineffective. It turns off the students who know they don't need it, confuses the

students who aren't sure whether they need it or not, and may be ignored by the students the teacher intends to reach. But there are times when all members of a group need to hear the same thing. This often amounts to a minilesson that reteaches some concept to a small group of students pulled together because they have a common learning need, as in a flex group.

Content of Feedback

Teachers also have choices about the content of the feedback they give. These choices relate to the following areas:

- Focus—the work itself; the process the student used; the student personally
- Function—description; evaluation/judgment
- Comparison—with criteria for good work, *criterion-referenced*; with the work of other students, *norm-referenced*; with the student's own past performance, *self-referenced*
- Valence—positive; negative
- Clarity—clear to the student; unclear to the student
- Specificity—nitpicky; just right; overly general
- Tone—implications; what the student will "hear"

Focus. Feedback needs to be a message about learning, which is why the criteria for success are so important. Success criteria answer for students the essential question "How will I know I have done a good job?" Criteria that focus on evidence of learning also answer the deeper question "Where am I now in my learning, and what should I do next?" Really effective criteria also help clarify the learning goal for students by describing what evidence of learning looks like (as opposed to what evidence of following directions looks like). When success criteria possess these qualities, teacher feedback and student self-evaluation can, indeed, be a message about learning. That said, sometimes students also need criteria to make sure their work is ready to turn in—that it is the proper length, is neat, and so on. If directions for a task are complicated, students can use a checklist to make sure they have followed them correctly. This has the benefit of keeping substantive feedback about learning separate from feedback on the surface features of the work.

When giving feedback, the teacher should first describe the work the student did in terms of the criteria the student was expected to meet. If the criteria were captured in a rubric that the teacher shared with students, the teacher should use the rubric's categories for feedback. For example, "Nice job" isn't very descriptive, and it isn't focused on particular criteria. By contrast, "This project is nicely organized according to Galileo's scientific contributions" describes the project according to one of its criteria (organization), tells the student the teacher believes the criterion was well met, and tells the student why (it was clear that the project was structured around Galileo's scientific contributions, as opposed to chronologically or other ways the project could have been organized). It is all right to comment "Good work!" if the comment goes on to say why the work was good.

If possible, teachers should talk about both the quality of the work and the process they observed (or can infer) that the student used to do the work. In some subjects, processes are more visible and more a part of lessons than others, but all subjects involve processes. For example, reading teachers typically teach reading strategies (sounding out words, using context clues, and so on). Mathematics teachers typically teach algorithms and methods for different types of problems. In these cases, commenting on the process is fairly obvious.

Work in all subjects requires a process of some sort, however. To return to our Galileo project example, suppose the feedback had gone on to say that some of Galileo's achievements were more clearly described than others. In addition to describing what specific achievements the teacher was referring to, her feedback could include some comments about the process of finding information. Especially helpful would be feedback suggesting additional information-finding procedures that the student could have used, or suggestions that help develop self-regulation, like taking stock to see whether additional information was needed at various points during the work.

Function. Feedback can be descriptive or evaluative, thereby making students feel enlightened or judged. A teacher should aim for descriptive feedback that students will perceive as information to help them with their work and avoid evaluative feedback that students will perceive as judgmental or bossy.

This can be easier said than done. A teacher's choice of comments is a big part of whether feedback is descriptive or not. For example, "There is only one event in this story" seems descriptive. "Not good enough!" seems judgmental. But in

the end, it is the student's perception of the feedback that makes it descriptive or evaluative. Fragile students sometimes hear descriptive feedback as a judgment ("I'm stupid") even when that was not what the teacher said. For those students, it is especially important for the teacher to communicate every achievement, however small, so they begin to see themselves as people who *can* do something.

Comparison. Descriptions of work need some sort of basis for comparison. Feedback can compare work with criteria (called *criterion-referenced* feedback), with the work of other students (*norm-referenced* feedback), or with the student's own past performance or expectations for current performance (*self-referenced* feedback).

Criterion-referenced feedback, using as criteria the qualities of good work that were part of the learning target, is usually best for learning. For example, "The contour lines on your topographical map are not all in the right places" is criterion-referenced feedback. "Your topographical map is not as good as most of the other kids' maps" is norm-referenced feedback.

Self-referenced feedback can help all students as they progress toward developmental (long-term) learning targets such as developing writing or research skills. Pointing out what students did well and how this compares with the last time the teacher observed them use the same skill can help students set goals, build on strengths, and work on weaknesses.

For fragile students, self-referenced feedback can be a way to point out progress even when the work itself is not very good. For example, suppose a student wrote a very poor report on the stars, but at least she used one source and had some accurate information. Suppose further that her previous report on the planets had been mostly made up from things she had heard in class. Instead of a teacher describing how the poor report on stars didn't meet the criteria she had set, her feedback could focus on the aspects of this report that she noted as improvements over the last one. A teacher's noticing and naming accomplishments can be valuable as affirmations for students who do not believe they can do much in school. The criteria come into play—the comments are about aspects of the work such as use of sources and accuracy of information—but the focus is on the student's improvement. This kind of feedback helps students see the connection between their effort and their achievement. It gives the teacher the opportunity to affirm any progress, however small, and suggest next steps.

Norm-referenced feedback is almost never helpful for learning. Comparing students with one another sets up a competitive classroom atmosphere where "getting it right" and outdoing one's classmates are more important than understanding concepts or developing skills. Comparing students with one another encourages students to hide misunderstandings so they won't be found wanting, and in so doing they also miss opportunities to clear up those misunderstandings in class. Comparing students with one another also encourages students to believe that intelligence is innate rather than learned, and students who don't believe they can learn won't learn much.

Valence. Feedback comments should be positive, not negative. Positive comments include affirmations noticing and naming good qualities in a student's work. Positive comments also include descriptions of places where the work needs improvement coupled with suggestions for how to do that, sometimes called "constructive criticism." Negative comments, simply describing the bad qualities of a student's work without offering any assistance, are not effective. If the student had known how to do better, he probably would have. Interestingly, studies of students' perceptions of feedback throughout the world (Ruiz-Primo & Brookhart, 2018) show that students perceive as positive both descriptions of what they did well *and* constructive suggestions for improvement, as long as they are given a chance to use those suggestions. Students perceive disapproving comments and constructive suggestions that they are not given an opportunity to use as negative; one student said such unfulfilled feedback made him feel "useless" (Gamlem & Smith, 2013, p. 160).

We should add one caution. A teacher should not give in to the temptation to tell a student that work is good simply because she doesn't have the heart to tell him it's not. That may be easier in the short term, but it's a disaster in the long run. The teacher should just make sure she doesn't criticize any aspect of poor work without giving specific, forward-looking help in the very next breath.

Clarity. Feedback needs to be clear *to the student*. This may seem obvious, but it's important to consider what the student will understand. If the student didn't understand something the way the teacher explained it in class, simply repeating those words on the student's paper will not lead to improvement. If the teacher is not sure whether a student understands some feedback, she should check—and

not by simply saying "Do you understand?" (because the student will say yes). She should really check. For example, the teacher could ask the student to tell in his own words what he will do next.

Specificity. Feedback should be specific enough to be helpful, but not so specific that the work is done for the student. Remember our example of written papers where the teacher copyedits everything? Not good. Sometimes using examples is an effective way to make feedback specific for a student.

Tone. The way a teacher addresses a student communicates a lot. Brusque, order-giving comments ("Do this! Do that!") convey that the teacher thinks a student should be ordered around. Sometimes well-meaning teachers who are pressed for time write feedback that sounds like orders even when that's not what they intended.

The teacher should aim for feedback that personalizes the students and positions them as the agents of their own learning. Feedback should imply that the person being addressed is a decision-making, autonomous being who is actively involved in figuring out how to learn. This really is a case of "you get what you wish for." When teachers treat students as if they are agents of their own learning, in most cases students will live up to the expectation. For example, if a student did a skimpy report on the electoral college, a teacher could say, "This needs to be longer." That certainly communicates what needs to be done. But it also communicates "Your report needs to be longer because I said so." If instead the teacher said, "After I read this, I wanted to know more. What could you add?" she sends the message that the report needs to be longer. But she also sends the message that it is the student's decisions that will make that happen and asks the student a question that will set that process in motion.

How Will I Recognize Effective Feedback When I See It?

We have just discussed the qualities of effective feedback. One way to recognize it, then, is to look for those qualities in teacher feedback. Let's return to the metaphor of the three lenses described on page 51. Figure 3.1 presents a Feedback Analysis Guide that examines feedback through these lenses.

Another way to recognize high-quality feedback is to look for its effects in the classroom. In classes where feedback is prominent,

FIGURE 3.1
Feedback Analysis Guide

Micro view 

Evaluate the feedback.

- Is it descriptive?
- Is it timely?
- Does it contain the right amount of information?
- Does it compare the work to criteria?
- Does it focus on the work?
- Does it focus on the process?
- Is it positive?
- Is it clear (to the student)?
- Is it specific (but not too specific)?
- Does its tone imply the student is an active learner?

Snapshot view 

What evidence of learning does the feedback provide?

- What did the student learn from it?
- What did the teacher learn from it?

Long view 

What next step(s) should the teacher and student take to use this feedback for learning? How were these steps taken? Did learning improve?

Source: From *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students,* 2nd Edition (p. 5), by S. M. Brookhart, 2017, Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Copyright 2017 by ASCD.

- "Mistakes" are viewed as opportunities for learning.
- Students are not afraid to ask for help as needed.
- Assignments build on strengths and practice to overcome weaknesses.
- Student self-efficacy is high.
- Students become better at appraising their own work.

Students learn from the models they have seen in their teacher's effective feedback to them. They learn self-assessment skills as they reproduce what their teachers have modeled, and they learn the value of review and revision and reshaping of work for improvement. "Getting it done" becomes less of a motivator than "figuring it out."

How Can I Model Effective Feedback in Conversations with Teachers About Their Own Professional Learning?

Your own feedback to teachers should follow the principles about strategies and content we have just described. Describe to teachers what you see in their practice. Identify their strengths. Even if you think a teacher knows what her strengths are, it is nice to have one's supervisor notice and name them. Then the teacher not only knows her strengths but also knows that you know. Here are some examples of ways to begin a conversation about feedback:

- I know you return work to students in a timely manner, and I appreciate the amount of effort that takes. Let's look at some of the comments you make on student work and see if we can figure out a way for you to write less but be more effective.
- Next time we look together at one of your lessons, let's look at the whole cycle. Let's look at how your lesson plans, classroom activities and assignments, and feedback tie together to advance your lesson learning targets and longer-range learning goals and objectives.
- You have said that one of your main goals for students this year is for them to become more independent learners. Let's see how your feedback supports that goal.
- As you think about the fact that teacher feedback models for students how you want them to look at their work, what do you think are the most effective elements of your feedback? What parts of your feedback provide the most support for student growth?

Feedback conversations about teachers' professional learning should in most cases be private, individual conversations. When weaknesses are identified, they should be treated as opportunities for development. The tone of the conversation should suggest to teachers that you believe they value improvement and are able to improve. Never identify a weakness without providing suggestions for what to do about it. If you, personally, do not have strategies to offer beyond what the teacher already has used, you can at least offer resources to help the teacher's development.

As for all formative professional conversations, make sure that you cast yourself in the role of a learner. Every feedback opportunity you have with teachers should help you think about new things you need or want to learn about how learning happens in your building (Moss & Brookhart, 2015). Sometimes these professional learning goals of yours will include a deeper dive into formative assessment strategies themselves. Other times, you will realize you want to learn more about how students are thinking about learning in your building. Or you may decide you need to learn more about the approaches to learning and classroom assessment that students experience in your building. In any case, the point is that the principal needs to be the leading learner and focus on learning at all levels (students, teachers, and administrators) to advance formative assessment in every classroom.

Remember that your conversations are just that—conversations. Listen to a teacher's response to your feedback. If she is defensive, then she experienced your feedback as evaluation rather than description. Examine what you said, checking to make sure it wasn't intended that way, and rephrase.

This leads to our last point. Although supervisors, of course, should give feedback at the time of evaluations, these are primarily summative events. Teachers should receive formative feedback often, in situations not tied to evaluations, and while there is still time to improve before an evaluation.

What If?

Effective written feedback helps students learn. It's a genre of writing that may take time for teachers to develop, however. *What if you receive a call from a parent who says her child is receiving negative or insufficient feedback on assignments?*

First—and in keeping with the principles of good feedback—note what is positive about the call. Thank the parent for her interest and close attention to the work the student is taking home. Then ask what the specific concerns are.

Second, talk with the teacher. What was she trying to have the student accomplish—what was the learning target? Look at the work in question. Did the feedback match the learning target? Did it suggest at least one positive next step? Why does the parent think the feedback is negative or insufficient? It could be that the parent is looking for the kind of feedback she received in school—for example, expecting every usage error to be marked in red and interpreting no mark on a misspelled word to mean that the teacher didn't know or didn't care. You might suggest to the teacher that she schedule a meeting with the parent, and the student if appropriate, to discuss the work. A teacher-parent conference puts the communication where it needs to be and prevents a parental "end run" around the teacher.

If you notice that the feedback was, in fact, not of high quality in the sense that this chapter has described, you can also talk with the teacher about developing skills at providing effective feedback. The resources in this chapter, and others, can help you (Brookhart, 2017). As with any professional development, the best strategies are collaborative and inquiry-driven. You may be able to identify another teacher who can coach the teacher in improving feedback skills.

Reflecting on Feedback That Feeds Forward

Many teachers will say that "grading" takes up a lot of their time, and by that they may mean looking at student work whether it counts in the final grade or not. Encouraging teachers to give better feedback will be successful if you can demonstrate that less is more, that effective feedback really doesn't mean writing volumes, and that in the long run it will save time because it will help students improve their own learning. Reflect on the quality of feedback that you see in your school by asking these questions:

- Are there many instances of feedback on ungraded practice work? Or is most of the feedback that you see really an explanation of where students "lost points" in a grade?

- Can you identify classrooms in your school where the teacher uses feedback effectively, probably in conjunction with other formative assessment practices, in ways that she would be willing to share with colleagues? A demonstration of how targeted feedback supports learning and saves time in the long run might be helpful to other teachers.
- Are you leading by example? Are you a leading learner who continually seeks to understand more about formative assessment and student learning?
- Do you give feedback to your teachers in ways that model the principles laid out in this chapter?

Summing It Up

In this chapter we have discussed feedback that does more than correct students' errors and instead informs their progress. Providing effective feedback is one of the most powerful ways teachers can use success criteria. The next chapter discusses student self-assessment and peer assessment, two of the most powerful ways *students* can use success criteria. Together, teacher feedback and student self- and peer assessment comprise multiple sources of information enabling students to support the regulation of their learning.