Beginning Educator Support Team

Spring 2020 Newsletter

Dig into some professional reading this month to focus on feedback for students and ourselves!
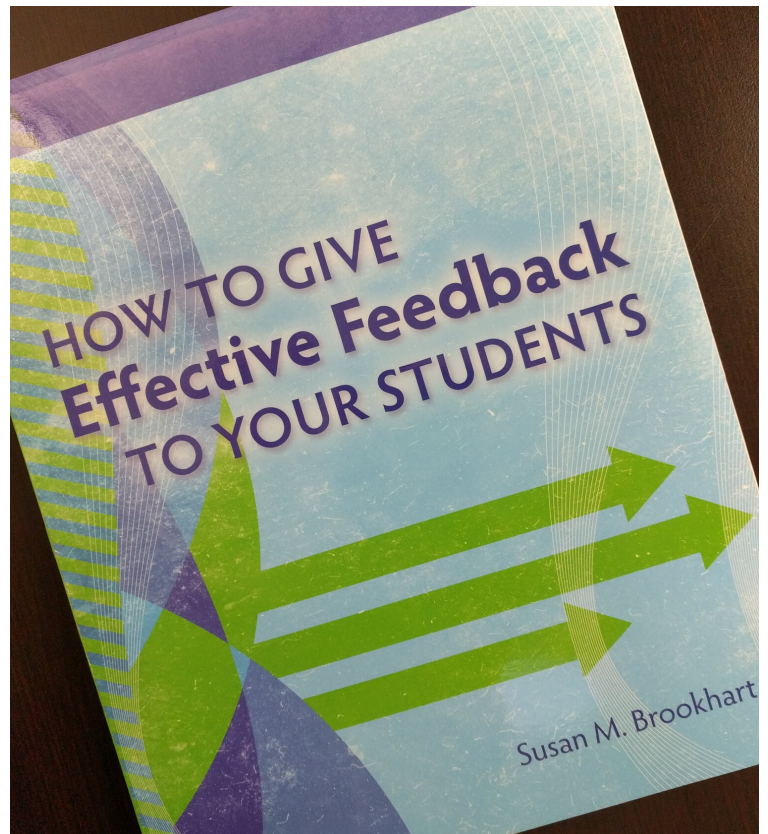
Feedback to Fuel Learning

As teachers, we spend countless hours crafting and giving feedback to our students with the hope that they will consider the feedback, apply it to their studies, and continue learning. Although feedback comes in all shapes, from quick informal comments and spontaneous mini-lessons to carefully composed written feedback and individual conferences, feedback that fuels learning has some hallmark characteristics and occurs within a positive feedback culture.

While it's tempting to keep the train rolling and hand out grades as quickly as students complete assignments, evaluation marks the end to learning, not an opportunity to extend and grow.

Effective feedback has the power not only to help students meet their standards along the way, but envision themselves as capable, reflective lifelong learners.

The same goes for feedback to fuel learning and reflection among novice and experienced educators, alike. As we consider the important role feedback plays within a learning cycle, remember, we are all learners in one way or another.

Mentoring Convos

Discussing feedback within a relationship with a mentor or trusted colleague is an important piece of successful instruction in the first years of teaching. Here are some topics to consider for learning-focused conversations between mentors and early-career teachers this time of year:

- Methods of self-care
- Action steps to accomplish goals for the second semester
- Analyzing data and responding to data with deliberate instructional planning
- Examining student work with a mentor or team
- Formative assessment and feedback strategies for students
- Formative assessment and feedback strategies for teachers (collecting classroom data, video feedback, etc.)
- Exploring differentiated instruction
- Successes and ongoing challenges

What is Feedback?

Feedback is different from evaluation, praise, or advice and takes some practice to master. Think about these 7 characteristics of effective feedback (Wiggins, 2012) to keep it forward-focused and connected to learning.

1. GOAL-REFERENCED: connected to a learning goal and actions the learner can take toward that goal

2. TANGIBLE & TRANSPARENT: must involve tangible results

3. ACTIONABLE: concrete, specific, and neutral

4. USER-FRIENDLY: must be understandable to the learner

5. TIMELY: must be provided while the attempts and effects are still fresh in the learner's mind

6. ONGOING: opportunities to use feedback during the learning process, not at the end

7. CONSISTENT: feedback must be stable, accurate, and trustworthy

In addition to the 7 characteristics, build a culture that views feedback positively in your classroom by modeling receiving and applying feedback. Ask students for their feedback, share the ways you're making changes based on a mentor's feedback, or join the #ObserveMe movement! Then help students use feedback they receive in productive ways.

For more about feedback that fuels learning, see this linked issue of ASCDExpress.

BEST Community Spotlight
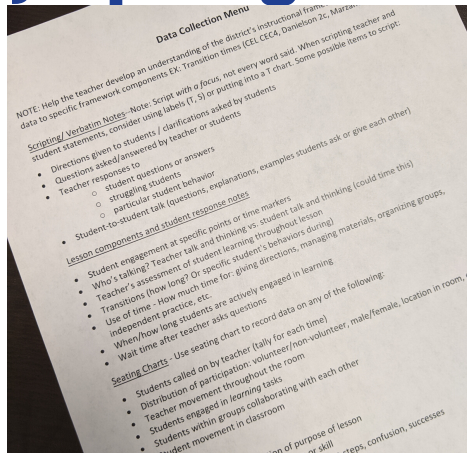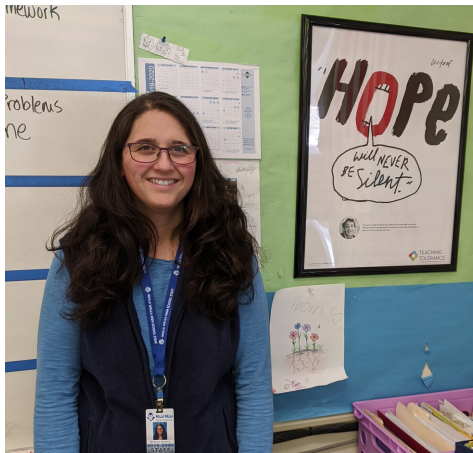
Melanie Medina won a Teaching Tolerance poster for sharing inspirational moments with the BEST community; Lots of ways to collect data for feedback on instruction; Laura James helps students celebrate growth with her iReady Punch-it

First- and second-year WWPS teachers were recently asked what support activities have been the most valuable in their success/growth as a teacher this year. The highest rated answer was "observation and feedback." Feedback from an observation can provide a wealth of actionable information and lead to improved student learning, so keep those classroom visits going in the spring semester! Here are some other places teachers have been finding helpful feedback on their instruction:

student work	para-educators	parent communications
student engagement	student surveys	your administrator
video recording	formative assessments	

ask a colleague or mentor to collect data for you on a specific area (student talk, positive comments, levels of questioning, pacing/timing, etc.)

Comments, questions, or want to know more about supporting early career teachers? Contact: Erin Dorso, WWPS BEST Coord/Teacher Mentor at edorso@wwps.org