**EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK**

John Hattie’s (2008) research revealed that feedback was among the most powerful influences on achievement. It is therefore essential that teachers are able to provide effective assessment and feedback in their classroom to enable students to be supported in reaching their goals.

In order for teachers to be able to improve formative assessment practices they need to look more closely at what feedback is and ensure they are conveying feedback in a way which relates to the individuals efforts to reach their goal. Grant Wiggins (2012) believes that the key characteristics of valuable feedback are that it should be goal referenced, tangible and transparent, actionable, user friendly (specific and personalized), timely, ongoing and consistent.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that the “main purpose of feedback is to reduce the gap between current understandings and performance and a goal”. In their model, feedback is addressed by exploring the following three questions:

1. Where am I going?
2. How am I going?
3. Where to next?

The model demonstrates how comments can be related to these questions on four different levels which are task, process, self-regulation and self-feedback. The feedback provided based on these three questions is the most valuable if it includes explanations of relevant processes and learning, and leads to self-reflection and management. Teachers therefore need to carefully consider the feedback they give students to ensure it allows students to deepen their understanding of the content and assists them in achieving their future goals.

Schools need to ensure that feedback is provided to not only assist students in reaching their long term goals but that the school’s structure supports this. This is not achieved by merely testing students after they have studied a topic. Schools should test students before and after they have learnt a topic to enable them to measure the individual’s progress. At my placement last year I was able to measure the students prior knowledge by having them work in small groups to write any ideas and knowledge they had in relation to the provided topic on butchers paper. This also gave me the opportunity to move between the groups and speak with the students about past experiences and knowledge that they had. I found that this was very beneficial as it enabled me to provide extension work to the students who had prior knowledge and deliver my teaching to an appropriate standard. One of the key issues I found was that the students only completed the subject for one semester as it was an elective, and many would not take it again. I therefore found it challenging to create long term goals. In an attempt to overcome this issue I attempted to relate skills to real life experiences, for example, when working on public speaking I related it to circumstance such as a future job interview in an attempt for students to see a variety of use of the skills.

Teachers should ensure that they are including a variety of feedback methods into their lessons. This includes through technology, peers and teachers. It should also include a variety of methods such as written and verbal to ensure they cater for contrasting learning styles. When teaching drama I have found that students can be tentative to provide feedback to their peers as they get embarrassed and worried that their peers will take their feedback personally. My mentor teacher gave me the idea of creating feedback sheets for the students to complete when giving feedback. This provided them with direction and led to them providing more beneficial feedback. The students then verbally gave the feedback to their peer and afterwards gave them the feedback sheet once I had perused it. I found this to be beneficial as the students could take the feedback home with them to reflect upon at a later stage and it allowed me to create questions for the feedback sheets that related to specific areas and encouraged discussion. It also provided me with a starting point to discuss feedback with each group.

A further issue that I observed whilst on placement was that teachers did not share questions and methods with other teachers and failed to effectively communicate with learning support staff. This is an issue raised by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam in their article *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through classroom assessment.* I had a student with individual learning needs in my class. It was not until I completed a referral to the Individual Learning Needs department that I became aware that the student had an individualized plan. I sent emails to the student’s previous teachers and her Learning Support Officer asking for any advice on what they had found worked for the student in the classroom environment. The only email I received back was from her Learning Support Officer resending her individualized plan which had not been updated in two years. I felt that the student could have had a more positive and productive learning environment if the teachers had shared their methods and experiences.

