THESAN

Providing Effective Feedback for Online Learning

Key Principles for Effective Feedback:
- What is good about the work? Be specific.
- What needs improving? Be specific.
- Strategies for how to improve
- Motivate the pupil to want to improve
- Timely – give feedback as soon as is viable after the work has been submitted

Ask Yourself:
"What kind of feedback is most helpful here – *for me* to identify what has / hasn't been learned and *for the pupil* to make progress?"

Low Stakes Testing
Research tells us that regular, repeated low stakes testing promotes pupil progress:
"Taking a test on material can have a greater positive effect on future retention of that material than spending an equivalent amount of time restudying the material."
Roediger, H.L. and Karpicke, J.D., The power of testing memory: Basic research and implications for educational practice, *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 1(3)* p.181-210

Kahoot (kahoot.com), Quizlet (quizlet.com) and Numbas (numbas.org.uk) all provide the facility to create online low stakes quizzes for virtually all subjects from Maths to Modern Foreign Languages. Try creating a quiz to test pupils' recall of key concepts, definitions, vocabulary or formulae. Use the online results analysis to identify gaps in understanding and feed this forward into your future planning to support pupils' learning.

You could consider scheduling a low stakes test ahead of an online video-conferencing lesson via Zoom or a similar facility. Then use your Zoom lesson to help pupils make progress by addressing misconceptions or providing discussion starters to extend their thinking on a particular topic. Invite pupils to re-sit the low stakes test immediately after the lesson and then again perhaps a week or a month later to check understanding and retention. (Zoom is a user-friendly video-conferencing facility, which allows you to video your online lessons for pupils to watch again. However, do check that you have parental permission in place before recording pupils.)

Traffic Light Feedback

This is useful for providing initial feedback on written responses of a paragraph or longer. Highlight sections of the response based on their quality: Red for errors; amber for something which needs clarification or elaboration; green for great quality. Teach pupils the system by getting them to traffic light a mid-range (e.g. GCSE grade 4-5) response, then task them with providing feedback for improvement.

The next step is to set a question on which pupils must draft a response. Either you or the other pupils in the class could then provide traffic light feedback on that first draft to support the development of a stronger final draft.

Verbal Feedback

Comment-based feedback can be verbal as well as written. Try using the Voice Comments tool on Google docs; record an MP3 using the microphone facility on your phone or tablet, or record a simple vlog via your mobile device's video camera. You could share these via email using Google Drive or even create your own Youtube (youtube.com) channel for pupils to subscribe to – your subscribers will then be notified whenever you post something to support their learning.

As part of the verbal feedback process, invite pupils to jot down their targets and a note of how they have addressed each one when they re-submit a piece of improved work to you: That way, you'll have a ready-made record of your feedback and each pupil's response to it for future reference.

Written Feedback

In a Word or Powerpoint document, highlight the section of text you want to comment on, click the Review tab, click New Comment and simply type in your comment. Rather than typing lots of similar comments on numerous pieces of work, consider creating a numbered comment bank to share with pupils and then just type in the number, rather than the full comment. For example, number 1 could be 'explain this point more clearly', number 2 'evidence is needed to support this point' and so forth.

A quicker way of writing comments 'long-hand' is to use a surface pen, which allows you to write directly onto your screen, rather than typing out each comment. Afterwards just save the document and send it back to the pupil as you would if you'd provided typed comments.

And finally…

- Don't expect to give feedback on every single thing a pupil does.
- Decide which pieces will provide the greatest learning benefit from your feedback and plan accordingly.
- Make your feedback specific, positive and timely.
- The best feedback helps pupils to improve and motivates them to want to do just that!
- Take care and stay safe.

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