

“Good feedback causes thinking.” Dylan Wiliam

Focus on Feedback, Not Grades

By Diane Cunningham

In OC21 we have unique opportunities to differentiate instruction and part of that process is providing quality feedback. The research overwhelmingly tells us that feedback, detached from grades, has great impact on student learning. The attributes of quality feedback (whether from peer or teacher) are also revealed in the research, again and again:

- Provide feedback when students can use it – while they are working and not at the end. Feedback “for the next time” is a waste of time.
- Begin with the strengths by describing what is evidenced in the work.
- Ask questions to promote thinking and allow the student to maintain ownership over the work.
- Provide direction with suggestions.

When feedback is descriptive and actionable, it has the potential to foster a growth mindset in students, as described by [Dylan Wiliam](#).

[Starr Sackstein’s blog](#) entry about feedback offers practical suggestions for seizing the opportunity to reduce the emphasis on grades by providing descriptive and actionable feedback, and to promote a growth mindset in your students.

For further learning:

- Lalor, Angela (2012). Keeping the Destination in Mind. *Educational Leadership*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Petty, Geoff (2009). Evidence based teaching, Second edition. (Chapters 4 through 8)
- Wiggins, Grant. (2012). Seven Keys to Effective Feedback. *Educational Leadership*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Xeriland, Tim - summary of research on formative assessment (feedback): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvXS2x3UhQU&feature=related>