

A Guide for Providing Feedback

Overview

According to research in neuroscience, when students learn something new and receive feedback on that learning, the parts of their brains associated with that learning are more active (Sousa, 2009). The feedback fuels the motivation for students to learn which, in turn, generates a positive emotional response in students (Cheliotis & Reilly, 2010). There are many factors that go into mentoring pre-service teachers, but arguably the most effective is offering meaningful, purposeful feedback. This practice can help the teacher become a more reflective practitioner and creative planner which leads to more effective classroom instruction—a goal we have for each of our MAT students.

Expectations

It is difficult, sometimes, to refrain from commenting on everything you see in a video. However, this can be overwhelming to a pre-service teacher who has just survived teaching a complicated math concept to a group of 5th graders! For the student internship, we will be focused on providing targeted, purposeful feedback that students can use to make improvements to their future instruction. In order to do this, we need to put on our “teacher caps” and think like classroom teachers. Much like a teacher who is attempting to lead her students to understand a concept through a series of questions, we will be attempting to help our students reflect on their instruction and grow as teachers through a series of statements/questions. In this way, students must think critically about their instruction and come to their own conclusions about how to make improvements.

Example:

“I noticed that when you told the students to go back to their seats after calendar time that they all stood up and ran to their desks, bumping into each other and falling down. One girl even ran a victory lap after she “won” the race to her seat. That happened to me when I taught Kindergarten, too. I had a really unique way of dismissing students individually or in small groups to go to their seats from the carpet that the kids responded well to. Let me share it with you...”

This is a common comment mentors make. Its aim is to be helpful, but it takes any ownership or critical thinking away from the student. You have just told them they need a transition strategy and here it is. To encourage critical thinking and creativity from the student, you might phrase the comment like this:

“In this part of the video, I saw that when you told the students to go back to their seats after calendar time that they all stood up and ran to their desks, bumping into each other and falling down. One girl even ran a victory lap after she “won” the race to her seat. That happened to me once when I taught Kindergarten, too. What did you think of that, and what do you plan to do tomorrow?”

Good feedback begins with noticing specific aspects of the lesson, then sharing those observations with the teacher as the starting point for the discussion. It can be likened to a teacher asking a well-crafted, thought-provoking question in the classroom, then spending the majority of the time listening to the student responses and asking follow-up question. By encouraging our students to critically think about particular aspects of the instruction through evidenced-based feedback, it will have a larger impact on their learning than if we are quick to offer a suggestion.

Feedback Prompts

Use the prompts below to craft feedback that will encourage our students to use critical thinking and problem solving skills to improve instruction. This is not an exhaustive list; rather, they are examples of

how to compose a response to fit a specific aspect of instruction. They are meant to encourage discussion with the student, or, at the very least, give them something to think about before submitting their next lesson.

Context

I noticed that you... ..could you talk to me about how that fits within this lesson or unit?

Perception

Here's what I saw... ..what were you thinking was happening at that time?

Interpretation

At one point in the lesson, it seemed like... ..what was your take?

Decision

Tell me about when you... ..what went into that choice?

Comparison

I noticed that students... ..how did that compare with what you had expected to happen when you planned the lesson?

Antecedent

I noticed that... ..could you tell me about what led up to that, perhaps in an earlier lesson?

Adjustment

I saw that... ..what did you think of that, and what do you plan to do tomorrow?

Intuition

I noticed that... ..how did you feel about how that went?

Alignment

I noticed that... ..what links do you see to our instructional framework (state standards, district curriculum, etc.)?

Impact

What effect did you think it had when you... ?

Also, when giving feedback, it might be helpful to think about the acronym FACTS when crafting your response:

Formative

Actionable

Clear

Timely

Supportive

The article “How to Give Better Feedback” (cited below) has more information regarding each of the aspects of this acronym. It will also be posted along with all other cited resources in our MAT-TA Canvas course.

Resources:

Baeder, J. (n.d.). *10 Questions For Better Feedback on Teaching* [PDF]. The Principal Center.

Cheliotis, L. G., & Reilly, M. F. (2010). *Coaching Conversations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

How to Give Better Feedback. (n.d.). Retrieved January 06, 2018, from <http://ctl.byu.edu/tip/how-give-better-feedback>.

Sousa, D. (2009). Brain-friendly learning for teachers. *Educational Leadership*, 66(9). Retrieved January 5, 2018, from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/summer09/v0166/num09/Brain-Friendly_Learning_for_Teachers.aspx.