

# Feedback

When it comes to student learning, few practices, if any, can have as profound an impact on their improvement as feedback. For many physical and health education teachers, this comes as no surprise because providing feedback for students is quite intuitive and seemingly a natural part of their practice. However, not all feedback is the same nor does it have the same effect on student learning. Consider the following information to ensure feedback is helpful and supports students to improve their learning. Some points refer specifically to understanding how to use feedback to improve learning in physical and health education.

## Descriptive

## Feedback

For feedback to effectively support students to improve their learning, it must provide them with an understanding of how they are currently doing in comparison to the established success criteria. This success criteria should be:



available for all students to see and refer to



explained by the teacher, with examples, so students can also see what success could look like



directly related to what is being learned in class



use strengths-based language for what might be present at each level of success, not what is missing (e.g., can rather than cannot)

When providing students with descriptive feedback, it is important to also note the following:

### SUGGESTIVE, NOT DIRECTIVE

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Feedback should be suggestive in nature so the student can use it to consider how they might change something in the learning instead of simply replicating what the teacher tells them to do (e.g., instead of telling a student to transfer their weight in a throw for more power, suggest they explore ways of moving their body so that they can produce more force in their throw).

### TIMING IS KEY

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In many cases, feedback should be shared in a timely manner so that students have time to receive and process the feedback to make appropriate adjustments. In other cases, sometimes withholding the feedback allows the students to adjust on their own without relying on the feedback from the teacher and/or peers.

### USE IT OR LOSE IT

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Teachers need to provide students time and space to receive feedback, process it, and make changes. Without this time and space to process and adjust their efforts, feedback loses its effectiveness for students, and they are unlikely to successfully receive or apply it.

### PRAISE IS NOT HELPFUL FEEDBACK

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Communicating “Good job” might sound encouraging, but praise like this does not indicate anything about what they did “good”. When providing descriptive feedback, be sure to use positive, suggestive language that is directly related to the success criteria for what is being learned.

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*Example:* “Wow, you did a great job at looking at the ball coming to you and spreading your fingers wide enough to receive the pass.”

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## PERSONALIZE FEEDBACK

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To ensure all students understand how they are progressing, and what they can do to improve, they need to receive personal feedback about their learning. Group and/or class feedback can be helpful for teachers, or making large group decisions, but it will not help individual students understand where they are in their journey or how to improve.

## FOCUS ON THE LEARNING, NOT THE PERSON

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All students can succeed and all students can struggle with learning in physical and health education. Descriptive feedback should focus on what the student demonstrated in their learning, and not on who they are as individuals. Regardless of whether a student is a high-level athlete or someone who is active only in a physical and health education setting, every student should receive personal and descriptive feedback about what they are doing well and what they might do to improve their learning.

## KNOW THE STUDENT

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Everybody has good days and bad. For some students having a bad day and receiving feedback can be a recipe for disaster. Some days, students might simply be closed off to receiving feedback. If this is the case, try not to force it on them as it is not likely to make a positive impact.

## MAKE IT DIGESTIBLE

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When providing feedback to students, be mindful of how much information you are giving them. Because most people can process a limited amount of information at one time, be mindful to not provide too much feedback all at once. Consider focusing on 1 to 3 items in your feedback, with most of it emphasizing what the student did well.

## A 2-WAY STREET

For feedback to be truly effective, teachers need to ensure that students understand it, can process it, and do something with it. To help with this, it is highly recommended that the feedback is discussed – not just delivered. Ask students about their thoughts on the feedback, how they feel they did, and what they think of the feedback being offered. This also helps the teacher to see if the student understands the feedback or if they should consider another way to deliver their message.

Feedback can be a very powerful tool to help students progress and improve their learning. It ensures there is clarity for each student concerning what they are learning, how they are currently doing, and what they can do next to improve. When used effectively, feedback helps all students to engage in and connect with their learning and ensures that all students can learn at high levels of success in physical and health education.

It is worth noting that it is not up to only the teacher to provide descriptive feedback for students. Self and peer-assessments can also provide this valuable information for students. In some cases, using non-teacher driven feedback can be much more impactful. To learn more about these forms of assessment and how they can help students with feedback, see the resource on *Assessment as Learning*.

