

HLPs 8 & 22: PROVIDE POSITIVE & CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK TO GUIDE STUDENT’S LEARNING & BEHAVIOR VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to our video for HLPs #8 and #22, Provide Positive and constructive feedback to guide students’ learning and behavior.

There are 22 High Leverage Practices for special education spread across four domains. Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students’ learning and behavior appears twice because of its dual implications for the social/emotional/behavioral and instruction domains.

This video is divided into two parts. In part 1, we introduce and define positive and constructive feedback. In part 2, we note four key components of this HLP, and feature four teachers demonstrating examples.

Part 1. Introduction and definitions

Human beings are constantly giving and receiving feedback in formal and informal ways. However, that does not necessarily translate into the most effective use of this practice within schools. The purpose of this video is to provide guidance to general and special education teachers in terms of their delivery of feedback to students in academic and behavioral domains.

Feedback is information all teachers provide to all students in order to improve performance in academic or behavioral domains. Students use the information to improve their motivation, engagement, and independence. Done effectively, feedback reduces the gap between students’ current knowledge and understanding and what they need, or have yet, to know and understand.

Research has shown that feedback from teachers increases students’ motivation and effort towards the learning task. Simple praise and corrective feedback can be helpful to students, but feedback that informs students about their progress toward a manageable learning goal is generally the most impactful. Timing of feedback is also key to its effectiveness.

A hallmark of effective feedback is it should be delivered immediately after students’ responses, and can be delivered using oral, written, or gestural/nonverbal modalities depending on the situation.

Another hallmark is feedback should not only be timely, but also contingent and genuine, so that students know why they are receiving feedback. Teachers should also give feedback that “fits” with the instruction, phase of learning, and expectations of students. In other words, teachers need to constantly evaluate the extent to which individual students need specific types and doses of feedback depending on the situation.

Feedback should be linked to specific student goals, and delivered in a way that helps students see progress towards those goals. In other words, teachers should do more than say “yes” or “good job.” Teachers must provide students with specific information about their current performance and their progress towards individual learning and behavioral goals.

In sum for part 1, teachers are always providing feedback to students, but to do so effectively, they should follow the guidelines demonstrated in part 2 of this video.

Part 2: Four components of providing feedback.

There are four components of providing positive and constructive feedback: They are: 1. Effective feedback is goal directed, 2. Effective feedback is constructive, 3. Effective feedback is immediate, and 4. Effective feedback is respectful and positive.

Component #1: Effective feedback is **goal-directed**. Teachers should set clear goals for students, and then provide feedback that tells him/her how to improve performance to get closer to that goal. Goals can relate to academic or behavioral outcomes. Providing feedback that is goal-directed is an iterative, ongoing process. Having a strong goal orientation can increase students’ motivation and engagement.

A good example of goal-directed feedback might sound like this: “I really like that you’ve started your paragraph off with a clear topic sentence. That’s exactly right! Now let’s see if you can think of three related detail sentences you could write to turn that topic sentence into a paragraph!” A non-example of goal-directed feedback would be: “You’ve done great so far; just keep going until I tell you to stop.” This feedback is not specific or goal directed. It doesn’t give the student an idea of how close he or she is to actually meeting the goal and it doesn’t even tell them what that goal is, other than to use up time.

In the following example from a small group mathematics class, Ms. Sarah Melvin is providing feedback on students’ multiplication models. One student is struggling to grasp the new concept, and so she uses a variety of practices, including goal-directed feedback, explicit questioning, and modeling to help him break through the confusion. It is common to see numerous HLPs and other evidence-based practices intersecting with the components of effective feedback. Note how her feedback is continuously positive, and focused on helping him achieve the goal of independently creating the representation of the multiplication model.

Component #2: Effective feedback is constructive.

Constructive feedback should support a student as they progress towards mastery of a new skill. Providing constructive feedback to students does not mean simply providing the answer, or noting whether responses are correct or incorrect. Instead, constructive feedback should provide the student with actual steps to take in response to the feedback.

An example of constructive feedback could be “You’re on the right track with question number 3 but there is a small error. Look back at your sample problems and see if you can find where you made a calculation error with a negative number.”

A non-example of constructive feedback might be “Question 3 is incorrect. Try it again and just try harder this time.” This kind of feedback does not provide any specific guidance or direction, leaving students with just as many, if not more questions than when they started.

In sum, when providing constructive feedback to students, teachers should include information that will help the students identify their specific mistake and next steps to fix it.

In this intensive, 1-1 mathematics lesson, Mrs. Khan is helping her student learn how to solve a subtraction word problem. Note how she is providing constructive feedback by never directly providing answers, but carefully follows the cues of the student to determine what steps she should review and when to utilize additional scaffolds.

Component #3: Effective feedback is immediate.

Feedback should be given as quickly as possible after the student has performed a task or behavior. This allows students to make immediate changes and keeps them from practicing incorrect actions. It also helps the student know specifically why they are receiving feedback.

Immediate feedback is especially important when students are in the early stages of learning a new skill. Teachers need to use feedback to address misconceptions about new content or how to apply new skills.

An example of immediate feedback would be monitoring a student as they work and providing feedback at critical stages. For example, class has started and Steve does not have his needed materials for class. “Steve, my expectation is for students to be responsible and ready for class every day. To be responsible, you need to bring your notebook and pen. Let me help you come up with a new strategy for ensuring you are ready for class tomorrow.”

A non-example of this principle would be allowing a student to continuously mispronounce a new vocabulary term during oral reading. By allowing the error to continue, the student is rehearsing the incorrect pronunciation, and probably determined they were correct since the teacher did not intervene.

In this clip, Mr. Andy Eckert is reviewing a homework assignment. He solicits responses from a range of students in the class and provides immediate feedback. In the instance where a student offers an incorrect response, he does more than say “no”, but instead highlights the correct information. Then, when another student makes the same mistake, he goes further in detailing why their responses were incorrect.

Component #4: Effective feedback is respectful and positive.

Feedback that is respectful and positive focuses on the student's successes and progress rather than on their deficits. It also keeps the focus on the student's actions rather than making personal judgments.

Providing positive, respectful feedback does not mean that teachers should not point out students' errors or mistakes; in fact, the opposite is true. Feedback that is corrective, but still positive and goal-directed, will help students address their misconceptions. Positive feedback motivates students to achieve their best on academic and behavioral tasks.

Positive, supportive feedback might sound like: "Abby, you did a great job with this the last time we worked on it, so I know you can do it again. Let's take it step-by-step and find a better way to answer these comprehension questions."

It is important to note that inconsistent performance is not uncommon when someone is learning something new, and it is particularly common for students with disabilities. Comparing today's performance in a negative way to a previous performance or to other students' performance is demotivating and not focused on success.

A non-example of positive feedback would be: "I know you can do this, Alex, because you did it last week, so just try a little harder. See how Marshall is already halfway done with his? See if you can catch up."

In this final clip, Ms. Milena Mesfin is working in a low incidence disability classroom. As she goes through part of their morning routine, note the constant use of positive language, prompts that redirect the student's attention, and lots of eye contact and gestures to keep the student engaged and aware that he is meeting expectations.

In summary, effective feedback is: goal-directed, constructive, immediate, and respectful and positive. Feedback is also used when implementing most, if not all, of the HLPs in the instruction and social/emotional/behavioral domains in some way. Thus, an argument could be made that this practice is perhaps the most important for teachers to implement with fidelity and dosage needed to support individualized students' needs.

More information about feedback and its role in supporting the needs of students with and without disabilities can be found at highleveragepractices.org.

Thanks for watching, and please continue using resources from this series on high leverage practices for special education.