

## **Student Well-being: A Collective Responsibility**

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### **Effective Feedback Matters**

JOHN ALMARODE: So, feedback is all around. If I step out into a crosswalk too early, someone honks the horn. If my three-year-old puts too many blocks on a tower, the tower falls over. If my six-year-old isn't careful with her coloring, it goes on to the table. Feedback's everywhere. And what's interesting is those three examples that I just gave you are very effective. They tell you, get back on the sidewalk. They tell Jackson, stop stacking the blocks that high, or come up with a system that supports it. And in Tessa's case, the six-year-old's case, she knows to change the way that she's coloring to prevent it from happening again. That promotes learning. We change our behavior when we get effective feedback. And in the classroom, the same rules apply. The feedback we give students should help them close the gap between where they are, where we want them to be, and it should result in a change in thinking and behavior. But effective feedback sometimes isn't as clear in the classroom as it is outside. So, for example, a child turns in, or a student turns in an assignment, and we immediately say something like, oh, wow, good try. Great work. Well, that's really not effective. Because the student doesn't know what was good about their try. They don't know what was great about the particular job that they did. And so, then there's no way for them to change their behavior. All they can do is hope that they can replicate whatever they did on this assignment the next time to get the same kind of praise. So, what is effective feedback? Effective feedback is specific. It tells the student exactly what about that particular task, performance, or event was positive, and what about that task, performance, or event needs some adjustment, or is an opportunity for growth. It's constructive. It doesn't focus on the individual. It focuses on the task. You are not a bad writer. The thesis statement isn't clear. And there's a difference in how we phrase that. So, it's constructive in that the student can do something with it, and it doesn't personally attack them. The last part of effective feedback is it has to be timely. If we give students an assignment, and they submit it, and they don't get any feedback on it for two weeks, they've moved on. Just like if someone comes in our classrooms, observes our classrooms, and doesn't say anything to us for two weeks. And then as we walk down the hallway, past the faculty lounge, they say, "Oh, great job the other day in class." I've had five to ten days of teaching in between there, so I have no idea what you're talking about. Which means I can't change my behavior. So, specific, constructive, and timely. But feedback also comes in different forms. So, there's task feedback. That's when we tell someone that something's right or it's wrong. Yes, no. Do this, don't do that. That's task feedback. And it's very good for novice learners or introductory learners, because they're still trying to determine the boundary of concepts. Yes, that's the correct way to solve the problem. No, that's not the correct way to solve the problem. Yes, that is a high-quality thesis statement. It aligns with your supporting details. No,

that's not an effective thesis statement. It is not aligned with your supporting details. Task feedback. The next type of feedback is process. Process feedback is feedback that asks students to consider the strategies or the processes they used to accomplish a certain task. And it often comes in the form of questions, but it can also be in the form of guidance. So, you might say to a student, your thesis statement does not align with your supporting details. That's task feedback. But then we might follow it with process feedback. Where could you find examples of thesis statements and supporting details that would help you revise your essay? Process. In mathematics, I might say question two and three are wrong. Task feedback. But the process part of that might be, remember when you divide by a negative number, what do we do to the inequality sign? Take a look at two and three. What decisions might you make now that you made differently before? Write a narrative in the right-hand column explaining how you solved this problem using this feedback. Process. So, I've given them something to do, a strategy to do, to dive in. The last type of feedback is the gold standard. It's the one that we really, really strive for, and it's really a characteristic of visible learners. It's really a characteristic of learners that have moved into the range of expertise and proficiency in whatever they're working on. And maybe not expertise like mastery, but they've moved into a high proficiency with some piece of content, or some type of learning. So, self-regulation feedback is, does the learner know what to do when they don't know what to do, and you're not around? So, if I'm working on an essay, if I'm working on a problem, if I'm working on a science experiment, and I run into a snag, and I look up and the teacher's not around, can I engage in self-regulation feedback to check, well, let me check this. Well, let me check this. Well, let me ask this person. Let me think about this, or let me think about that. Can I self-regulate and give myself feedback to close the gap in my learning? And it's those three types of feedback that we really want to see in our classrooms, and we want to see them progress as learners progress. More task in the beginning, and then move towards process, and then the gradual release to self-regulation. Effective feedback matters. It has to close the gap from where the student currently is to where we want them to be, and it has to be specific, constructive, and timely. Otherwise, it's just a grade on a paper. It's just another assignment that goes in the back of their folder, or in the trash can, or the bottom of their book bag.