

“Good Job” is Not Enough Using Descriptive Feedback to Create Independent Learners

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Introduction:

In my practice I have observed a lack of self-monitoring and self-direction among my students; instead my students depend too frequently on teacher direction. My experience in the accounting department at Sundt made evident the importance of communication and feedback. Employees know exactly how to handle unexpected charges or accounts on their own because supervisors consistently answer questions, and give input and immediate feedback. A real sense of learning from one another is embedded in the workplace that I am hoping to establish in my classroom in order to create learners that can learn independently. I do not want to just give superficial praise, instead I want to give students feedback they can use to evaluate their own learning and progress. I want to empower students to learn in a more independent manner by giving them feedback that is descriptive. In this investigation, I changed feedback procedures during the second quarter so students noticed a change from first quarter. I collected data from student surveys, parent surveys, turn-in rate of assignments and district benchmark scores.

Findings:

More descriptive, actionable teacher feedback contributed to higher student achievement. District benchmark assessment data showed an increase in overall student achievement. As the year progressed, students matured and built a stronger math identity; one that was more independent from both their teacher and their parents. Students began self-monitoring their learning and took the completion of tasks and achievement under their own supervision. The rate of homework assignments turned in over the period of data collection decreased. Students and parents both reported on the post surveys that they relied less on grades or teacher feedback to tell them about student learning in math. Instead, they relied more on student generated strategies. Students based learning on their own ability to solve problems, rather than grades reported by someone else.

Plan of Action:

To create a community of independent and self-directed learners, I plan to continue incorporating actionable feedback into my classroom. I will develop more tasks that use math students are already practicing at home, such as finances and planning; doing so will support students in their already developed math identities and create a path for parents to support their children even as they become more independent. Incorporating topics familiar to students will give them the independence they are growing toward, and still allow them to have learning successes. I will conduct future research to investigate how actionable feedback coupled with math tasks based off of mathematics already done at home affects student achievement.