

# "Good Job" is Not Enough Using Descriptive Feedback to Create Independent Learners

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## MY PROBLEM

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.

Research has found students do well when they have feedback they can use to measure their own learning and play an active role in assessment of how they are doing (Dixon & Haigh, 2009). In a study of small teacher actions, such as showing excitement and smiling, students reported teacher enthusiasm for learning increased their motivation (Patrick, Hisley, & Kempler, 2000).

## MY IDEA

I do not want to just give superficial praise ("good jobs" and percentages); 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; I tell them what they are successful at, what they need to continue studying, celebrate strategies they are using and question their decisions. Overall, this feedback will help them assess their own progress.

## INSPIRATION FROM SUNDT

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 and work effectively with others.

## HOW I INVESTIGATED

11/2/15

- Actionable feedback given to students- suggestions, comments on successes, questioning of techniques.
- Turn in rate of assignments monitored by "Making the Grade" (n=48)
- Quarter 1 District Benchmark scores collected (n=48)

11/4/15

- Pre surveys collected from students (n = 43)
- Pre surveys collected from parents (n = 23)

12/11/15

- Post surveys collected from students (n = 31)
- Post surveys collected from parents (n = 11)
- Turn in rate of assignments calculated (n = 48)
- Quarter 2 District Benchmark scores collected (n = 48)

- Changed feedback procedures (scores to descriptions) implemented during second quarter so students would notice a change from first quarter.
- Homework assignments, tests, journals, group and classwork were written with detailed feedback before they were handed back to students.

Examples:

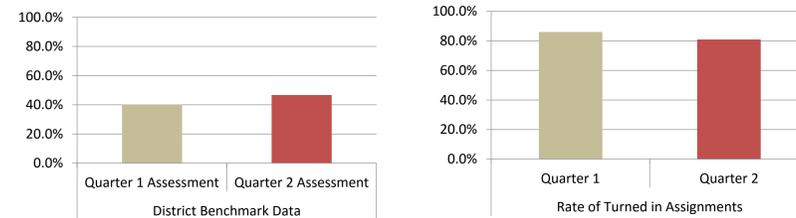
"Why did you choose to add instead of multiply?"

"Your strategy is very detailed. Thank you for using words and labeling numbers."

- Quantitative data was analyzed to compare responses from Week 1 to Week 6.
- Qualitative data was coded and analyzed for trends.

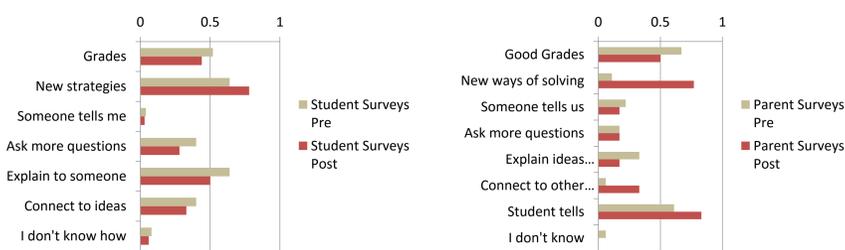
## WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACTIONABLE TEACHER FEEDBACK AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION?

**Finding 1: District benchmark assessment data showed an increase in overall student achievement.** This indicates that the more descriptive feedback contributed to higher student achievement.



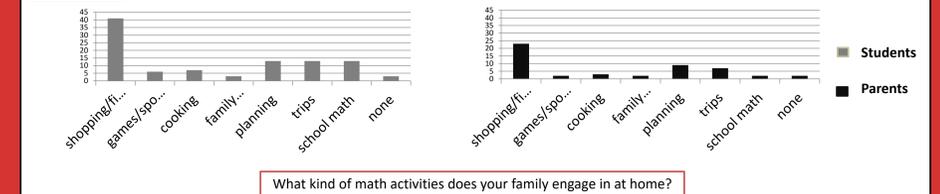
**Finding 2: The rate of homework assignments turned in over the period of data collection decreased.** Students and parents both reported on the post surveys that they relied less on grades or teacher feedback to tell them about student learning in math. Instead, they relied more on student generated strategies. A possible explanation for this decrease is that students found less need to turn in assignments for feedback because they were already aware of their own understanding.

How do you know you/your student is learning in math?

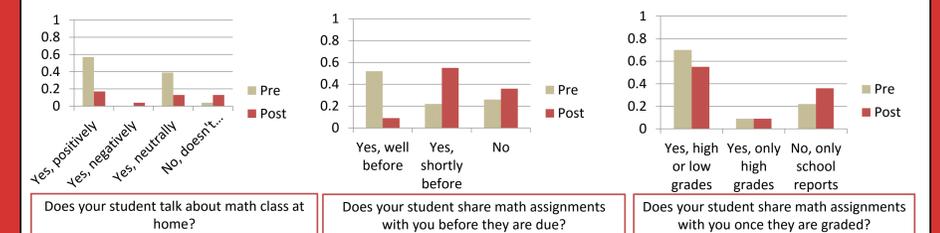


## WHAT ARE STUDENTS' AND PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND IDENTITY IN MATH?

**Finding 1: Students and parents describe similar math tasks done at home.**

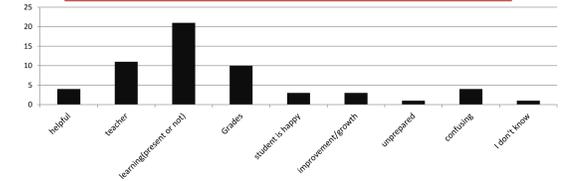


**Finding 2: Parents reporting hearing less frequently about school from students after the feedback intervention.**



**Finding 3: Parents had more positive than negative feelings about their students' math classes.** Positive and negative feelings about students' math classes were based on several themes. The most mentioned was parents were happy when their student was learning, and unhappy if they were not.

Why do you have the feelings you do about your student's math class?



## WHAT MIGHT IT MEAN?

- Actionable teacher feedback contributed to higher 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.
- Students based learning on their own ability to solve problems, rather than grades reported by someone else.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Educators must make sure the identities students build are ones in which they see the value of mathematics and their ability to be successful.
- Students, parents, and teachers should work together to help build stronger math identities.
- Communication allows parents and students to share the concepts their families already use, allowing for the teacher to incorporate math topics that are relevant and familiar to students.
- By integrating mathematical topics that students have already encountered in their lives, teachers can support their independent learning and continue to strengthen independence through actionable feedback.

## WHERE NEXT?

- 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.

## REFERENCES

Dixon, H., & Haigh, M. (2009). Changing mathematics teachers' conceptions of assessment and feedback. *Teacher Development*, 13(2), 173-186.

Patrick, B. C., Hisley, J., & Kempler, T. (2000). "What's everybody so excited about?": The effects of teacher enthusiasm on student intrinsic motivation and vitality. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 68(3), 217-236.