

What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

“Feedback is complicated, complex, and layered. *How Feedback Works* made it feel possible and easy! As someone who is familiar with formative assessment practices, which include feedback and peer feedback, I saw the through line immediately. Each module addresses a different type of feedback but also adds a deeper understanding of feedback as new ideas are discussed in various ways. This book added to my own knowledge and pushed me to think a little differently.”

—**Jeni McIntyre**, Director of Data-Driven Instruction, Tulsa Public Schools

“The contents of this book are accurate, coherent, consistent in theme, and backed up with references and plausible examples. This playbook provides appropriate and relevant guidance for teachers, including learning outcomes and information on misconceptions. It is relevant for all levels of learners in this field—from the lead to the highly accomplished to the proficient and provisional educators.”

—**Leanne Hebden**, Quality Teaching Coach, Literacy, Instructional Leader,
Department of Education, Tasmania, Kingston Primary School

“Feedback is the missing link. As educators, we know the important role that feedback plays not just for our students, but for our teaching as well. And yet if we do not understand what that feedback looks like and sounds like, we can never truly know the depth of our impact. *How Feedback Works* gives the teacher the tools they need to know exactly when to use feedback and the kind of feedback that should be given.”

—**Barbara Lane**, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

“Feedback is one of education’s most powerful assets in moving learning forward, yet it’s often the most misunderstood. *How Feedback Works* ties in pedagogical principles with cognitive science and educational psychology to explain not only how to give effective feedback, but also how to create the structures and conditions necessary for feedback to maximize its potential on student learning. Through explanation, models, and guided practice, this playbook capitalizes on the research to help educators better understand and implement feedback that moves students to and through their next levels of learning. As an educator who coaches teachers, prekindergarten through twelfth grade, I’m excited to have this gem in my back pocket as a relevant reference to share with my colleagues and for developing my own knowledge and skill set around all things feedback.”

—**Kierstan Barbee**, Director of Assessment for Learning

HOW FEEDBACK WORKS

John Almarode | Douglas Fisher | Nancy Frey



HOW FEEDBACK WORKS

a playbook

CORWIN

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Visit the companion website at
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 for more resources.

List of Videos

Note From the Publisher: The authors have provided video and web content throughout the book that is available to you through QR (quick response) codes. To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

Videos may also be accessed at resources.corwin.com/howfeedbackworks.

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Introduction

Dear colleagues,

This is a playbook about feedback. As with all our playbooks, we invite you to learn alongside us as we dive into those strategies, approaches, and influences that research says work best in our schools and classrooms. Playbooks help foster, nurture, and hopefully sustain active engagement with what works best in teaching and learning. This playbook is no different. We are grateful to be learning with you about a well-known but often misunderstood part of the learning process.

Your days, weeks, months, semesters, and years are jammed full of those responsibilities of the job of an educator. With very little downtime, we must ensure that what we do in our schools and classrooms and how we do what we do in our schools and classrooms are both effective and efficient. This includes giving, receiving, and integrating feedback.

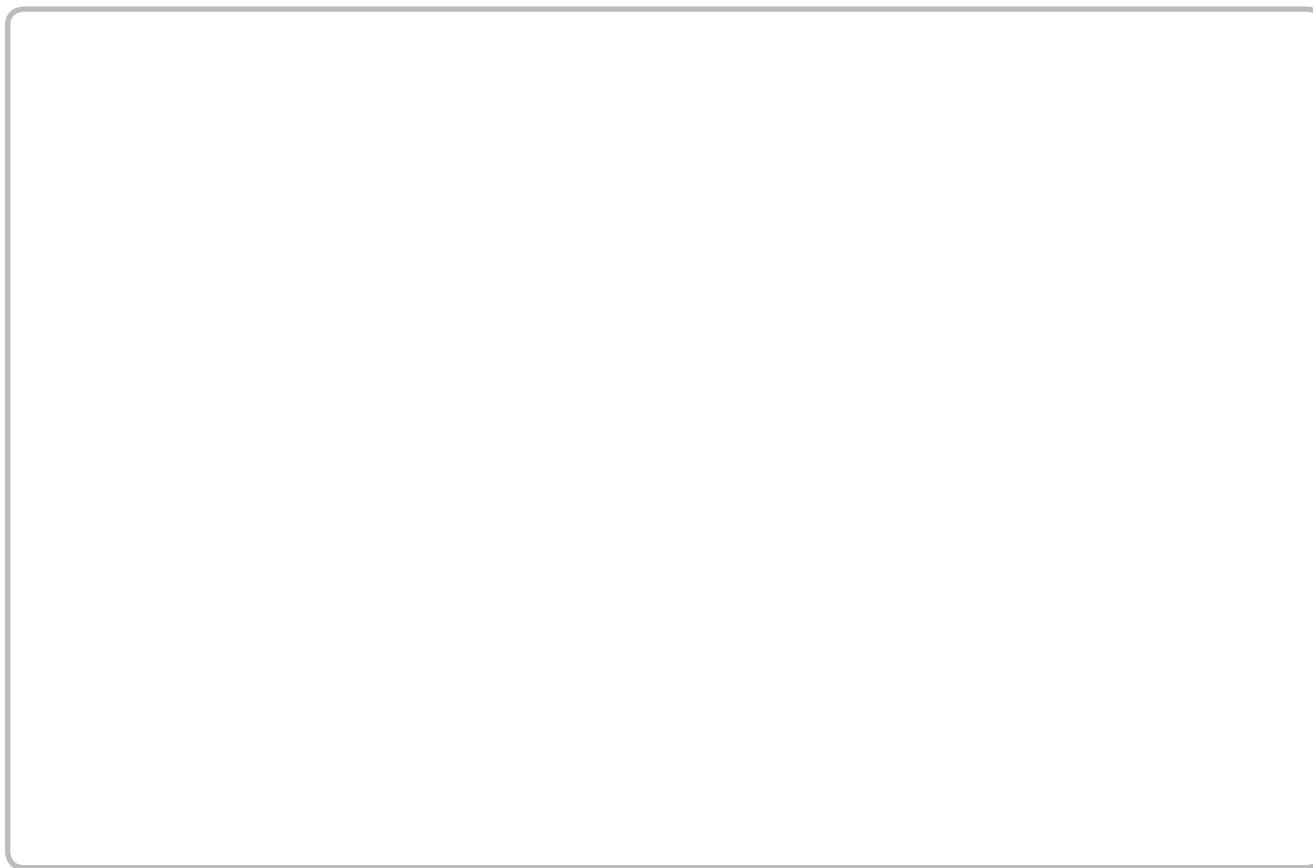
Take a moment to circle, underline, and/or highlight the words *giving*, *receiving*, and *integrating* mentioned in the previous sentence. These three words will appear over and over again as we embark on this learning journey. While the importance of these three words may not be clear this early on in our journey, by the time you read the last sentence in this playbook, you'll find that these three words will guide you as you apply your learning to your own school or classroom.

In fact, for us, feedback is the one area that *can* cause the greatest strain on us as educators. While we may acknowledge and believe that feedback is an important and essential part of the learning process, we are confronted with challenges of feedback in our own classrooms. Maybe you can relate to the following questions, which are always on our minds:

1. When we have a full classroom of students and a variety of assignments and tasks, how can we possibly ensure that all of them get the feedback they need?
2. What type of feedback is most helpful in learning? Simply telling students that a particular response or action is not correct cannot be enough, right?
3. How do we get our students to receive the feedback and edit, revise, or change their approach the next time? What if our students simply toss the feedback in the book, desk, backpack, or, even worse, the trashcan?
4. What role do our students play in giving and receiving feedback? After all, they will not be in our classrooms forever and will have to transition to independent learners.

Could you hear yourself or your colleagues asking these same questions? Could you relate to each of the above four concerns about feedback? These questions and concerns are what lead us to actively engage with the question, *how does feedback work?*

What additional questions or concerns do you have about feedback? Write them out in the space below so that we can revisit them throughout our work in this playbook.

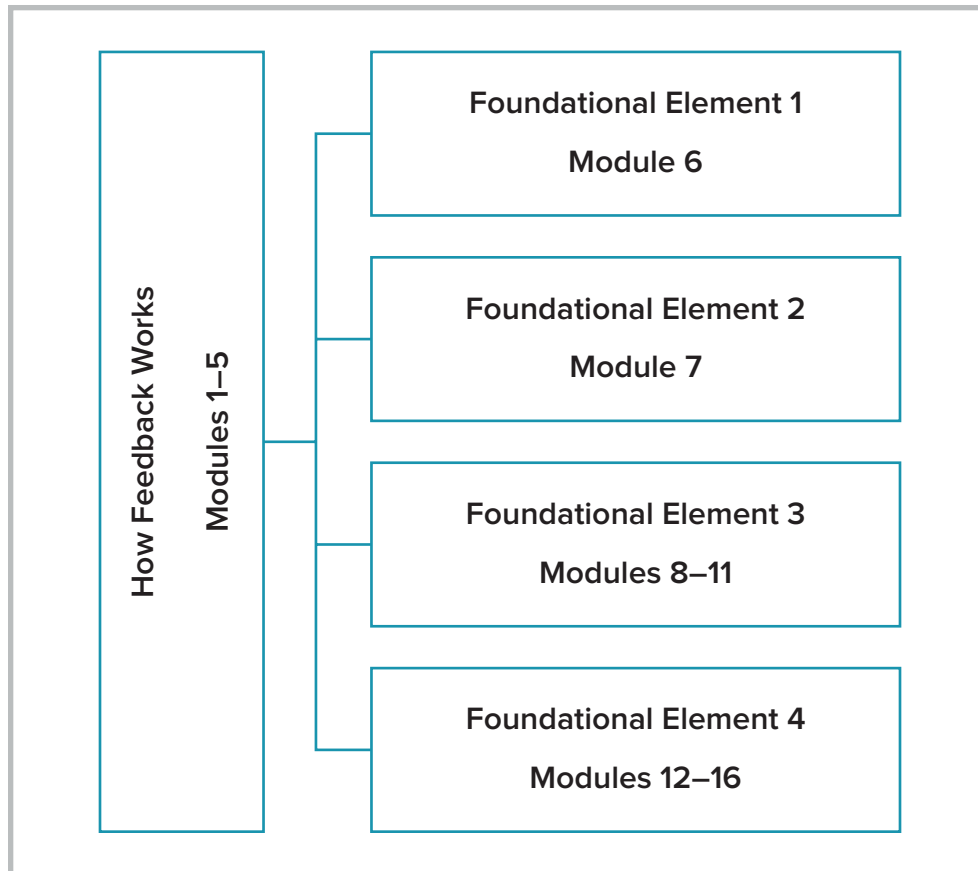


If feedback is such an important and essential part of the learning process, we must uncover how to implement effective feedback effectively and efficiently in our schools and classrooms. Ignoring this important and essential part of the learning process will impede the learning progress of our students. That is something none of us wants to do.

Each of the modules in this playbook has a specific focus on understanding *how feedback works* and how to make feedback work in your unique school and classroom. We will be explicit about our focus within each module by providing a learning intention and desired outcomes. Moving from research to reality, each module will look at a specific aspect of feedback and provide examples and opportunities for you to apply that specific aspect to your school or classroom.

Part I of this playbook will set the foundation for giving, receiving, and integrating feedback. These first five modules will help us develop a definition of feedback, explore the latest research on feedback, identify barriers to giving, receiving, and integrating

feedback, and introduce the four foundational elements to high-quality, high-impact feedback. One by one, we will spend the remaining modules in the playbook taking a deep dive into each of the four foundational elements that make feedback work. To support the learning of these, we call these foundational elements the **Four Cs of Feedback**. Be patient; we will introduce those to you very soon.



Throughout the pages of this playbook, we strive to include examples from primary, elementary, middle school, and high school content, skills, practices, dispositions, and understandings. From building a case for the reduction of fossil fuels to analyzing primary sources in history to creating a still-life painting, feedback is essential to advancing learning. But we should not go at this alone—which is why we are joining you on this learning journey. Who will you collaborate with to uncover how feedback works?

COLLABORATING FOR GREAT LEARNING

Each module offers you an opportunity for practice and application with a variety of grade levels and content areas. We encourage you to engage in this playbook by circling, highlighting, underlining, writing your own notes and responses, and using sticky



notes to mark pages. Most importantly, though, we encourage you to collaborate with your colleagues on this journey. Although using this playbook as part of your personal learning is fine, the opportunity to dialogue about *how feedback works* and collaborate on how to make it work in our school and classroom is best done collectively with colleagues. We offer three suggestions for collaborating with another to use this playbook:

- ➔ With an accountability partner
- ➔ With an instructional coach
- ➔ During your common planning or PLC+ meeting (see Fisher et al., 2020)

Let's start with accountability partners. The use of this playbook during common planning or your PLC+ meeting may not be feasible. You may be more comfortable partnering with a colleague across the hall, in another part of the building, or in another school. You and this colleague can move through the modules, engage in the tasks, implement ideas in your own classrooms, and debrief the impact this had on advancing student learning. You and this colleague will serve as accountability partners in increasing your understanding of *how feedback works* and leveraging your new learning in the design of your classrooms, learning experiences, and tasks.

A second way to work collaboratively through this playbook is to work alongside an instructional coach. Instructional coaches provide all of us with an outside perspective on the teaching and learning in our classrooms. They can provide us with the right feedback at the right time. In fact, working with an instructional coach may offer the opportunity for the instructional coach to build their capacity by applying *how feedback works* to the instructional coaching cycle. Either way, sitting down with an instructional coach, engaging in critical dialogue about *how feedback works*, designing experiences and tasks, and then working together to evaluate the impact on student learning is an invaluable asset to professional growth.

Finally, this playbook can support collaborative conversations during your PLC+ meeting (Fisher et al., 2020). The work of this playbook is another tool for the work you do in your PLC+. The use of these five guiding questions of PLC+ will keep the focus relentlessly on the learning of our students:

- ➔ Where are we going?
- ➔ Where are we now?
- ➔ How do we move learning forward?
- ➔ What did we learn today?
- ➔ Who benefited and who did not benefit? (Fisher et al., 2020, pp. 8–9)

In PLC+, teachers identify learning intentions and discuss ideas for instruction. They meet to review student work and figure out if their efforts have been fruitful. They also talk about students who need additional instruction or support for success (see the following table). To revisit an earlier idea, understanding *how feedback works* is essential in navigating the implementation of effective feedback and advancing learning. This is best done together, during our work as a community of learners.

HOW THIS PLAYBOOK SUPPORTS THE WORK OF PLC+

PLC Question	Module
Where are we going?	The nature of the feedback given and received tells us where additional teaching and learning are necessary. This requires that we maintain clarity about the learning. Modules 1–5, 8, 9
Where are we now?	Noticing where our learners are in the progression and the generation of evidence to make teaching and learning visible tells us where we are now. Modules 9, 10
How do we move learning forward?	Moving learning forward requires the giving, receiving, and integrating of feedback. We, alongside our learners, must engage in the feedback loop, remove the barriers to the exchanging of feedback, and effectively communicate that feedback. Modules 3, 5–7, 11–16
What did we learn today?	Having a clear understanding of what we learned today (both us and our learners) requires noticing what learners are saying and doing and communicating with them around their learning. Modules 8–10, 15, 16
Who benefited and who did not benefit?	While every module of this playbook applies to this particular question, the primary module is around noticing which learners are giving, receiving, and integrating feedback. If we do not take notice of how learners are engaging with feedback, we will never know if they are benefiting from feedback. Modules 9, 10

Whether you have an accountability partner, access to an instructional coach, or a high-functioning, high-impact PLC+, the benefit of a collaborative approach is the opportunity to engage in critical dialogue around what learning looks like for you and your learners.

This brings us to the singular focus of this playbook. Together, we will take an up-close look at feedback in our schools and classrooms. By the time we arrive at the final pages of this playbook, we will be able to answer the essential question

How does feedback work?

and apply that answer to our schools and classrooms. Again, we are glad you are here to learn alongside us in this playbook.

Sincerely,

John, Doug, and Nancy



Video 1.1: Introduction to How Feedback Works: A Playbook

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To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.



SETTING THE FOUNDATION FOR HOW FEEDBACK WORKS



In this section:

Module 1: What Is Feedback?

Module 2: What Does the Latest Research Say About Feedback?

Module 3: What Does the Feedback Process Look Like in Action?

Module 4: What Are the Four Foundational Elements of Feedback?

Module 5: What Are the Barriers to Giving, Receiving, and Integrating Feedback?

1

WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

LEARNING INTENTION

In this module, we are learning the definition of feedback so that we can better understand what feedback looks like in our schools and classrooms.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

We have successfully completed this module when

1. We can define feedback in our own words.
2. We can connect the definition of feedback with specific actions in our schools and classrooms.
3. We can identify specific examples of when feedback works in our schools and classrooms.



Video 1.1: Introduction to Module 1

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Feedback is an essential part of the learning process. As classroom teachers, we constantly seek feedback to gain a sense of how our learners are progressing in the learning experience or task. From a much larger perspective, we seek feedback to gain an understanding of how learners are progressing toward the overall learning goals or targets for the academic semester or year. On the other side of the desk, our learners seek feedback to know if they are headed in the right direction in learning content, skills, and understandings.

However, each of us has our own understanding of what feedback is, what feedback looks like, and the ways to seek feedback. Use the space provided on the next page to jot down your prior knowledge and prior experiences with feedback. What is your understanding of *how feedback works*?

<p>What do you currently see in your own school and classroom that you would identify or classify as feedback?</p>	
<p>What do you think feedback should look like in order to move learning forward?</p>	
<p>What are the different ways you currently seek feedback to gain a sense of how your learners are progressing?</p>	

Again, feedback is an essential part of the learning process. Now that you have shared your current thinking, let's begin to explore the importance of feedback with an example from the toy section at your local department store.

Building blocks, puzzles, and furniture shine a spotlight on the value of feedback. Whether using blocks to make a model airplane, working on a 1,000-piece landscape puzzle, or putting together a bookshelf you just purchased for your classroom, monitoring your *progress* throughout the *process* ensures that you don't arrive at the end of your task with misaligned wings, a puzzle that doesn't match the picture on the box, or a crooked bookshelf (not to mention the dread of having extra pieces and parts lying around). Using the idea that feedback helps us gain a sense of *progress*, use the space

provided to list all the ways you and your colleagues might monitor your *process* in building with blocks, completing a puzzle, or putting together a bookshelf. You don't have to do all three, but be very specific with the one you and your colleagues select. We provided two examples for the puzzle task to get you started.

	What You Need to Do to Monitor the Process	Questions You Would Ask Yourself or Others From Whom You Need Feedback
Building a Block Airplane		
Completing a Puzzle	<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the picture on the box to see the finished product. • Arrange the pieces into piles with similar coloring. 	
Putting Together a Bookshelf		

This is certainly not a playbook about blocks, puzzles, and furniture. So, now let's replace the three tasks above with the following:

1. Instead of building an airplane, what if learners were asked to build a case for the reduction of fossil fuel use for a high school environmental science class?

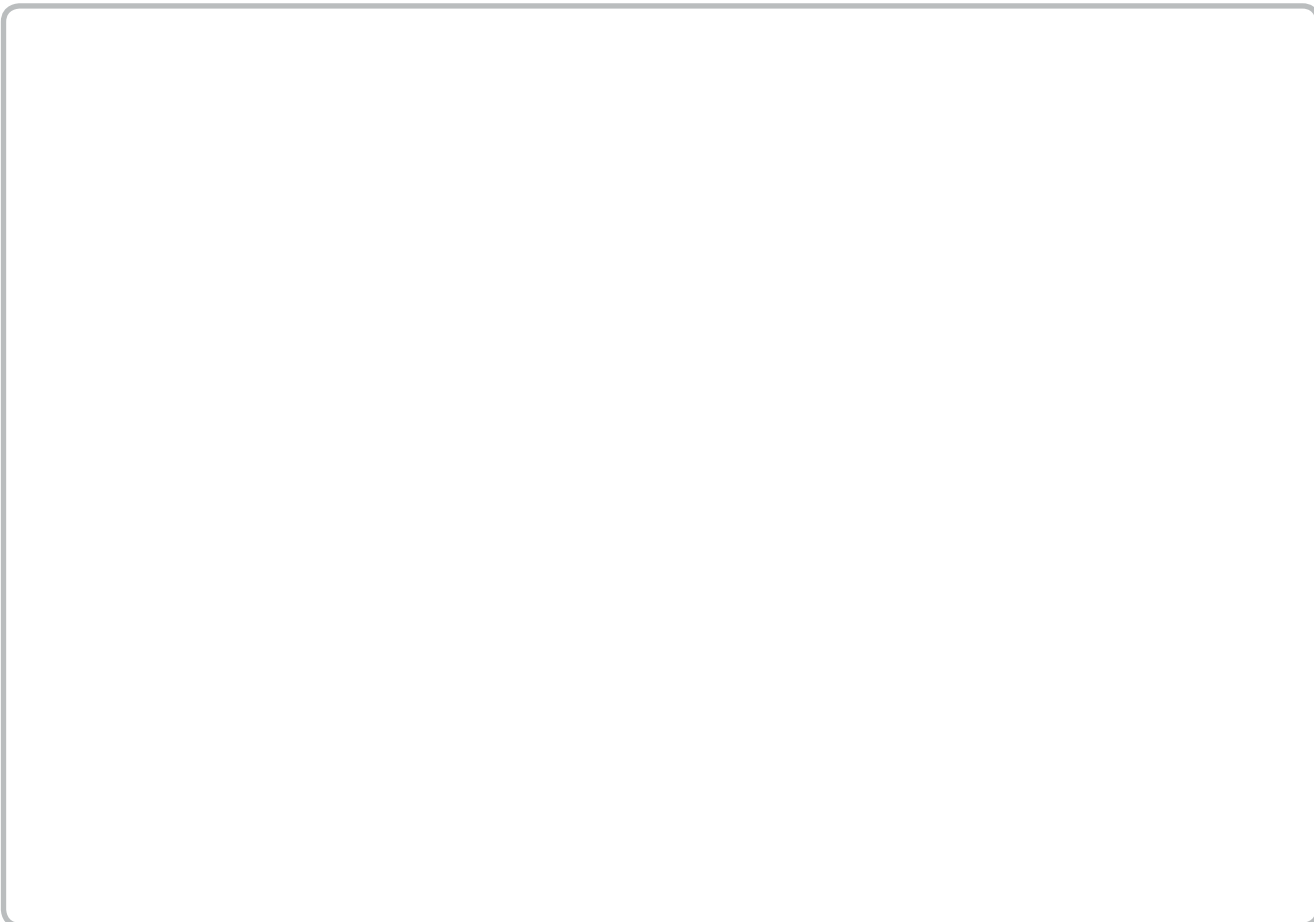
2. Instead of completing a puzzle, what if learners were asked to complete an analysis of primary sources to make informed judgments about a particular historical event?
3. Instead of putting together a bookshelf, what if learners were asked to put together the elements of color, value, patterns, and emphasis to create a still-life painting?

It turns out that monitoring the *progress* throughout the *process* of each of the revised tasks is an essential part of the overall learning process. Using your responses from the previous task, revise them to reflect the science, social studies, and/or art task. An example is provided for you.

Building a Case for Fossil Fuel Reduction	Completing an Analysis of Primary Sources	Creating a Still-Life Painting
	<p>Instead of . . . Look at the picture on the box to see the finished product . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try . . . Look at an exemplar response to see what a successful analysis looks like. <p>Instead of . . . Arrange the pieces into piles with similar coloring . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try . . . Highlight specific parts of the document with different colors based on similar information. 	

You and your colleagues may have noticed that revising your responses to the first task (i.e., building blocks, puzzles, and furniture) to fit a science, social studies, and/or art task was easier than expected. With very minor edits, the same ways you and your colleagues might monitor your *progress* and *process* in building a plane, completing a puzzle, or putting together a bookshelf applies to science, social studies, and art. This strongly suggests that there is a common set of features in all feedback that makes feedback essential and important. Similarly, if this common feature or set of features is missing, the feedback loses power in the process. For example, if you and your colleagues had simply responded to the previous tasks by stating you would stand by and keep saying, “try harder, keep at it, you can do it,” little progress would be made in any of these tasks. So, what is the common set of features that make feedback essential and important?

Before moving forward, take a moment to discuss what you and your colleagues believe are the common features that make feedback essential and important to the learning process. In other words, what makes your feedback effective?



Keep this page marked. We will come back and revise your initial response. For now, let's unpack the definition of feedback.

THE DEFINITION OF FEEDBACK



The very definition of feedback provides an on-ramp to identify the features of effective feedback. Using your phone, tablet, computer, or a good-ol'-fashioned dictionary, look up the definition of *feedback* and write all parts of the definition that stand out to you in the box below.

What is the official definition of *feedback*?

We used Merriam-Webster's online dictionary to pull down the official definition:

1. a. the transmission of evaluative or corrective information about an action, event, or process to the original or controlling source also: the information so transmitted
- b. the partial reversion of the effects of a process to its source or to a preceding stage;
2. the return to the input of a part of the output of a machine, system, or process (as for producing changes in an electronic circuit that improve performance or in an automatic control device that provides self-corrective action)
3. a rumbling, whining, or whistling sound resulting from an amplified or broadcast signal (such as music or speech) that has been returned as input and retransmitted. (Merriam-Webster, 2021)

Part I: Setting the Foundation

There are several key words contained in Merriam-Webster's definition of *feedback* that will guide our learning in the subsequent modules of this playbook. For now, circle, highlight, or underline the following words from above.

From part 1 a, **corrective information**

From part 1 a, **process**

From part 2, **output**

From part 2, **improve performance**

From part 3, **returned as input**

These key words, extracted from the general definition of feedback, provide the foundation for understanding the definition of feedback and *how feedback works* in our classrooms. Take a moment to construct your own definition of feedback in your classroom. Edit and revise the official definition to contextualize what is meant by feedback in our schools and classrooms. Write that definition below.

A contextualized definition of *feedback* is . . .

Now, let's apply your own definition of feedback to the teaching and learning in your classroom. Use the space provided to describe what each aspect of the definition of feedback would look like in your classroom. We have provided examples to get you started.

Aspects of the Definition of Feedback	Our Example	What This Looks Like in My Classroom
Corrective Information	Students are provided comments highlighting aspects that need revising in their narrative essays.	
Process	Students conference with a peer to integrate the feedback to make revisions to the narrative essay.	
Output	Students individually prepare the next draft of their narrative essays.	
Improved Performance	Students once again conference with a peer to compare and contrast the drafts of their narrative essays.	
Returned as Input	Students resubmit their narrative essays. This is input for us, as teachers, to get feedback on both peer conferencing and the writing process.	

Now that we have developed a definition of feedback and begun to connect that to our teaching and learning, we turn our attention to what the research says about *how feedback works*.

Take a moment to reflect on your learning. How are you progressing? Where do you need to spend a little more time in this module?

Consider these questions to guide your self-reflection and self-assessment:

1. Can I define *feedback* in our own words?
2. Can I connect the definition of feedback with specific actions in our schools and classrooms?
3. Can I identify specific examples of when feedback works in our schools and classrooms?



Access videos and other resources at
resources.corwin.com/howfeedbackworks.