

Universal Ideas for Effective Feedback

Be creative in your system for providing feedback to your students. In class, online, Zoom calls, office visits, and emails are all ways you can have valuable conversations with students about their performances. Post-it notes are easier to notice than written feedback on a test. Small groups are efficient for you and build relationships among your students.

Help your students know what to do with the feedback information in an actionable form. Suggest some similar problems that use the skills they couldn't do before, perhaps from class notes, assignment problems, or practice tests. If not acted upon by the student, the information gained in your feedback session is not always retained and the student is destined to repeat the same mistakes.

Praise students for correctly worked problems and for the steps they performed correctly instead of focusing only on the negatives.

Feedback works both ways. Invite students to provide feedback to you. What parts of your lessons help them learn better? What confused them? Work improvements into your pedagogy for future classes.



Feedback for Learning Growth

Feedback in teaching is a tool used to create more informed, knowledgeable students. Benefits include improved self-sufficiency and a reduction in faking completed homework. Feedback also produces a pattern for resiliency for life when students learn how to manage difficulties by creating opportunities for improvement through analysis and acquiring new skills and understanding. Effective feedback is timely, relevant, specific, and task-oriented, which is why computer-based homework programs can be popular with students. However, the achievement effect of computer-based homework programs is mixed at best (Kirkham & Laing, 2023; Dawson, 2013). Just as in-person teaching appears to be more successful than on-line classes, a more personal approach to feedback may be more beneficial.

Feedback can be formative or summative. Formative feedback occurs during the learning process prior to assessment. Summative feedback occurs after assessment and is typically more formal. For many students, the only feedback they acknowledge is their single numeric grade on a test, especially those students who are discouraged or embarrassed about their scores. Yet some of the most valuable information comes from students analyzing their own test results.

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Formative-Specific Feedback:

1. **Create a classroom atmosphere** where mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning.
2. **Express learning objectives** as part of your lesson design.
3. **Consider smaller “chunks” of content** during your lesson so that students can receive frequent and immediate feedback.
4. **Suggest strategies**, such as sketches, similar but simpler problems, or applications.
5. **Consider ways your students can be sources of feedback** for other students (board work, clicker quizzes throughout your lesson, pair-and-share, online discussion threads, and more). Monitor closely for incorrect or unclear feedback.
6. **Ask leading questions** so that students develop their own cognitions and skill development instead of simply telling the student what to do.
7. **Inform your students where to look** for learning feedback when working independently and to take advantage of the information. They can check answers or reach out to a classmate, for example. They may not know they are supposed to be monitoring their own understanding.

Summative-Specific Feedback:

1. **Resist the temptation to “bleed red”** all over a test by pointing out every mistake.
2. **Encourage students to sit down with you**, a peer, or an on-campus tutor to review test mistakes. You might consider incentivizing your students to partake in this valuable practice.
3. **Prepare students for receiving feedback.** Consider having the student take notes or formally analyzing mistakes as an assignment.
4. **Make sure the feedback is individualized** and targeted but not personal.
5. **Keep your feedback simple.** Allow the student fill in the details for their own corrections.

Here are some ideas to get you started, even if you don't know which students are needing you to become involved yet.

1. Consider outside resources that focus on early identification and improvement of learning practices, such as *Way to Succeed*. *Way to Succeed* identifies students who are not using learning behaviors and cognitions for successful college-level learning with a personalized learning profile for all students as early as the first week of class. Specific "Actions" provide individual student suggestions to improve learning weaknesses.
2. Use a coaching mindset with your classes. Coaches work on motivation and hints along with conveying their knowledge of game strategies for players regardless of talent or work ethic. Everyone benefits. As a content instructor, include practical non-content learning suggestions as part of your lesson for all students early in the academic term.
3. Inquire about learning behaviors of your students in a whole-class discussion. The suggestions from peers indirectly help those struggling students avoid being singled out while giving them real solutions for learning.



Early intervention with under-achieving students is critical to pull those students off the path of failure and on to the route towards success. Often, we don't know which students are struggling until we happen to see the signs of stress (avoidance behaviors, anxiety, isolation from classmates) or low test scores several weeks in to a semester. By the time we notice the indicators of learning gaps and other struggles, it is often too late for students to recover from their "bad start" to be able to pass your class. Bad starts can result from many of reasons. The newfound freedom of college can lure students into skipping classes and putting more emphasis on social interactions than class responsibilities. Time management issues, cramming for tests, and counterproductive homework behaviors such as copying or cheating (see

[Learning Insights, August 2021](#)), are part of the unproductive repertoire of some first-year students trying to manage classroom responsibilities. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could prevent the "bad start" before it ever happened? An intervention plan can help.

Early changes trajectories.

By intervening to help struggling students, you have the opportunity to change your students' life trajectory. Failure of any course at the college level can be catastrophic both in terms of keeping much-needed scholarships and in undermining self-confidence.

Early improves motivation.

Students come to college wanting to be successful, but they don't often know what it takes. Early intervention, as opposed to waiting for students to figure things out on their own, gives your students the best possibility of success. This is true for two reasons. First the learning gap is smaller than it would be several weeks into the academic term, helping to avoid a high level of frustration and motivational issues that transpire for those who lag behind academically or in understanding how to learn.

Early changes outcomes.

A good start gets students on

Critical Early Intervention How to quickly identify and assist underachievers

the right track towards becoming a self-regulating college student. Just as passing the first math class in college is a positive indicator of future graduation, passing the first math test in the first class is a positive indicator of passing their first math course.

What is an intervention? The Cambridge Online Dictionary defines intervention as "the action of becoming intentionally involved in a difficult situation, in order to improve it or prevent it from getting worse." While the definition seems clear in the context of the struggling student in your class, the difficulty often lies in the identification of students needing intervention early enough for the intervention to be successful.

References:

- Dawson, C. (2013). *The impact of an online component in a face-to-face community college mathematics class* (Order No. 3565116). Available from ProQuest Central; ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; ProQuest One Education. (1411974287). <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/impact-online-component-face-community-college/docview/1411974287/se-2>
- Kirkham, R., & Laing, G. K. (2023). Effect of Homework on Academic Achievement: Online compared to traditional pen and paper. *The e - Journal of Business Education & Scholarship of Teaching*, 17(1), 1-8. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/effect-homework-on-academic-achievement-line/docview/2825884657/se-2>

Way to Succeed Can Help!

We designed [Way to Succeed](#) to accompany first-year math and other STEM classes. Our goal is to help your students become aware of and develop their learning skills and strategies in a personal way while freeing you to focus on your math or other STEM content. The online program works concurrently with your class, providing students with personal learning profiles and targeted actions for improvement, short, thought-provoking readings, videos, and short quizzes that highlight the skills, attitudes, cognitions, and learning strategies in which successful students engage. Student can quickly make changes to become better learners and improve their academic achievement.

Lowering Standards + Grade inflation = A Failure to Educate

We have all seen the headlines: “[23 Baltimore schools have zero students proficient in math, per state test results,](#)” and “[Not A Single Student Is Proficient in Reading Or Math At 55 Chicago Schools.](#)” A multitude of factors contribute to the low achievement level of high school students, and yet the trend is that more students are graduating from high school than ever before. Low levels of achievement make high school graduation not meaningful. Though the problem is complicated, we can select two policy issues affecting this decline in achievement: grade inflation and lowering of standards, two sides of the same coin.

Grade inflation is defined as the same grade for lower quality work. According to Wikipedia, the proof that this has occurred in one domain is for the ACT, a well-known college entrance exam. Most students taking these exams claim to be A students at their respective high schools, but scores have dropped precipitously since 2012 (see graph right).

Minimum grade policies adopted by many K-12 schools gives grade points for missing work and tests cannot be assigned grades lower than a 50%, regardless of the actual score. Other “creative grading” policies have transitioned up from the elementary and high school levels to [colleges and](#)

[universities](#). Some universities have adopted a “No F” policy for students trying to improve their grades after a term is completed.

Lowering standards is another reason students are unprepared for the next level. Content is de-emphasized or eliminated with the idea that students will be more successful with less to learn.

Both grade inflation and lowering standards send the wrong message. Grade inflation says, “You can still get good grades without knowing as much.” Lowering standards says, “You don’t need to know as much to get

student is often left with substandard skills and work habits. They will eventually come to a place where the learning gaps are too great to overcome.

The purpose of education is to prepare students for successful experiences after leaving our classroom. How do we realign our system to the purpose of education? A gradual tightening of the standards and a movement back to more objective and meaningful grades would be a great start.

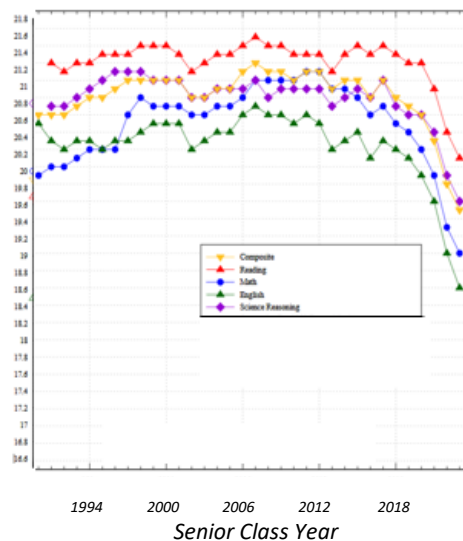
Thinking about the Past, Present, and Future of students helps promote learning and academic achievement and has the potential to realign with what education is supposed to be.

Past: Rigorous **Standards**, established before you meet with students and consistent with what students should be learning in any given course and any age.

Present: **Expectations** while you are teaching your students. Immediate and present learning goals with realistic and accurate feedback and support.

Future: **Transitions**, to make sure your students have what they need to move successfully to the next level of academics or employment. Vertical alignment and future considerations should take precedence.

Average ACT Scores of College-Bound Seniors



good grades.” While trying to create an encouraging system for the struggling student to persist and be successful, the

Q&A About Way to Succeed

Q: Our students won’t understand about metacognition and such. How will Way to Succeed help them?

A: It’s true that many students have never heard of metacognition. Unfortunately, instructors often tell students what they need to know, but don’t teach them how to learn it. Frequently, educators keep that knowledge to themselves when



teaching. Students must often figure out how to learn for themselves.

Way to Succeed helps students understand their personal learning strengths and weaknesses, what they do to contribute to and detract from their learning, and why these factors are important for their academic success.

Students who understand and use the keys of learning will be more successful in your class and in future classes.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“No one rises to low expectations.”

Les Brown





Visit our Website

We offer a unique research-supported approach to helping students become more independent and successful in your classes.

Visit [Way to Succeed](https://www.waytosucceed.com) for more information about our product, pricing, and how to order.

You can be ready for Summer and Fall Semester 2024 classes!

First-year, at-risk, and probationary students typically need more support than most other returning students, especially when these students enroll in online classes. [Way to Succeed](https://www.waytosucceed.com) can help you to assist your students with a personalized, stand-alone success program designed for mathematics and other STEM courses. [Way to Succeed](https://www.waytosucceed.com) helps students develop their own self-regulating and metacognitive skills so they can become more independent and effective learners.

- Students learn how to learn, especially in their math or STEM class.
- Our focus is on improving self-regulation, time-management skills, metacognition in your students, and how to access extra help resources.
- Nothing to grade. Nothing to plan. No essays for your students.
- Personalized learning diagnostics and recommendations for each student.
- Companion eBook for better student accountability.
- Research-based process with significant improvement in grades.
- Low department and per-student costs.
- Compatible with any STEM text or curriculum, online or face-to-face.
- Easy-to-access instructor reports.
- **Quick and easy set-up for your school, by department, course, or class.**

Upcoming Articles in the next issue of *Learning Insights*

1. Why cheating has skyrocketed and how to reduce it
 2. Communicating learning objectives clearly to students
-and more!

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