

# Introduction

**F**eedback enriches learning. Yet not all feedback has the same effect on the learner. Consider the following cases about two different uses of feedback in education.

## Case A

.....

Shantelle is a fifth-year teacher and grade-level chair. In the previous school year's annual performance review, her supervisor noted that she is an accomplished teacher, yet her students and other 5th-graders at the school were not progressing in math at the same rate as other students across the district. He recommended that the team's professional goal be to improve student performance through formative assessments, data analysis, and adjustments to instruction. She agreed that the goal would help the team uncover some of the challenges with student learning.

As the school year progresses, the team looks more closely at student data to identify gaps in student learning. They develop and implement common assessments and adjust their math instructional practices and student

learning tasks. They recognize and close evident gaps in their units and lessons.

In periodic reviews with her supervisor during the year, Shantelle brings student performance data for him to review. She shares data and the 5th-grade team's analysis from the grade-level common assessments. She also presents revised units and lessons with annotations about the adjustments the team made. During one of the regular reviews, her supervisor comments that she is very committed to her goal; he names the indicators related to several areas in the teacher performance rubric, specifically in the area of planning, instruction, and professional responsibility and expresses appreciation for her leadership within the 5th-grade team. He adds that the real indicator will be in student test results that are due at the end of June. He thanks her for bringing these data and says he looks forward to seeing the student test results as much as she does. He ends the 35-minute conversation by asking about the parent situation that arose last week and says that he hopes that his meeting with the parent took care of the situation once and for all.

Case B

Jonathan is a second-year middle school principal who acknowledges that he has a lot to learn. His goal is to exhibit instructional leadership by being in classrooms daily and conducting weekly learning walks with teams of teachers focused on the instructional framework. He also meets frequently with teachers to talk about their professional goals or review student data; later, he makes time to visit team meetings to observe and provide feedback and support.

Each month he meets with his own supervisor to review his overall work, address challenges that he is grappling with, assess progress toward his goal, and examine data he is collecting about the effects of his work. In each meeting, Jonathan and his supervisor use the principal performance standards to ground their examination of his practice. The supervisor begins by asking Jonathan to cite both successes and opportunities emerging from his work during the past month. He probes Jonathan’s analysis of his practice, asks him to cite data, and listens deeply. He asks Jonathan about his assumptions and beliefs, his decision-making process, and his feelings. He often invites Jonathan to put himself in the shoes of someone else and consider the effects of his actions through the eyes of another.

While they devote some time to a review of the past month, the larger part of the conversation focuses on what Jonathan is learning and how it will influence his future actions. A common phrase they use is *lessons learned* as they consider how Jonathan’s past choices will influence his future actions.

During the nearly 60-minute conversation, Jonathan explores multiple perspectives, assesses his own practice, and formulates conclusions. Then, he begins to consider how he might adapt those conclusions if he applied

them in different situations. He strives to examine the assumptions guiding his decisions and actions; he explores how his actions would affect teachers, families, students, and himself as a leader. The conversation is punctuated with periods of silence as Jonathan constructs a deeper understanding about what it means to be an instructional leader.

•••••

The previous situations share commonalities. They are a part of an annual performance appraisal system. They involve a supervisor and supervisee. They focus on performance goals with periodic opportunities to review progress toward the goals. Yet, they differ in how the supervisee and supervisor interact, their roles in each conversation, and the content and purpose of the conversation.

In the first scenario the supervisor remains in the supervisor role: He names the indicators of performance and provides general recognition and approval of Shantelle’s effort. He does not go as far as rating or judging her performance, although the subtext might suggest that his approval is synonymous with a positive rating. Shantelle is the recipient of the supervisor’s feedback. At the end of the conversation she has heard that he approves of and appreciates her efforts, and that the judgment of her success depends on student results. Shantelle leaves feeling anxious about her overall evaluation since so much depends on how students perform. And she wished that she had learned something she didn’t already know.

In the second case the supervisor probes to promote learning. Through the shape of the conversation, the topics addressed, the silences, and balance of looking backward as a springboard to future actions, this case places Jonathan in the lead role. Jonathan takes an active role in the conversation by unpacking his own thinking with the supervisor facilitating

the construction of new insights and lessons learned. As a partner in the learning process, the supervisor cultivates Jonathan's ability to engage in self-analysis and knowledge construction independently. Jonathan leaves the meeting with a deeper understanding of the concept of instructional leadership, awareness of his own practice, and awareness of how his behaviors influence others. He also leaves with greater capacity to engage in self-generated feedback and recognition that it is valued.

Learning-focused feedback differs from other forms of feedback in its content, purpose, and process. It requires the participants in feedback conversations to take on specific roles that may not be evident in other feedback conversations. A question frequently asked about feedback is, "How do you get people to use it?" This question demonstrates that the current approach to feedback is insufficient because it presents an imbalance in responsibility and roles. It suggests that those asking the question see themselves as the master and the recipient as a responder to their demands or expectations. Learning-focused feedback changes these dynamics. These fundamental differences distinguish learning-focused feedback from other types.

*The Feedback Process: Transforming Feedback for Professional Learning, Second Edition* guides learners and their learning partners in generating and using a feedback process that results in change. The premise of this book is that feedback is an integral component of the cycle of continuous improvement. When integrated into ongoing professional learning and sustained support, feedback is a process for strengthening educators' professional practice and achieving greater results. *The Feedback Process: Transforming Feedback for Professional Learning, Second Edition* strives to increase

the frequency and quality of the feedback process so that it is continuous, self-generated, and future-focused. Ultimately, the feedback process becomes a routine part of ongoing professional practice rather than an occasional one-way judgment of performance delivered by an external source.

This book is for learners and their learning partners who work side-by-side throughout the feedback process. It will guide learning partners, supervisors, coaches, content experts, professional learning facilitators, consultants, mentors, teacher leaders, peers, and others who support adults in the learning process to transform feedback from static information into a dynamic process that places the learner in the driver seat. It is useful for supervisors whose primary responsibility is to lead learning among those they supervise and for those who want to use the performance appraisal process to promote continuous growth in practice. Others who facilitate learning among professionals will also find the discussion of the feedback process relevant (and perhaps revelatory) to their work.

At this point a caution is in order about what this book does not do: It does not offer a how-to guide on giving one-way feedback, choosing words carefully, or sandwiching corrections between positive comments. Readers seeking such information will want to explore other sources.

Instead, the chapters examine feedback as a constructivist process that engages learners with their partners in generating and deconstructing knowledge. Each chapter invites readers to examine their assumptions about feedback and their feedback practices by digging into their own understanding of feedback. At the end of each chapter, reflection questions invite readers to review the chapter content and explore feedback and its role in the learning process of professionals. Related resources and tools

## THE FEEDBACK PROCESS

in each chapter guide the reader in examining various types of feedback, understanding how to apply the feedback process, and constructing new knowledge about the role of feedback in learning and change.

So, beginning this book means that the reader is ready to consider carefully the purpose

of feedback and what he or she expects as a result of engaging in the feedback process. If feedback is about learning, then, it is the learner who must construct deep understanding as a result of the feedback process, and the learning partner must be willing to guide, facilitate, or witness that process.

*The Feedback Process: Transforming Feedback for Learning, Second Edition* includes the following chapters:

<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>Feedback Fundamentals</b> Explores rationale of the feedback process. In this chapter, readers will find common misconceptions of feedback and definitions of key terms that are associated with the view of feedback presented in this book.
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>Feedback Defined — and Redefined</b> Examines definitions of feedback within the research literature, provides a definition of a learning-focused feedback process, and distinguishes this book's view of feedback from other more commonly held views.
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>Attributes of an Effective Feedback Process</b> Identifies and describes 11 attributes of effective, learning-focused feedback processes.
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>Feedback Conditions</b> Describes the conditions necessary for effective feedback related to the actors in the process and the environment.
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>Types of Feedback</b> Describes a primary typology along a continuum of nine forms of feedback based on their context and purposes.
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>Use of Feedback Types</b> Describes the typology in broader clusters to help support fluent use of the feedback process.
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	<b>Feedback Process</b> Describes the learning-focused feedback process and several variations.
<b>CHAPTER 8</b>	<b>Feedback Evidence</b> Discusses data and evidence used in the feedback process.
<b>CHAPTER 9</b>	<b>Feedback Process Within Systems</b> Discusses a systems-thinking approach used in the feedback process.
<b>CHAPTER 10</b>	<b>Future of Learning-focused Feedback</b> Examines policy and practice implications for the new view of feedback.