

This Spotlight is the third of 4 Spotlights that looks at specific feedback strategies that you might want to consider making habits. These are strategies that have effectiveness and manageability at their core. If you use some of these already, why not consider writing a small piece for our Spotlight; reflecting on their success and how you implement them.

Covered in this Spotlight are **'Switching the onus onto the student', 'feeding forward' and 'making every word count in my written marking'**

**Switching the onus onto the student.** We need to change our marking habits, so that the onus is placed more directly onto our students. Tom Sherrington<sup>1</sup> is clear about this. He says that marking should have the following features:

- Selective: Only mark work that you will return to the students to improve
- Formative: restrict written comments to those that inform students how to improve, or give instructions for actions they should take; otherwise use codes
- Think of all marking as an instruction for what students will do; make sure it leads to them doing more work than you!
- Every time you mark, give students time to respond to the comments and feedback immediately

**Switching the onus** can also **Reduce workload & Increase Impact.**<sup>2</sup> I have referred to the chart below at least twice before in my Spotlights / Briefings, but I think it should be pinned above all our desks, to look at before we mark....

Instead of...	The teacher...	The student...
Writing annotations in the body of a piece of work and giving an overall comment	Only writes annotations in the body of the work	Writes an overall review highlighting two strengths and one area for improvement
Writing annotations in the body of a piece of work and giving an overall comment	Only writes an overall comment	Annotates areas of the work where the areas of strength are apparent and where improvements need to be made
Writing extensive comments	Only gives one strength and one possible improvement	Works to 'close the gap' on the one issue identified
Writing 'Well done you have...' next to good aspects of work	Puts a double tick next to the best parts of the students work	Adds the reasons for the double tick
Marking every question in detail	Only marks the highlighted questions in detail	Marks or peer marks the work before it is submitted
Writing out a full solution when a student gets a question wrong	Writes a hint or the next step	Completes the correction
Correcting work when a student makes a mistake	Writes WWWT? (What's wrong with this?) or RTQ! (Read the question!)	The student makes their own correction
Marking only extended pieces of work	Reviews in class students' initial plans for this work prior to marking the extended piece of work	Does not hand in rubbish!
Giving back work and moving straight on...	Gives students specific skills or corrections to work on and time in lessons to 'close the gap'	Students read and start to engage with marking before working on the 'close the gap' task the teacher has identified

<sup>1</sup> The Learning Rainforest - Tom Sherrington

<sup>2</sup> Nathan Cole and Jo Sansome - Closing the Gap:

<https://teacherhead.com/2012/11/10/mak-feedback-count-close-the-gap/>

A number of writers<sup>3</sup> argue that we should take a hard-nose approach and refuse to mark any piece of work until the student has shown that they have thoroughly proofread and edited it. Additionally they should feel compelled to annotate exactly where they would like our feedback before handing it in. Allison and Tharby<sup>4</sup> talk about the **presentation dilemma** - *"I want my work to look neat and tidy, but I want to improve it"* - I think at Channing this hang-up about work *"looking pretty"* might be more damaging than we realise. Maybe we need to encourage our student body to follow Tharby's maxim of **"Write tidily. Edit messily"**  
So I think we need to model how to annotate improvements - some students are unaware that this involves lots of crossing out, adding sentences, drawing arrows, exploiting numbered asterisks.....etc.

**Feeding Forward:** The idea here is that pupils engage with their work before they hand it in. They identify where they have met specific success criteria. Here is an example of what Year 9 Geographers had to do with an extended piece of work before they handed it in:

**Using examples examine why the effects of an earthquake are so much more severe in a poorer country' (8 marks + 2 marks for SP+G)**

Before you hand in your essay we want you to:

- Box the words that show you have TLAG
- Underline in one colour where you think you have shown excellent knowledge
- Highlight any relevant connectives (there will probably be comparison connectives such as *'whereas'* or *'adding a point connectives'* *'in addition'*)
- Number the different points you have made (did you put them in a particular order - write a sentence to explain this)
- Underline in another colour where you have applied your knowledge - examining why the effects are more severe in Nepal

In essay subjects, why not photocopy essays prior to marking so that you can ask the pupils to engage with them before they see your comments and marks? You can then easily use this to show what excellence looks like (revisiting models and discussing their qualities and limitations)

Last Year Polly in English told me that *"the most effective thing I think I do is photocopying sections of the class's essays in order to provide models of good work - I focus each example on a particular skill or element of the essay"*

**Mark Enser** argues that if we are going to mark work in the traditional way, then we need to **make sure that every moment spent, and every word counts**. He suggests:

1. **Mark with a purpose:** Never mark a piece of work without a clear purpose. Ask yourself 'what am I doing this for?' 'How will this help someone make progress'
2. **Be wary of corrections:** Next term we are also going to be focusing on self-regulation; it could be argued that student self-regulation is the ultimate aim of feedback - so we want to avoid making corrections ourselves. Instead, highlight errors and give pupils time to work out what mistakes they have made and how to correct it themselves. (**Dot-marking** is common practice in many schools - a quick google search will explain).
3. **Specific improvements:** I am with Mark on this - how many times do I write *'write in more detail'* - a valid response from our students could be *"well I would write in more detail...if I know how to"*. If they have written a poor piece of work out of laziness, then get them to do it again to the best of their ability. In most cases though, they probably need more knowledge or a better understanding to be able to improve their work.

Conversely, sometimes our comments can be too specific and only useful in that context *'improve your definition of photosynthesis'* Mark argues that in this case we should write reminders of things a pupil should always do when faced with this kind of task.....

*"Support your point with a quote - for example"*  
*"Refer to range of sources - for example"*

They then should be expected to make these improvements - redrafting or perhaps more usefully attempting a second task in which the same target would apply - it is my sense that colleagues in maths and chemistry (amongst others) are very good at this

<sup>3</sup> David Didau: <https://learningspy.co.uk/assessment/getting-feedback-right-part-2-provide-clarity/>

<sup>4</sup> Making Every Lesson Count - Allison and Tharby