

This Spotlight is the first 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 **Checklists, DIRT (Individual Improvement Tasks), Live marking, Codes and Symbols Marking & Whole Class Feedback**,

These ideas are all covered in number of easily accessible books:

- Allison and Thaby: "Making Every Lesson Count"
- Ross Morrison McGill: "Just Great Teaching" & Mark. Plan. Teach
- Mark Enser "Teach Like Nobody's Watching"

Please ask if you would like to read them - AB has copies

Key Takeaways: *Pupils like precise and timely feedback, whereas teachers need flexibility to make this workable. Fundamentally, feedback must work for teachers and students alike; responsive teachers help students improve their work through a range of well thought-out feedback strategies.*

IDEA 1: Checklists: Are you frustrated by students' poor proofreading. I would argue that once they have been taught about conventions such as leaving a line between paragraphs, underlining titles and dates, putting a box around diagrams, they should be given the responsibility for doing so. Consider developing checklists to help students identify simple errors in their work, or their peers, and to improve their self-monitoring and to save you time.

- Expect students to complete these checklists whenever they submit their work
- Return work if they have missed obvious errors

!! Checklists are powerful if they deal with superficial features or remind students to complete actions they know how to - they cannot convey what quality looks like.

A simple checklist might include:

- + Title and date, underlined
- + New paragraphs indented
- + Capitals at the beginning of every sentence, full stop at the end
- + Spelling and grammar accuracy

IDEA 2: A(Very) good idea - why not create checklists stickers - download templates from the Avery website

IDEA 3: DIRT: Feedback at its best, is a reciprocal process. It is not one way traffic. **Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time'** - is something we have covered before. Wiliam is very clear, we should be spending less time on marking and feedback, then the students do on engaging with that feedback. DIRT has become a useful shorthand for checking, drafting, proofreading and for labelling the age-old process of students spending crucial time on improving their work.

"DIRTY" work then is that old fashioned stuff – getting students working really hard to ensure that the standard of their work is the best it can be. Time is the thing. Too often we spend a great deal of time marking student work and giving them excellent feedback to improve. Crucially, however, students often spend a relatively short amount of time scanning the feedback for a grade or a level and then move on. Similarly, with a draft of their work they give the feedback a cursory glance, but they hurry on with supposed improvements and make the same mistakes once more. DIRT is about redressing that issue.

"Most discussions of assessment start in the wrong place. The most important assessment that goes on in a school isn't done to students but goes on inside students minds. Every student walks around with a picture of what is acceptable, what is good enough. Each time she works on something she looks at it and assesses it. Is this good enough? Do I feel comfortable handing this in? Does it meet my standards? Changing assessment at this level should be the most important assessment goal of every school. How do we get inside students' heads and turn up the knob that regulates quality and effort" (PI03, Berger 'An Ethic of Excellence')

Tips for excellent DIRT:

- **Keep it focused** - on specific improvements to their work.
- **Model and scaffold** - Models of work, with specific strengths or weaknesses, are crucially effective in determining what Berger describes as the assessment going on inside the head of students. DIRT time may seemingly be about independent work, but in actuality there is a great deal of reliance upon scaffolded teacher expertise.
- **Targeted feedback** -. If we give great feedback, with specific targets to improve, then DIRT is the crucial next step to deal with that feedback. As a rule of thumb, we can expect students to spend twice their time reflecting on their feedback as we devoted to giving feedback.
- **Make oral feedback matter** - oral feedback works. It is simply a staple of good teaching. If we establish a really clear focus for DIRT, with quality models, scaffolds and targets for improvement, then students should be sufficiently focused to allow the teacher to undertake quality 'one to one feedback' whilst DIRT is taking place.
- **Exploit the power of peers** - Peer assessment is often derided or done badly, by both students and teachers. For

students it can be a poor substitute for teacher feedback. What should do is use peers as a positive support tool during DIRT time (see checklists). Any peer work needs real focus. If we have peers analysing the work of one another for spelling, punctuation and grammar improvements, then guidelines and expectations need to be explicit. Small details, like getting pairs to sign their feedback can be a small, but powerful way to get students to fully engage in the task. Any pairings of students needs to be carefully considered of course, like any good seating plan.

IDEA 4 Codes + Symbol marking

Instead of writing out comments over and over again, use symbols instead. For example:

T1 = Use a wider range of sentence lengths to help you create the voice of your character

Write T1 on the student work and then project it's meaning onto the board once. This shifts the burden of responsibility for marking away from you and on to the student. You also now have the targets saved for the next time you set this task. Allison and Tharby explain this in their superb book 'Making every lesson count'

A number of departments use code marking, some have adopted proofreading codes. I have seen a variety of templates being used in this way as well.

IDEA 5 Asterix Cognition

Crucially (and in the spirit of AfL) I would insist that pupils do the cognitive work themselves. If you spot a mistake why not put an asterix in the margin so that they have to find the mistake and correct it themselves.

The approach can be modified for improvement questions too, which often guide students' thinking more precisely than abstract targets. Just replace the T with a Q:

- Q1. Why do you think that *The Merchant of Venice* is often considered a 'problem play'?
- Q2. How do you think an Elizabethan audience would have responded to this line (in the margin next to the point in question)?
- Q3. And so on.

You can also create a code for pointing out student successes. Here is one that Andy has developed:

- *** Excellent (about A standard)
- ** Very good (about B standard)
- * Good (about C standard)
- ! Interpretation of Shakespeare's ideas about racism
- £ Close analysis of Shakespeare's use of figurative language
- % Knowledge of the way Shakespeare utilises the conventions of comedy

So, if you then write ***! and **£ in an exercise book, the student writes down: 'Excellent interpretation of Shakespeare's ideas about racism' and 'Very good close analysis of Shakespeare's use of figurative language'. Simple.

IDEA 6: Whole-class feedback: In 'The Learning Rainforest' Tom Sherrington explains an idea we have already encountered last year, but it is worth revisiting:

The method is simple:

- Take all your students' books in and read through the work that you want to give feedback on.
- Instead of making any marks in students' books, make notes on a sheet or in your planner as you go through the books. This will form the basis of your whole-class feedback. You might want to include the following:
 - Common technical errors and misconceptions
 - Common areas for improvement either in the substance of the work or in the presentation
 - Common spelling and grammatical errors
 - Particular books that demonstrate excellence to share with the whole class
 - Particular students whose books are below par and will need special attention
- Ideally the following lesson, give the books back out and run through your comments. Give students redrafting tasks to address the common issues, check their spellings, search for the common errors and make immediate improvements in their books, possibly in a new colour of pen so you can all see where the improvements are being made.
- Show the examples of excellence and talk individually to the students who need special attention.

Compare that process – which is very quick to do – with the laborious process of writing individual comments in each student's book in the hope that they will then read your comments, interpret them correctly and then successfully act on them. It seems like a no-brainer to me. Whole-class feedback is more efficient by far and, because of the time saved, students will receive the feedback more promptly which means it is likely to have more impact.

Some schools have devised standard marking sheets so that teachers are prompted to look for specific things and so that the findings from each marking process can be shared with colleagues in a common format. Managers are now no longer looking to see that teachers have covered the books in red pen; they are looking to see a flow of improvements in student work.

Ready for more? Not convinced? Need help in visualising how this might work? See 'the five minute flick' (pages 195 - 196) in Making Every Lesson Count - I have a copy

IDEA 3: Live Marking: This is marking in lesson time with the student by your side. As students are working, spend a few minutes with them, discuss their work, and give them clear feedback about how to improve and where to go next. This works best when a class is undertaking an extended piece of work. Can there be a better form of feedback than sitting with a student, talking about their work and ways in which it can be developed? Plus it saves a huge amount of time. How about marking a piece of work in-front of the whole class - there are a range of ways that you can project work onto the board - modeling marking is a very powerful feedback tool.