Giving Effective Feedback

Summary: Feedback to students has a surprisingly large impact on their achievement. Some meta-analyses suggest feedback is among the top 5 to 10 influences on student achievement (Hattie, 1999). In an article published in the *Review of Educational Research*, University of Auckland researchers John Hattie and Helen Timperly suggest a model of giving feedback that maximizes its positive effects on students.

Practical Applications

According to Hattie and Timperly, there are three main levels on which feedback should be focused, and one level to be generally avoided:

- *Feedback about the task*. The most common form of feedback, these are statements about success or lack thereof on a particular task. Feedback at this level is much more effective when coupled with cues for getting the right answer next time instead of just judging correctness – for instance, studies have repeatedly shown that short written comments on assignments are far better than only providing grades.
- *Feedback about the processing of tasks*. This is feedback about the strategies a student used to approach a task, such as how they checked for errors or searched for information. This feedback is a powerful way to build in deeper learning.
- *Feedback about self-regulation*. This is feedback about the attitude and effort a student brings to a task. It can help students develop strategies for self-assessing when, for example, they are becoming frustrated and what to do to handle that frustration and persevere.
- *Feedback about the self as a person (pitfall!)*. This feedback that the authors identify as being "too often present" in classrooms is one that teachers should generally avoid as studies are nearly universal in showing it to be ineffective. It involves feedback about students disconnected to the task at hand (e.g. "Good girl.") However, personal praise can be effective so long as it is related to the task (e.g. "You're really great because you have diligently completed this task by applying this concept.")

Conclusion and Citation

Hattie and Timperly suggest that current models of feedback are too focused on either the student as a person or just the correctness of a task. Utilizing stronger feedback holds great promise – indeed, "when feedback is combined with effective instruction in classrooms, it can be very powerful in enhancing learning."

Hattie, J. & Timperly, H. "The Power of Feedback." *Review of Educational Research, 77.1 (2007), pp. 81-112.* http://rer.sagepub.com/cgi/content/full/77/1/81 *(free).*