UCL

Verbal Feedback Toolkit

"I think it's making me a better teacher, and ultimately I think it is benefitting the pupils… the results are important, but then I think engagement is as well, and that engagement then has a knock-on effect on classroom management and on the behaviour of pupils."

- Teacher

Contents

"…it was recognised by an external reviewer who came into school and…actually watched my lesson – the overriding impressions were that these students are taking responsibility and being independent learners. It's nice for someone else to see it."

- Teacher

Introduction to the Verbal Feedback Toolkit

In 2019 I worked with the UCL Access and Widening Participation Office on the Verbal Feedback Project, which was delivered in partnership with the UCL London Centre for Leadership in Learning. The project grew from my desire to challenge the notion that 'written feedback is king' and that speaking to students using high quality and actionable feedback might increase outcomes for students and reduce workload for teachers.

My interest in verbal feedback has been well-documented via the @ TeacherToolkit blog, and I was delighted when UCL expressed an interest in taking this forward as a two-term action research project. I delivered the professional development aspects of the programme sharing strategies and techniques drawn from both my experience as a teacher and senior leader and subsequent research in this area.

This toolkit reflects much of my work on the programme and provides ideas and approaches for any teacher that is interested in adopting verbal feedback techniques in their classroom, across any subject or phase. It will also provide ideas for senior leaders that are looking to develop whole-school feedback policies. In either case I hope that the toolkit offers a starting point for experimenting with verbal feedback techniques that are designed to promote student engagement and also reduce the marking burden for teachers.

You can read more about the impact of the action research project, in the accompanying Verbal Feedback Report, which is available to download from www.ucl.ac.uk/wp.

Ross McGill

August 2019

Marking/feedback reflection grid

What is effective marking/feedback?	What is ineffective marking/feedback?

Feedback considerations

One-off feedback	Medium-term feedback	Long-term feedback	Feedback to avoid

What is verbal feedback?

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it does provide a starting point for thinking about verbal feedback in the classroom.

What is verbal feedback?	What isn't verbal feedback?
– Speaking directly with students	– Recording what has been said.
– Providing diagnostic assessment	– Offering a summative grade
– Providing explicit information	– Offering too much information
– Ensuring the information implicit	– Lacking clarity
– Targeting future intervention and support	– Withholding 'how to improve'
– Offering words of motivation, *e.g.*, include the phrase 'not yet' informative feedback	– When evaluating a piece of work, saying "it's good" followed by using "but…"
– Offering words to develop confidence	– Providing feedback that leads to demotivation or apathy.

Skills and techniques for delivering verbal feedback

In order to successfully provide verbal feedback the teacher will need to understand personal needs and develop strategies that respond to student dialogue. This will develop from deliberate practice from observations, analysis and explicit follow-up conversations. The student should act and respond positively to feedback in order to acquire better knowledge and skills. To achieve this, the teacher will need to focus on the following:

- To listen actively, accommodating and valuing student feedback.
- To concentrate on what is actually being said, using body language to signal attention.
- To relate sensitively and work through processes to build confidence and clarity.
- To understand the goal of verbal feedback; to support students to act immediately.
- To make conversations explicit and encourage students to interpret feedback collaboratively.
- To use open questions to raise awareness, reveal beliefs and enable the student to act.
- To relay what is been said, mirroring words to check meaning and/or value thinking.

Developing a common vernacular?

For teachers that are working in an institution which has a whole-school approach to verbal feedback, it is expected that everyone follows a common vernacular - largely vocabulary derived from a published teaching and learning policy, behaviour for learning policy, or vision and values. The table below outlines a generic template that can be adapted according to phase/setting.

Examples: the common vernacular may include some of the following key phrases:

Vocabulary	Example
– Not yet	– You have scored 8/10 – You have **'not yet'** scored 9/10 – You have developed form in your sketches – You have **not yet** enhanced the range of form in your sketches
– And (instead of 'but')	– This Macbeth essay is critical **but…** – This Macbeth essay is critical **and** requires more examination between X and Y so that Z ...
– Imagine if ...	– **Imagine if** you are successful, what would it look like?
– Where are you?	– **Where are you** right now?
– Recognise	– How will you **recognise** if you are successful?

"…there's far more conversations in lessons, I'm not rushing through lessons anymore, I'm really listening to what students are saying to me and I'm stopping if I have to address these misconceptions."

-Teacher

Structuring verbal feedback

P.P.I.P.L

Structuring verbal feedback is key and it is useful to plan a script for a structured feedback conversation. The P.P.I.P.L approach, outlined below, builds on the PIPL model (Bambrick-Sanoyo's, 2012) and can be used as both a coaching model and a verbal feedback strategy.

1. **Praise** (link to previous action step)
2. **Probe** (start with question to narrow focus)
3. **Identify** (identify future support)
4. **Plan** (solution focused)
5. **Lock** (lock in action points)

Some **possible** questions to guide your feedback using the P.P.I.P.L structure:

Praise Feedback:

– Where are you right now?

– On a scale of 0 -10 where is your work right now?

– What tells you that you are at 6? How did you get there? How do you keep the 6?

– Tell me about the last time this happened …. What have you tried so far? Was it helpful?

Probing Feedback:

– Imagine you were successful. What is that like?

– What will you be doing differently? What would you notice?

– What would it be like if things were better?

Identify Support (through Feedback)

– What are your actions to achieve your goal?

– What are the different ways you could achieve the goal?

– Who might be able to help us? Would you like suggestions from me?

Plan / Lock

– How will you recognise you've reached your goal?

– What would be the signs that things were moving in the right direction?

– What was your intention behind?

– What might you do differently next time?

The G.R.O.W model

John Whitmore's G.R.O.W model is, perhaps, one of the most influential and well-known coaching models. Originally featured in *Coaching for Performance* (Whitmore, 1992), the model offers a useful framework for structuring conversations with students.

Below is a list of possible questions to guide your structured conversations, based around the G.R.O.W model

Goal

1. What would be useful for you to discuss in this session?
2. What did you want to achieve in the lesson? What would you like to achieve?
3. What would you like to be different when you leave this session?
4. What would indicate to you that this time has been well-spent?

Reality

1. Where are you right now? What are the facts? What have you tried so far?
2. Let's look at the evidence from the lesson. What does it tell you?
3. What really pleased you about the lesson?
4. Tell me about the last time…….. How achievable is this?

Options

1. What are your actions to achieve your goal? What options have you thought of so far?
2. What are the different ways you could achieve the goal?
3. Who might be able to help us? Would you like a suggestion from me?
4. What are the possibilities? The best one?

What next (and when)?

1. Which option will you take? What are the next steps?
2. How committed are you to this action? Scale of 0-10? When will you achieve it?
3. How will you recognise you've reached your goal?
4. What would be the first signs that things were moving in the right direction?

> *"I feel like they feel that I'm invested in them, because I'm verbalising it so much now."*
>
> –Teacher

Reflection questions for teachers

Focus area	Feedback to consider when reflecting on 'verbal feedback'
Pupil behaviour and attitudes to learning	– How did (individual or group) apply themselves to the tasks/learning? – What was the impact of the behaviour of (individual or group) on their own learning the learning of other pupils?
Achievement and progress	– How did (individual or group) achieve the learning objectives set? – How did you gauge what feedback to offer (individual or group) in the lesson? – How easy/ difficult did (individual or group) find the feedback? – What might you do to help (individual or group) achieve even more?
Assessment for Learning (meaning, responsive teaching, not data collection)	– What feedback opportunities for assessment were built into the lesson? – What information did you derive from the lesson? – What does your Assessment for Learning information tell you about learning and future needs? – How effectively were you able to assess the understanding of pupils?
Pupil independence and ownership of learning	– What was the balance between teacher-feedback and independent learning obvious? – How effective was this feedback balance in relation to the objectives? – How might more detailed feedback shift this balance? – How much independent feedback did (individual or group) take? – How might your feedback be further extended?
Diagnostic marking	– How effectively is your verbal feedback moving the pupil forward? – How effectively are students responding to the comments? – How could you help pupils improve their responses to your feedback? – When you next mark (named individual or group) work, how could you create a dialogue between the teacher and pupil?

MARK. ✓ PLAN. TEACH.

@TEACHERTOOLKIT
ROSS MORRISON McGILL

MARK

Secure overview ①
Get your curriculum bearings before setting off

Not yet ②
Nudge growth mindsets with the positive *Not Yet*

Live marking ③
Quicker student progress and less teacher workload

Marking code ④
Quick, simple and easy for both student and teacher

Redrafting ⑤
A culture where work–in–progress is valued

Spot the gap ⑥
Use feedback to establish what hasn't stuck

Find and fix ⑦
Students identify their own gaps and re–learn

Moderate work ⑧
Always think of context when moderating work

Smarter marking ⑨
Mark so students work harder than you

Quality above all ⑩
Be selective what work you mark and use verbal feedback

PLAN

Clarify learning ①
Be precise about what students have to learn

The Why? test ②
Apply the 'So Why?' test to all learning activities

Imaginative ideas ③
Integrate imaginative strategies into your teaching

Stickability ④
Embed stickability into lesson planning

Challenge ⑤
Plan to keep students in the struggle zone

Flying starts ⑥
Flying starts help students learn more purposefully

Differentiate ⑦
Plan to differentiate over time to ensure quality

Stockpile ⑧
Store away ideas and resources to pull out of your hat

Change plans ⑨
When dealing with challenging behaviour, be flexible

Reality check ⑩
We all need a reality check once in a while

TEACH

Be explicit ①
Be clear about learning outcomes and keywords

Use modelling ②
Demonstrate and explain learning strategies

Go with the flow ③
Stick to the spirit, not the letter, of lesson plans

Simple T&L policy ④
Use simple, evidence–based guidance

Use questioning ⑤
Follow the question matrix and question your questions

Seven traits ⑥
Follow the seven traits of effective teachers

On the move ⑦
Don't panic, stay organised when moving classrooms

On reflection ⑧
Observe colleagues teach and think about your practice

Collaboration ⑨
Engage students with collaborative learning methods

Coaching systems ⑩
Establish coaching systems for all teachers to improve

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References

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Acknowledgements

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