What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

"Feedback is complicated, complex, and layered. *How Feedback Works* made it feel possible and easy! As someone who is familiar with formative assessment practices, which include feedback and peer feedback, I saw the through line immediately. Each module addresses a different type of feedback but also adds a deeper understanding of feedback as new ideas are discussed in various ways. This book added to my own knowledge and pushed me to think a little differently."

—**Jeni Mcintyre**, Director of Data-Driven Instruction, Tulsa Public Schools

"The contents of this book are accurate, coherent, consistent in theme, and backed up with references and plausible examples. This playbook provides appropriate and relevant guidance for teachers, including learning outcomes and information on misconceptions. It is relevant for all levels of learners in this field—from the lead to the highly accomplished to the proficient and provisional educators."

—**Leanne Hebden,** Quality Teaching Coach, Literacy, Instructional Leader, Department of Education, Tasmania, Kingston Primary School

"Feedback is the missing link. As educators, we know the important role that feedback plays not just for our students, but for our teaching as well. And yet if we do not understand what that feedback looks like and sounds like, we can never truly know the depth of our impact. *How Feedback Works* gives the teacher the tools they need to know exactly when to use feedback and the kind of feedback that should be given."

—**Barbara Lane**, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

"Feedback is one of education's most powerful assets in moving learning forward, yet it's often the most misunderstood. *How Feedback Works* ties in pedagogical principles with cognitive science and educational psychology to explain not only how to give effective feedback, but also how to create the structures and conditions necessary for feedback to maximize its potential on student learning. Through explanation, models, and guided practice, this playbook capitalizes on the research to help educators better understand and implement feedback that moves students to and through their next levels of learning. As an educator who coaches teachers, prekindergarten through twelfth grade, I'm excited to have this gem in my back pocket as a relevant reference to share with my colleagues and for developing my own knowledge and skill set around all things feedback."

—**Kierstan Barbee**, Director of Assessment for Learning

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How FEEDBACK WORKS

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John Almarode | Douglas Fisher | Nancy Frey

How FEEDBACK WORKS

a playbook

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Fisher & Frey

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Videos may also be accessed at **resources.corwin.com/howfeedbackworks**.

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SETTING THE FOUNDATION FOR HOW FEEDBACK WORKS

In this section:

Module 1: What Is Feedback?

Module 2: What Does the Latest Research Say About Feedback?

Module 3: What Does the Feedback Process Look Like in Action?

Module 4: What Are the Four Foundational Elements of Feedback?

Module 5: What Are the Barriers to Giving, Receiving, and Integrating Feedback?

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1

WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

LEARNING INTENTION

In this module, we are learning the definition of feedback so that we can better understand what feedback looks like in our schools and classrooms.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

We have successfully completed this module when

1. We can define feedback in our own words.
2. We can connect the definition of feedback with specific actions in our schools and classrooms.
3. We can identify specific examples of when feedback works in our schools and classrooms.

Video 1.1: Introduction to Module 1

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Feedback is an essential part of the learning process. As classroom teachers, we constantly seek feedback to gain a sense of how our learners are progressing in the learning experience or task. From a much larger perspective, we seek feedback to gain an understanding of how learners are progressing toward the overall learning goals or targets for the academic semester or year. On the other side of the desk, our learners seek feedback to know if they are headed in the right direction in learning content, skills, and understandings.

However, each of us has our own understanding of what feedback is, what feedback looks like, and the ways to seek feedback. Use the space provided on the next page to jot down your prior knowledge and prior experiences with feedback. What is your understanding of *how feedback works*?

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What do you currently see in your own school and classroom that you would identify or classify as feedback?	
What do you think feedback should look like in order to move learning forward?	
What are the different ways you currently seek feedback to gain a sense of how your learners are progressing?	

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Again, feedback is an essential part of the learning process. Now that you have shared your current thinking, let's begin to explore the importance of feedback with an example from the toy section at your local department store.

Building blocks, puzzles, and furniture shine a spotlight on the value of feedback. Whether using blocks to make a model airplane, working on a 1,000-piece landscape puzzle, or putting together a bookshelf you just purchased for your classroom, monitoring your *progress* throughout the *process* ensures that you don't arrive at the end of your task with misaligned wings, a puzzle that doesn't match the picture on the box, or a crocked bookshelf (not to mention the dread of having extra pieces and parts lying around). Using the idea that feedback helps us gain a sense of *progress*, use the space

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provided to list all the ways you and your colleagues might monitor your *process* in building with blocks, completing a puzzle, or putting together a bookshelf. You don't have to do all three, but be very specific with the one you and your colleagues select. We provided two examples for the puzzle task to get you started.

	What You Need to Do to Monitor the Process	Questions You Would Ask Yourself or Others From Whom You Need Feedback
Building a Block Airplane		
Completing a Puzzle	*Example:* • Look at the picture on the box to see the finished product. • Arrange the pieces into piles with similar coloring.	
Putting Together a Bookshelf		

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This is certainly not a playbook about blocks, puzzles, and furniture. So, now let's replace the three tasks above with the following:

1. Instead of building an airplane, what if learners were asked to build a case for the reduction of fossil fuel use for a high school environmental science class?

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2. Instead of completing a puzzle, what if learners were asked to complete an analysis of primary sources to make informed judgments about a particular historical event?
3. Instead of putting together a bookshelf, what if learners were asked to put together the elements of color, value, patterns, and emphasis to create a still-life painting?

It turns out that monitoring the *progress* throughout the *process* of each of the revised tasks is an essential part of the overall learning process. Using your responses from the previous task, revise them to reflect the science, social studies, and/or art task. An example is provided for you.

Building a Case for Fossil Fuel Reduction	Completing an Analysis of Primary Sources	Creating a Still-Life Painting
	Instead of . . . Look at the picture on the box to see the finished product . . . • **Try** . . . Look at an exemplar response to see what a successful analysis looks like. **Instead of** . . . Arrange the pieces into piles with similar coloring . . . • **Try** . . . Highlight specific parts of the document with different colors based on similar information.	

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You and your colleagues may have noticed that revising your responses to the first task (i.e., building blocks, puzzles, and furniture) to fit a science, social studies, and/or art task was easier than expected. With very minor edits, the same ways you and your colleagues might monitor your *progress* and *process* in building a plane, completing a puzzle, or putting together a bookshelf applies to science, social studies, and art. This strongly suggests that there is a common set of features in all feedback that makes feedback essential and important. Similarly, if this common feature or set of features is missing, the feedback loses power in the process. For example, if you and your colleagues had simply responded to the previous tasks by stating you would stand by and keep saying, "try harder, keep at it, you can do it," little progress would be made in any of these tasks. So, what is the common set of features that make feedback essential and important?

Before moving forward, take a moment to discuss what you and your colleagues believe are the common features that make feedback essential and important to the learning process. In other words, what makes your feedback effective?

Keep this page marked. We will come back and revise your initial response. For now, let's unpack the definition of feedback.

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THE DEFINITION OF FEEDBACK

The very definition of feedback provides an on-ramp to identify the features of effective feedback. Using your phone, tablet, computer, or a good-ol'-fashioned dictionary, look up the definition of *feedback* and write all parts of the definition that stand out to you in the box below.

What is the official definition of *feedback*?

We used Merriam-Webster's online dictionary to pull down the official definition:

1. a. the transmission of evaluative or corrective information about an action, event, or process to the original or controlling source also: the information so transmitted
   b. the partial reversion of the effects of a process to its source or to a preceding stage;
2. the return to the input of a part of the output of a machine, system, or process (as for producing changes in an electronic circuit that improve performance or in an automatic control device that provides self-corrective action)
3. a rumbling, whining, or whistling sound resulting from an amplified or broadcast signal (such as music or speech) that has been returned as input and retransmitted. (Merriam-Webster, 2021)

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There are several key words contained in Merriam-Webster's definition of *feedback* that will guide our learning in the subsequent modules of this playbook. For now, circle, highlight, or underline the following words from above.

From part 1 a, **corrective information**

From part 1 a, **process**

From part 2, **output**

From part 2, **improve performance**

From part 3, **returned as input**

These key words, extracted from the general definition of feedback, provide the foundation for understanding the definition of feedback and *how feedback works* in our classrooms. Take a moment to construct your own definition of feedback in your classroom. Edit and revise the official definition to contextualize what is meant by feedback in our schools and classrooms. Write that definition below.

A contextualized definition of *feedback* is . . .

Now, let's apply your own definition of feedback to the teaching and learning in your classroom. Use the space provided to describe what each aspect of the definition of feedback would look like in your classroom. We have provided examples to get you started.

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Aspects of the Definition of Feedback	Our Example	What This Looks Like in My Classroom
Corrective Information	Students are provided comments highlighting aspects that need revising in their narrative essays.	
Process	Students conference with a peer to integrate the feedback to make revisions to the narrative essay.	
Output	Students individually prepare the next draft of their narrative essays.	
Improved Performance	Students once again conference with a peer to compare and contrast the drafts of their narrative essays.	
Returned as Input	Students resubmit their narrative essays. This is input for us, as teachers, to get feedback on both peer conferencing and the writing process.	

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Now that we have developed a definition of feedback and begun to connect that to our teaching and learning, we turn our attention to what the research says about *how feedback works*.

Take a moment to reflect on your learning. How are you progressing? Where do you need to spend a little more time in this module?

Consider these questions to guide your self-reflection and self-assessment:

1. Can I define *feedback* in our own words?
2. Can I connect the definition of feedback with specific actions in our schools and classrooms?
3. Can I identify specific examples of when feedback works in our schools and classrooms?

Access videos and other resources at **resources.corwin.com/howfeedbackworks.**

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