

BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ARMONK, NEW YORK

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Title: *Facilitating Stations for Feedback: A Work in Progress*
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School/Grade: BHHS / 9-11

SUMMARY OF *INVESTIGATORS OF PRACTICE* ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Context:

As a French teacher of Levels 2, 3, and 4 I have to consistently provide feedback to the students to help them build upon their skills, increase language production, and maximize learning within a short period of time to be able to reach the next level of learning. This generates a challenge in any class, but in a larger class it is especially thought-provoking to inform students of their progress in speaking and writing as well as reading and listening.

This year I was faced with this challenge as one of my upper level classes was larger than usual. I collaborated with a colleague to research a similar focus: creating smaller groups of students working on several assigned tasks which would allow more time to facilitate their activities and monitor their progress, therefore providing high quality feedback.

Action Plan:

My research questions were: *What are the ways in which a teacher can provide productive feedback to students in a large class setting? How will the students interpret this feedback to improve upon their skills?*

I attended a workshop in November on creating small group work and workstations in the classroom. This provided me with a basis for how to structure my class as well as create activities the students could work on in their groups.

My colleague suggested that I contact a second grade teacher who had established a successful system of workstations in her classroom to which, I observed, the students adapted seamlessly. I noticed how organized the teacher had to be and how well-behaved the students were because they knew what was expected of them. Having used this system as a foundation, while planning, I realized that this was going to be a work in progress and to this testament the teacher confirmed, "It took time to get [the students] to this point, and I'm still not finished."

I first introduced the students to the activities to familiarize them separately in class before putting them in groups so that they would be comfortable working on their own and helping out other members in their group. Initially, I elicited verbal feedback from the students regarding the activities.

Some of these students would be taking AP French the following year, some Level V and others were not going to move on in French at all. With such varying levels I thought it best to group the students according to their target language ability even though in the workshop I attended in November, the instructor said the best way to group students was randomly. However, I thought

homogeneous groups would permit me to spend more time with the students who needed extra help.

I implemented these stations during the study of a French novel, *Le Petit Prince*. The novel was read both together in class and by the students independently, particularly chapters ten through fifteen on which the stations were completed.

There was a series of five activities for each group including:

- *Grammar* – a packet involving practice with direct and indirect object pronouns
- *Comprehension* – a group of questions in the target language to which the students had to respond in the target language – questions were assessing the students on their comprehension of the five chapters they read in the text
- *Socratic Seminar* – a small group discussion, completely in French, where the students and teacher engage in a discussion regarding various themes from the chapters
- *Essay* – the students work together to create an “ode” as one of the characters in the chapters (based on an “ode” to a baobab tree students read in class)
- *Vocabulary* – a vocabulary exercise created by the students that other students in their group had to complete

After having created and facilitated the workstations for a week in class, I created a written survey and asked only a few of the students to complete.

Results:

I found this new way of facilitating to be challenging as it really took me out of my “comfort zone”. I am accustomed to a teacher-directed classroom. Group work is a common practice in a foreign language classroom setting; however the next step of allowing the students to work independently for forty-nine minutes, to be accountable for their own learning, was intimidating at first. I was afraid that “letting them go” would turn into mayhem. At the same time, I found it liberating to take the risk. Even if it was not exactly what I expected, I found it humbling and rewarding to try something new. I was not sure what to expect. What was important was assuring that the students knew what I expected of them.

I know there is much to change to be able to truly reach my goal which is to provide each student with feedback to help them improve their skills. With these changes, I believe, will come more questions. However, having started this process also allowed me to realize that trying new methods to reach my goals is not as daunting as I anticipate.

I was pleasantly surprised that the students were amenable to the task and cooperated willingly. From my survey, I found that the common opinion amongst students was that they found the activities valuable and suitable, however, they would have benefited from more time to complete them thoroughly.

Implications:

My question remains similar: *What are ways in which I can provide clear and concise feedback to my students to help them understand their expectations, progress and meet their goals?* While working with my colleague in second grade, I discovered that workstations are a constructive way to provide useful feedback in a smaller classroom setting as she was able to do this with a small group of students. I wonder how to use this method for a larger classroom setting. Perhaps I simply need more time to revise and modify my approach. As educators, we are constantly seeking to improve our practice and assist our students in achieving their goals.