

BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ARMONK, NEW YORK

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**Title of Project:** *The Most Effective Feedback for Student Achievement*

**Year:** 2014

**School/Grade:** Byram Hills High School/9

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SUMMARY OF *INVESTIGATORS OF PRACTICE* ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

**Context**

I am an Italian teacher at Byram Hills High School. I am currently teaching three Italian classes of 9th graders, a Pre-AP class (a class for Juniors considered the first part of the AP program), and an AP class. I began the 2013-14 school year thinking about how to best give feedback to my AP students. Last school year, I started doing one-on-one meetings with AP students, and while their skills improved, I began to wonder how feedback could improve.

Soon I realized that 9th grade students needed feedback as much as AP students, if not more. In all the reading I have done, it became obvious that the information was applicable to freshman as well as AP students. Because of this, I changed my focus to research feedback strategies from which 9th grade students would benefit.

**Action Plan**

My starting questions were: 1) *What are the criteria of effective feedback?* 2) *How can feedback be used to improve particular skills, such as writing skills?*

As I started documenting my research, I kept going back to the starting questions, and I felt the urge of formulating a new question: *As an educator, how do I become more of a resource, a guide, for my students?* One article in particular made me reflect and reconsider my starting point, *Feedback is a Two-Way Street*. According to the author of this article, Cris Tovani, feedback has to involve both the teachers and the students; whereas the teachers give their students the opportunity to share their needs. Based on what I learned in this article, I changed the way I give feedback to my students. With this in mind, I started targeting specific activities. For example, while students are working in small groups, I listen to their comments and keep a log. Then I create a mini-lesson based on the comments/feedback students provided me. With time, these mini-lessons proved to have a great effect on their learning.

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Another example is how I want my students to face the challenge of long reading comprehension on their own. In a second language it is fundamental that students accept the fact that they cannot understand word by word but instead they should have an overall understanding. This is what I decided to try; instead of giving out questions regarding the reading comprehension, I divided the class in small groups, and I shared with them the targets of the day: read one chapter from our reader, write true or false statements, exchange the statements with the other groups and make a reaction using the expressions of agreement and disagreement from their notes.

While the students were working, I would monitor them and take note of their comments. I created opportunities for my students **to give me feedback** that would help me to help them.

### **Results**

Learning from Research: *“What are the criteria of effective feedback?”*

As I started documenting my research, I came across several articles regarding feedback, and each of them targeted specific criteria of feedback from which I could benefit. These are some of them:

- good feedback does not do the thinking for the students
- good feedback comes as a result of communication between teacher and learner
- effective feedback occurs during the learning process, while there is still time to act on it
- effective feedback is not in the form of scores or grades
- effective feedback does not want to praise, but to engage with students about their work
- do not give feedback if there is no sign of learning process, but reteach!

The results at the end were quite positive. For example, students were able to finish the previously mentioned reader by March, when it would usually take up to May, and each of them was able to comment on a particular chapter. Knowing their level of proficiency, I was able to give students more guidance and opportunities to use complex grammar features as well as more advanced vocabulary in their writing and speaking production.

### **Implications**

What I learned about this experience, is that the more I researched, the more questions arose. As a result of this journey, I combined my original two questions into one: *“How do educators become more of a resource and a guide for learners?”* I am also left wondering how I can take what I have learned and apply it to my upper level classes whose reading assignments are more advanced.

Teaching is a work in progress as we educators reflect on our practice each year in order to better

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assist our students in achieving their goals.

While previously, I did most of the thinking and the students were just trying to follow along, now, students are demonstrating that they are more engaged as they work to accomplish the goal of the day. I, on the other hand, guide and assist their learning by listening to them. As Jan Chappuis mentions in his article, *How am I doing?*, “*When we listen to our students, and our feedback is the reflection of what we hear from them, our students are more likely to take our advice and apply it.*”

Every day I spend in any of my classrooms, is an opportunity for my students to give me feedback about their needs.