

## Strategies to enhance peer feedback

Some strategies are particularly suited to younger students, where often the names that teachers have for these strategies provide a 'shorthand' way of communicating to students that they wish them to provide peer feedback.

For example:

- Two stars and a wish
- Plus, minus and what's next?
- Warm and cool feedback
- Traffic lights

In addition, teachers of all levels can also use the following strategies:

- Using models or exemplars
- De Bono's Thinking hats
- Using a rubric

For younger students, it is easier and more effective to encourage oral rather than written feedback.

### **Two stars and a wish**

Students identify two positive aspects of the work of a peer and then express a wish about what the peer might do next time in order to improve another aspect of the work. 'I want to give you a star for the start of your story and a star for the way you described the house. I wish that you will tell us more about Billy.'

Teachers model this strategy several times, using samples of student work, before asking the students to use the strategy in pairs on their own. They check the process and ask pairs who have implemented the strategy successfully to demonstrate it to the whole group.

### **Plus, minus and what's next?**

Students comment on what was done well in relation to the success criteria, and also on what could be done better. This strategy may be better used after the students have become adept at using Two stars and a wish. This strategy can also be used as part of self-assessment, where students use 'What's next?' to set a personal learning target.

### **Warm and cool feedback**

When students comment on the positive aspects of a peer's work, they are said to be giving warm feedback, and when they identify areas that need improvement, they are providing cool feedback. They provide hints on 'how to raise the temperature' when they give advice about how their peer could improve their work.

### **Traffic lights**

Students green-light (using a green highlighter on the margin of the work) the work of their peer to indicate where the success criteria have been achieved, or amber-light where improvement is needed.

This strategy is best used on a work-in-progress, although it could also be used, with colored sticky notes, to provide feedback on a final piece of work. The suggestions for improvement would then relate to the next occasion on which the students undertook work which required similar skills - writing or number skills, for example.

### **Using models or exemplars**

Teachers demonstrate for students how they can match the work of a peer to an exemplar which most closely resembles its qualities. For example, for young students exemplars of handwriting which reflect a range of qualities (letters on/off line, no spaces/spaces between words, straight/crooked letters, mixture of upper- and lower-case letters etc.) can be displayed in the classroom and students asked to match the handwriting of the peer with the appropriate exemplar.

Students explain to the peer why they have selected this particular exemplar and, using other exemplars, explain what the peer needs to do in order to improve his/her handwriting. Exemplars of various products (written and 3-D) can be displayed in the classroom for use both by individuals to self-assess and also by peers to provide feedback. If there is concern that providing a model will lead to copying or stifle imagination and creativity, the teacher might consider providing exemplars of parts of the product - for example, an effective introduction or an interesting use of media in an artwork.

When employing exemplars as a self-assessment strategy, students use the exemplars to help them articulate what changes they need to make to their own work in order to achieve the success criteria.

### **De Bono's Thinking hats**

Because the Thinking hats encourage thinking from different perspectives, they can be used to focus students' feedback to their peers. Again, teachers model the use of the Thinking hats and train students in their use before asking them to use the hats as one of the peer feedback strategies.

The Yellow hat, for instance, encourages students to think about the 'good points' and to ask themselves questions such as 'Why will this work?' The Black hat urges caution and evaluation: 'Is this true? What are the weaknesses?' while the Green hat encourages creative thinking: 'Is there another way of doing this?' 'What would be better?' 'How else can this be done?'

Giving different students different hats can make peer feedback more focused and manageable for younger students. That way, each individual doesn't have to consider every aspect of the peer feedback but can concentrate on just one.

### **Using a rubric**

For larger assessment activities conducted over a period of time, the rubric, which has been negotiated with students at the beginning of the task, can be used as the basis for paired discussions about progress. If students are very clear about the qualities of work implied by the various levels of performance described on a rubric, they can provide useful feedback to their peers.

If rubrics are to be (a) designed so they do capture the difference between levels of performance and (b) used effectively by students not only as a peer feedback tool but also as a self-assessment tool, then students need explicit teaching so they understand the differences between, for example, work which lists benefits as opposed to work which describes those benefits or explains them or evaluates them. An understanding of the language used by the rubric is essential.