

Literacy Link: Moving Forward: MyPerspectives

Framing Difficult Feedback for Parents by: Joe Hirsch

As educational partners, teachers and parents (or guardians) share responsibility for the success of children. Keeping open lines of communication is essential to maintaining a relationship of transparency and trust. Parents expect and deserve honest feedback about their children's progress. But when situations call for difficult conversations, teachers can become apprehensive. Will hearing negative feedback about their kids make parents defensive or supportive? Point fingers or lend a hand? Brain research shows that negative feedback floods neural pathways with cortisol, the stress-inducing hormone, and triggers our threat awareness. How can teachers give parents the information they need to know but might not want to hear? A standard approach is the praise sandwich or feedback sandwich, which attempts to sidestep blame, conflict, and hurt feelings by surrounding negative feedback with positive statements. After opening with praise ("Johnny is so energetic"), the teacher brings up a specific critique ("With all that energy, he can become quite disruptive in class"), and closes on a positive note ("But he adds so much to our learning community"). While this tactic remains popular, it's not always effective: Since people tend to remember the first and last things they hear, they focus on the praise at the ends and not the critique in the middle. The sandwich delivery softens the message and doesn't necessarily drive it home.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO DIFFICULT FEEDBACK An alternative might look more like a bundle. Rather than buffering negative feedback with praise, teachers can offer direct feedback that comprises specific observations and value statements:

- ◆ **Context:** Where and when is the behavior happening?
- ◆ **Observations:** What has happened?
- ◆ **Emotions:** What feelings does this cause?
- ◆ **Value:** Why does this matter?
- ◆ **Input:** What can be done to achieve success?

First, teachers establish a feedback context by naming the time and place the problem is happening. Next, they provide specific and objective observations about the problem in action. From there, they describe the impact of the problem on the emotions of others and its value to the group as a whole. Finally, they seek active input from the parents on how a positive and productive solution can be reached. In the case of the excitable but disruptive Johnny, here's an example of how the teacher can give his parents more productive feedback using the bundle approach: "Mr. and Mrs. Jones, I want to mention some concerns I have about the way Johnny is behaving during class [context]. In the past two weeks, he's been calling out frequently during small-group instruction. He also riles up his classmates during transitions [observations]. As his teacher, I'm concerned that Johnny is falling behind in his class work and frustrating his friends [emotions], which is detrimental to the learning environment we're trying to create [value]. Can you offer any ideas about why this is happening and how we can help Johnny improve [input]?" The teacher clearly defines the feedback context (small-group instruction and transitions), provides specific and targeted examples of the problem (calling out, causing distraction), expresses in personal terms what this means to her ("As his teacher, I'm concerned..."), gives a basis for her claims by tracing the behavior's impact on others (degraded learning environment), and seeks advice from the receiver on how best to resolve the conflict ("Can you offer any ideas?"). The teacher approaches Johnny's parents as partners, not combatants, and uses matter-of-fact, nonaggressive language to win their support and find a solution.

My Perspectives

Differentiation

Ways to Differentiate Learning Utilizing ReadyGEN Materials

- Digital Library & Independent Reading Activities
- Utilize the OpenED resources to supplement as needed
- Discussion Board
- Trade Book Lesson Plans
- Graphic Organizers
- Spanish Resources
- Create or Customize Content
- myPerspectives+ Resources: Conventions, Reading Skills, Standards Practice, Academic Vocabulary

WAYS TO DIFFERENTIATE CONTENT, PROCESS, AND PRODUCT	
Same Goals Different Materials	Students focus on the same lesson but work with different materials. For example, some students may need a simplified version of a challenging text, others may need to read instructions in their native language, and others may need to hear an audio recording of a selection as they read the text.
Same Goals Different Products	Students focus on the same essential goals but express their ideas in different forms. For example, students could demonstrate understanding of a character through a written character sketch, a spoken monologue, or a portrait that includes critical details.
Same Goals Different Applications	Students work on the same essential goals but find applications in different areas. For example, one student might bring in examples of first- and third-person point of view from advertisements, while another might find examples in favorite song lyrics. This kind of flexibility increases student motivation.
Same Goals Different Directions	Students pursue the same goal but with directions geared to their learning needs. When studying character motivation, for example, you might ask some students to find evidence in the story that shows why a character acted as he or she did. You might raise the difficulty level a bit by asking other students to describe how the same motivating forces could have affected another character in a completely different way.
Different Goals	Students work on different goals related to the same lesson to address their particular needs. For instance, as part of a writing assignment tied to the lesson, you might direct some students to focus on organization of ideas, others to concentrate on precision of wording, and others to target supporting their opinions effectively.

Strategy

Pass the Plate (Vocabulary)

Strategies for Review and Practice

Pass the Plate

(K-6)

Developing students who are able to think "out of the box" is a goal of many teachers. Pass the Plate is a high-energy activity that encourages students to generate a wide variety of ideas and exposes all students to creative thinking. Pass the Plate (Peterson, 2004) also allows students who are English language learners to be exposed to a wealth of rich vocabulary words.

Materials

- 6 plastic disposable plates
- Water-based, wipe-off markers

How To

1. Place students in heterogeneous groups and provide each group with a plate and a marker.
2. Explain to the students that you will announce a word. One of the group members is to write the word in the center of the plate. For example, the word might be *big*.
3. Once the word has been written, tell the students that they will have two minutes to generate as many synonyms for the word as possible. Each student is to take a turn and write a synonym on the plate around the edge. The plate is to be passed around the group as quickly as possible. If a student cannot think of a word, he can pass.
4. Explain that each word will generate points but that the most points will be awarded to words that are not found on any other plate.
5. If necessary, provide examples, such as *large* or *gigantic*, and more-creative examples, such as *gargantuan* and *supersized*.

6. After the time period is finished, help students in determining their points. Award 10 points for each word on the plate, and 50 points for any word that no other group has written.
7. When finished, simply rinse the plates off and store for another time.

Variation

- Pass the Plate can be used to generate creative examples in a wide variety of content areas. Students can list examples of verbs, mammals, carbohydrates, science fiction titles, prime numbers, artists, etc.

Tip

- ☆ If there is a student who might struggle with this activity, carefully consider which position might be best for her. For example, going first or second is usually easier than fifth or sixth.



Differentiation Strategies

List Group Label Strategy (Vocabulary)

List-group-label is a form of semantic mapping. The strategy encourages students to improve their vocabulary and categorization skills and learn to organize concepts. Categorizing listed words, through grouping and labeling, helps students organize new concepts in relation to previously learned concepts.

HOW TO USE LIST-GROUP-LABEL

1. Select a main concept in a reading selection.
2. List: Have students brainstorm all the words they think relate to the topic.
 - Visually display student responses.
 - At this point do not critique student responses. Some words may not reflect the main concept, but hopefully students will realize this as they begin grouping the words in the next step.
3. Group: Divide your class into small groups. Each group will work to cluster the class list of words into subcategories. As groups of words emerge, challenge your students to explain their reasoning for placing words together or discarding them.
4. Label: Invite students to suggest a title or label for the groups of words they have formed. These labels should relate to their reasoning for the grouping.

Content Area Examples

Earth Systems

Standard II, objective 2

Title: List-Group-Label

Description: Students will generate a list of items found in an ecosystem and then group them by similarities. The teacher will guide the discussion to eventually label all traits as biotic or abiotic.

Materials: overhead or index cards(10-12 per group)

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Procedure:

1. Ask students to think about all the parts of an ecosystem. You can write their responses on the board or overhead or you can have students write the parts on index cards (one per card).
2. Once a list has been generated, ask students to group them. Discuss what characteristics might be used to create groups. Do not label the groups yet.
3. Give students an opportunity to categorize each of the parts that were listed. If they have index cards, they can work in a group and move the cards around. They should only develop two or three categories.
4. Clarify the characteristics of each category and give students the definition (or have them look it up in their books)
 - Abiotic: non-living
 - Biotic: living
5. Ask students to put all the parts into one of these two groups. Have a group share what they get and discuss with the class whether they are right or wrong. The textbook could also be used to have students check their work.
6. If a written assignment is desired, have students write definitions for each category and list the parts under each.

List Group Label

Directions: Sort the following words into groups. You will want to label each group with a specific title. You may create as many groups as you wish, as long as the group has a label or title and contains at least two words from the list. Be prepared to share your List Group Label with the class and defend your decisions.

List						
tepee	sinew	lacrosse	car's cradle	wampun	tomahawk	maize
coffee	buffalo	arrow	kachina	peace pipe	Shaman	igloo
tobacco	powwow	wigwan	kachina	toboggan	totem pole	brave
Hogan	blowgun	moccasins	kachina doll	dreamcatcher	prayer stick	bow

Food	Shelter	People	Tools	Fun Stuff	We Don't Know
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maize • coffee • buffalo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tepee • kachina • igloo • wigwan • hogan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaman • brave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sinew • tomahawk • arrow • peace pipe • toboggan • blowgun • bow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lacrosse • car's cradle • tobacco • powwow • totem pole • kachina doll • dreamcatcher • prayer stick 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wampun • moccasins



List-Group-Label

Name _____

Topic _____

In the first column, list all of the words you can think of that are related to the topic. Once you have created your list, group the words based on their similarities. Label each group when you are finished.

List	Group and Label

Differentiation Resources/Websites

- *3 Myths & 3 Truths about DI: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/differentiated-instruction-myths-and-truths-john-mccarthy>
- *Four Ways to Differentiate in the Classroom: <http://inservice.ascd.org/four-ways-teachers-can-differentiate-in-the-classroom/>
- *Nine Strategies for Reaching all Learners in ELA: www.edutopia.org/blog/stw-expanded-learning-time-individualized-learning-hassan-mansaray
- * Strategies that Differentiate Instruction: <https://education.ky.gov/educational/diff/documents/strategieshatdifferentiateinstruction4.12.pdf>
- *5 Strategies for Teaching Tweens: <https://www.middleweb.com/6641/5-strategies-for-tween-teachers/>

50 the **Ultimate** List of **DIFFERENTIATION Strategies**

50 STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum Mapping	26. Game-Based Learning
2. Inquiry-Based Learning	27. Identity Chart
3. Power Standards & Enduring Understandings	28. Grouping
4. Project-Based Learning	29. Socratic Seminar
5. Classroom Layout & Design	30. Problem-Based Learning/Place-Based Education
6. Learning Model Integration	31. Learning Blends
7. Sentence & Discussion Stems	32. Write-Around
8. Tiered Learning Targets	33. Genius Hour
9. Learning Through Play	34. Rubrics
10. Meaningful Student Voice & Choice	35. OET Seminar
11. Learning Badges	36. Learning Menus
12. Relationship-Building & Team-Building	37. Cubing
13. Self-Directed Learning	38. Layering
14. Choice Boards	39. Jigsaws
15. Bloom's Twist	40. Graphic Organizers
16. Assessment Design & Backwards Planning	41. Learning Through Workstations
17. Sync Teaching	42. Concept Attainment
18. Double-Entry Journal/Essay Writing	43. Flipped Classroom
19. Analogies, Metaphors & Visual Representations	44. Mentoring
20. Reciprocal Teaching	45. Planning Through Learning Taxonomies
21. Mock Trial	46. Debate
22. The Hot Seat/Role-Play	47. Student Interest & Inventory Data
23. Student Data Inventories	48. Learning Feedback
24. Mastery Learning	49. Mini-Lessons
25. Goal-Setting & Learning Contracts	50. Class Rules

