

Literacy Link: Moving Forward – ReadyGEN

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

ReadyGEN

Differentiation

Ways to Differentiate Learning Utilizing Ready-GEN Materials

- ◆ Scaffolded Strategies Handbook
- ◆ Independent Reading Activities
- ◆ Sleuth
- ◆ Tikatok
- ◆ Graphic Organizers & Reading Activity Mats
- ◆ Printable Leveled Readers, Teacher's Guides & Student Pages
- ◆ Printable Practice eReaders
- ◆ ReadyUp! Intervention
- ◆ Center Option Activities
- ◆ Online Word Analysis & Vocabulary Games
- ◆ Utilize the OpenED resources to supplement as needed

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.

Copyright © Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company

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

Sweet Sheets (Comprehension)

Strategies for Encouraging Participation

Sweet Sheets

Book groups, also referred to as literature circles, are a beneficial experience for students as they study literature. Book groups allow students to engage in discussion about what they are reading, making it meaningful to them on a personal level. The students who might benefit the most, however, from this type of experience may also be the ones who struggle with deciding what to say during the discussions. Rather than allowing them to sit back and just listen, try using the Sweet Sheets strategy to provide some support.

Materials

Copies of Sweet Sheets (see reproducibles, pages 150–151)

How To

1. Ask students to get into their book groups.
2. Place a copy of a Sweet Sheet in the center of each group, so that all the students can view it from wherever they are seated.
3. Explain that there are times, for everyone, when we might need a little help to get our thinking and conversations started—and that's what the Sweet Sheet is for: to help them during their discussions if they are in need of ideas for what to say.

Variations

- Consider sending a Sweet Sheet home with students. Encourage parents to use it when they are reading a book with their child.
- Use a Sweet Sheet during whole-group discussions of books by copying the reproducible onto a transparency and placing it on an overhead projector.

- A Sweet Sheet can be developed for any content discussion. For example, in science, a Sweet Sheet might include several statement starters about the scientific process, the surprises of an experiment, or predictions.

Tips

- ☆ Be sure to make it clear that all learners occasionally have difficulty thinking of things to say. A Sweet Sheet should not be viewed by students as being only for the struggling students in the group.
- ☆ Preteach some of these discussion starters to students who might struggle with on-the-spot thinking.
- ☆ A Sweet Sheet is especially helpful for students who are learning English as a second language and may not yet have learned some of the necessary vocabulary for a literature circle.

"SWEET SHEET"

What actor do you think would play the main character in a movie?

I was a bit confused when...

Do you think it is a believable story so far?

My favorite part, so far, was...

I would rewrite this story so that...

Would you recommend this book to anyone else?

I thought of...

"SWEET SHEET"

Does this story remind you of any other stories or movies?

What do you think the author's purpose was?

What was your favorite part of the story?

How would you feel if this happened to you?

I thought the author was very...

If I were the main character in this story, I would...

Something like this happened to me once...

Something like
this happened to
me once...

If I were the main character in
this story, I would...

I thought the author
was very...

How would you feel
if this happened
to you?

Does this story
remind you of
any other stories
or movies?

What was your
favorite part of the
story?

What do you think the
author's purpose was?

"SWEET SHEET"

FOLD

"SWEET SHEET"

Does this story
remind you of
any other stories
or movies?

What do you think the
author's purpose was?

What was your
favorite part of the
story?

How would you feel
if this happened
to you?

I thought the author
was very...

If I were the main character in
this story, I would...

Something like
this happened to
me once...

Would you recommend this book to anyone else? If so, to whom?

I thought it was kind of crazy when...

I would rewrite this story so that...

My favorite part, so far, was...

Do you think it is a believable story so far?

I was a bit confused when...

What actor do you think would play the main character in a movie?

"SWEET SHEET"

"SWEET SHEET"

FOLD

What actor do you think would play the main character in a movie?

I was a bit confused when...

Do you think it is a believable story so far?

My favorite part, so far, was...

I would rewrite this story so that...

I thought it was kind of crazy when...

Would you recommend this book to anyone else? If so, to whom?

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/>
- *Six Differentiation Strategies for New Teachers: <https://www.teachingchannel.org/blog/2015/04/01/6-differentiation-strategies/>
- *Strategies that Differentiate Instruction: <https://education.ky.gov/educational/diff/documents/strategieshatdifferentiateinstruction4.12.pdf>
- *Resources & Downloads for Differentiation: <https://www.edutopia.org/stw-differentiated-instruction-budget-resources-downloads>

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. CFT Seminar
11. Learning Badges	36. Learning Menus
12. Relationship-Building	37. Cubing
13. Team-Building	38. Layering
14. Self-Directed Learning	39. Jigsaws
15. Choice Boards	40. Graphic Organizers
16. Bloom's Twist	41. Learning Through Workstations
17. Assessment Design & Backwards Planning	42. Concept Attainment
18. Sync Teaching	43. Flipped Classroom
19. Double-Entry Journal/Essay Writing	44. Mentoring
20. Analogies, Metaphors & Visual Representations	45. Planning Through Learning Taxonomies
21. Reciprocal Teaching	46. Debate
22. Mock Trial	47. Student Interest & Inventory Data
23. The Hot Seat/Role-Play	48. Learning Feedback
24. Student Data Inventories	49. Mini-Lessons
25. Mastery Learning	50. Class Rules

