

# Understanding the Effects of the Best Practices of Formative Feedback and Intentional Follow-Ups on Online Students' Success

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*This study aimed to understand the effects of the best practices of Formative Feedback and Intentional Follow-ups on online students' success. Students in the online learning environment struggle with meeting the deadlines of submitting their assignments, discussions, and field experience projects, especially during and after COVID-19, students wrestled with online learning. Some students were neither starting nor submitting their discussions and projects on time, which hindered their success. The study will assist me and other online teaching faculty to apply feedback skills and intentional follow-ups of all students to enhance success. The study examined the definitions of formative feedback, student success, student and learner, and intentional follow-ups. Second, the study explored the goals of formative feedback, types of formative feedback, functions of feedback, faculty knowledge of good feedback, effective written feedback, examples of feedback, the amount of feedback, and timing. Third, data from surveys, observations, and interviews enriched with the day-to-day life experience of feedback. Finally, the study hypothesized that effective feedback and intentional follow-ups enhance students' success.*

*Keywords: formative feedback, feedback, student, learner, student success, intentional follow-ups*

## INTRODUCTION

In the introductory part of the study, the study presented the purpose of the study, the problem statement of the study, the significance of the study, the research questions, the methodology of the study, the limitations and delimitations of the study, and the definition of terms.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study aimed to understand the effects of the best practices of formative feedback and intentional follow-ups on online students' academic success. The online teaching and learning platform sharply differs from the onsite teaching and learning experience. So, because of the dynamics of online teaching and learning, I needed to engage in this study.

### **The Problem Statement of the Study**

I teach one course in one monthly learning environment. So this means that both faculty and students adhere to a monthly one-course format and much more after the Corvid-19. Now, when it was an onsite learning environment, it was different because teachers' time with students was face-to-face, and although it was twice a week, it helped students connect with the teachers and their colleagues. However, now, all teaching and learning is an online platform, and the format of one course in one month continues. So, during

and after the Corvid-19, I have seen students struggle with online discussions and assignments. Some students were neither starting nor submitting their discussions and projects on time, which bothered me greatly. Then, I began to ask myself how to assist my students in their online learning environment.

As a teacher who wants the best for my students and sees their academic needs, I began to think deeply about feedback and follow-ups to motivate and generate students' academic success every month I teach. So, that is how I started working on *understanding the effects of the best practices of formative feedback and follow-ups on online students' success*.

### **The Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is threefold. First, the study is essential to me as a researcher and teacher because I wanted to examine literature to ascertain the best practices of formative feedback to gain new knowledge of how to sharpen my teaching skills in my online teacher preparation classes at my university. Further, I wanted to know ways of making effective follow-ups with students after an online lesson to see if they understood the content and to encourage them to act on the peer interactive discussions and the weekly assignments, because soon the class will end by the end of the month. No sooner did I make follow-ups than students started asking questions; I knew it was my duty to provide immediate feedback to enhance their learning. Second, the study is essential.

My colleagues at the university will benefit from the study as I share the ideas of the best practices of formative feedback and follow-ups with students to see if they need help in their learning because time is of the essence. Third, when the study is published, it will add to educational research. Many more teachers in the teacher preparation programs in various universities will interact with the ideas I postulate in the study. They will want to apply or embellish the ideas to suit their teaching contexts.

### **Research Questions**

To obtain answers for best practices of formal feedback, students' success, and intentional follow-ups, I used the following questions to search for the answers from literature reviews.

1. What is the meaning of formative feedback, student success, student and learner, and intentional follow-ups?
2. What is the goal of formative feedback?
3. What are some of the types of formative feedback?
4. What are the functions of formative feedback?
5. How do faculty know that they have given good feedback?
6. What does effective feedback look like?
7. How does Healthy Feedback Look Like?
8. What are some of the examples of feedback?
9. What amount of content should be contained in faculty feedback?
10. How is Timing Applied as a Supportive Asset in Feedback?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Site Selection**

I selected my classes as my site because, since Covid-2019, I started to think deeply about formative feedback and follow-ups and how I can enhance students' academic success, and what came into my mind is "charity begins at home" (Gardner, 1991; Odendahl, 1990) that is I must start with my classes.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data for this study was collected using literature reviews (Fabijan, Olsson, & Bosch, 2015; Olsen, Chappell, & Loftis, 2012; Onwuegbuzie, Leach, Collins, Williams, & Vogt, 2011; Kitchenham, Brereton, Budgen, Turner, Bailey, & Linkman, 2009) class observations of students' learning activities, in the online class, and their reactions to online discussions, the actual doing of assignments, and completion of weekly

assignments (Mkandawire, 2019; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017; Walshe, Ewing, & Griffiths, 2012; Harris, & Brown, 2010; Kawulich, 2005).

I sensed delays in completing discussions and doing all assignments on time, so I needed to pay special attention to the subject matter and the effects of formative feedback and follow-ups on students' success. The study is qualitative; hence, I collected data from web-based questionnaires given to a small number to represent the larger student body, interviews, and notes (Mkandawire, 2019; Ebert, J. F., Huibers, L., Christensen, B., & Christensen, 2018; Alshenqeeti, 2014; Aborisade, 2013; Harris, & Brown, 2010).

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed throughout the study. The collected data on formative feedback and intentional follow-ups from the literature review, interviews, questionnaires, and learning team information were analyzed for commonalities, patterns, narratives, summarization of data, and themes (Lester, Cho, & Lochmiller, 2020; Liamputtong, 2009; Lacey, & Luff, 2001). Data was organized to form results of the study, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations (Ridder, 2014; Seers, 2012)

### **The Limitation of the Study**

The limitations of the study are threefold—first, time. I had very little time to collect data because of research of this magnitude; I needed some months, but I had only one month to do it. Second, the limitation of targeted respondents is my students from January 2023 to March 2023. I picked only 12 to provide written responses to the questionnaire built on the research questions I served them. Third is my personal bias because I am doing the study for my online teaching improvement, and since I love the area of formative or constructive feedback so much, prejudices when writing might blind my eyes.

Fourth. I am a participant observer in this study. My interactions with the students every day are many. I hope the study outcomes are not affected based on the mentioned limitations.

### **The Delimitation of the Study**

The study specifically examined best practices of formative feedback to students, and as for me, I reviewed my ITL 604 Classes from January 2023 to March 2023. I am observing their treatment of the formative feedback I provide daily and seeing if they yield student success in their learning, teaching profession, and life.

### **The Definition of Terms**

I want to highlight several terms in this study by providing definitions for the readers of this article.

#### *Formative Feedback*

Formative feedback is constructive information faculty communicate to the learner to modify thinking or behavior to increase knowledge, skills, and understanding in some content area or general skill.

#### *Student Success*

Student success is defined academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, and post-college performance (Alyahyan, & Düşteğör, 2020; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

#### *Student and Learner*

Student and learner in this study are used interchangeably to mean women or men interacting with faculty/teachers and learning materials, engaging in learning to understand the educational phenomenon and change their behavioral attitudes towards themselves and the world around them.

### *Intentional Follow-ups (IFUs)*

Intentional follow-ups are understood as online teaching faculty monitoring students' learning process, examining if students are missing assignments and showing slowness in submitting responses to interactive discussions and assignments.

### **Literature Review: Best Practices of Formative Feedback**

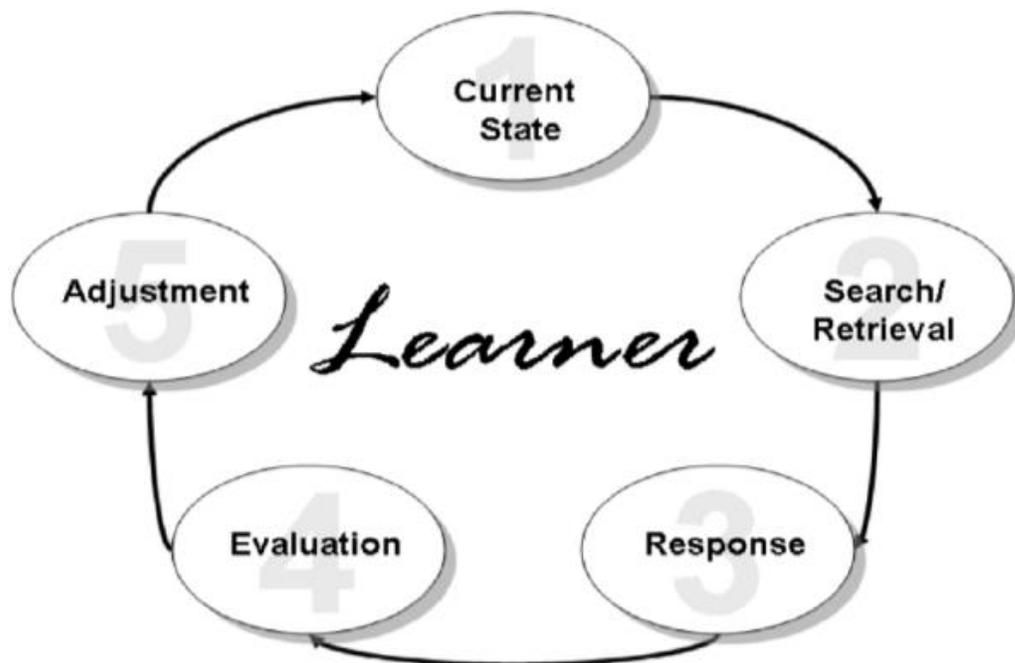
This study aimed to understand the effects of the best practices of Formative Feedback and Intentional Follow-ups on online students' success. First, the study examined the definition of formative feedback, student success, and intentional follow-ups. Second, in detail, the study explored the goals of formative/constructive feedback, types and functions of feedback, faculty knowledge of good feedback, effective written feedback, the amount of feedback, and timing in providing feedback.

### **THE DEFINITION OF FORMATIVE FEEDBACK, STUDENT' SUCCESS, STUDENT AND LEARNER, AND INTENTIONAL FOLLOW-UPS**

#### **Formative Feedback**

According to Shute (2008), formative feedback is information communicated to the learner intending to modify thinking or behavior to increase knowledge, skills, and understanding in some content area or general skill (e.g., problem-solving) (Shute, 2008; Gedye, S. (2010). Constructive feedback then must demonstrate clarity on style and relevancy, and faculty teaching online courses should seek to provide comments that students can comprehend and utilize to improve their responses to their fellow peers in the weekly interactive discussions and assignments (Gedye, 2010; Halverson, 2010; Shute, 2008).

**FIGURE 1  
FIVE-STAGE MODEL OF THE LEARNER**



*Adapted from the Five-stage model of the learner during a feedback cycle, Shute 2008*

Shute (2008) demonstrates five stages in the cycle of formative feedback as shown in Figure 1. First, in the current state stage, the student shows a degree of interest and goal orientation, a desire for self-efficacy, and prior knowledge. Second, with search and retrieval, students' cognitive mechanisms are

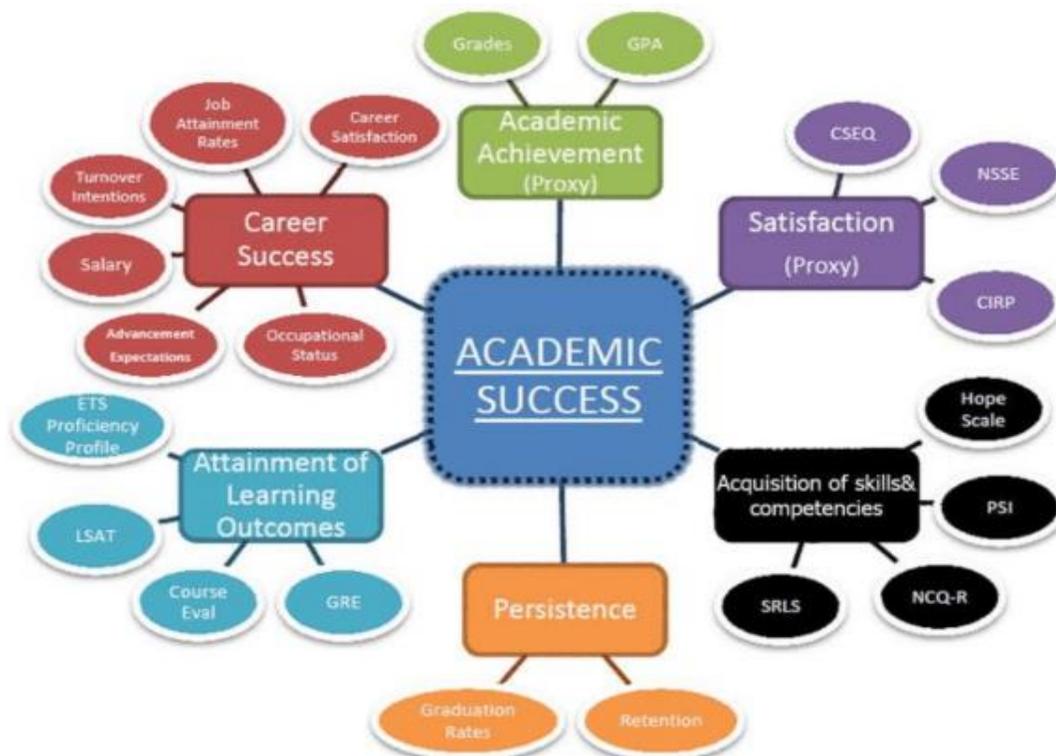
activated by an inquiry by retrieving stored prior knowledge. Third, After the inquiry, students move on to their responses to the questions or tasks the faculty gave. At this stage, students have certainty about their learning and develop expectations of what the feedback may bring.

Fourth, students move to the stage of evaluating the response depending on the feedback provided by the faculty. Fifth, the learners adjust relevant knowledge, self-efficacy, interests, and goals as a consequence of the response evaluation, and the next stage will depend on the adjustments made.

### Students' Success

Students' success in their learning is profound because it embraces the consequence of the whole student learning process. Alyahyan, & Düşteğör, (2020), citing (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006), wrote, "Student success is defined as academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, and post-college performance" gives us an understanding of what to expect in our sense of student success (para. 8).

**FIGURE 2  
ACADEMIC SUCCESS**



*Adopted from Alyahyan, & Düşteğör, 2020 and York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015*

After nine years later York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015) provided an amended and comprehensive definition of student success to include "Academic achievement, satisfaction, acquisition of skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of learning objectives, and career success" (Alyahyan, & Düşteğör, 2020, para. 8) as shown on figure 2.

Indeed, this definition is broad in its scope because it covers academic success, career, attainment of learning outcomes, acquisition of skills and competencies, satisfaction, and all connective tissues of each success because the success of our students must grow and yield fruits beyond the internet class doors.

## Student and Learner

Student and learner in this study are used interchangeably to mean women or men interacting with faculty/teachers and learning materials, engaging in learning to understand the educational phenomenon and change their behavioral attitudes towards themselves and the world around them.

Hence, students and learners are involved in the act of learning, and to effectively reach them, learning must be student/learner-centered, which means that “learning is personalized to the student’s interests, learning styles, cultural identities, life experiences, and personal challenges” (Kaput, 2018, para.1; Smart, & Csapo, 2007; O’Neill, & McMahon, 2005; Schunk, 1989). Hence, providing feedback to students/learners becomes the whole mark of good teaching and learning, but we need to do it right, and it must meet students’ learning needs (Boud, & Molloy, 2013; Boud, & Molloy, 2012; Wright, 2011).

## Intentional Follow-Ups (IFs)

Intentional follow-ups mean that online teaching faculty monitor students’ learning process, examining if students are missing assignments and showing slowness in submitting responses to interactive discussions and assignments. In this IF process, the faculty will then contact the students via email, and Zoom video conferences, to learn students’ preferences for feedback, correct, reteach, and redirect students to improve performance in their learning and overall reshape their path to success in their learning (Recep, Korkmaz, Bacanak, & Arslan, 2018; Easterday, Rees Lewis, & Gerber, 2017).

As a result of intentional follow-ups (IF) faculty mentor, help/support, and waken up some of the slow students in the class, some students need a little push, an email message, and a call if need be. To meet my students’ learning needs via feedback, I created the Intentional Follow-ups Chart 1 below. For confidentiality, I will use pseudo-names to show what we can do with IF concept in faculty feedback efforts.

**CHART 1**  
**INTENTIONAL FOLLOW-UPS (IPUS)**

Student’s Name	Method	Date	Need/Question/Wake-Up Call	Faculty Feedback
EUNICE	EMAIL	MARCH 21, 2023	<i>Professor Mbuva, I want to get an A in your class. So, I am trying to complete last week’s extra opportunity to earn those 2 points. How long should the reflective summary take to get the 2 points awarded?</i>	Eunice, you are very zealous about obtaining an A in my class. First, I want you to know that it is possible to get an A. Second, you will write a three-paragraph summative reflective essay about your week four learning experience using the materials provided, conversations with peers in the weekly discussions, and my presentation in the class, emails, and announcements.
Mather	Email	March 14, 2023	<i>In what practical way can we use 504, IEPs knowledge, and IDEA?</i>	Excellent question Mather. As a teacher in your classroom, you will use the knowledge

				of 504, IDEA, and IEPs to recommend to the school administration and parents the special needs students who need special attention using the provisions provided by Federal Law for learners. As educators, we are advocates for all students. So, evaluate your students to know their performance, then let your school provide support.
Mary	Email	March 9, 2023	<i>I gave the student a grade (I), meaning incomplete work, when I posted my class grades in January 2023. And I appealed for a provision of six months for the student to finish the unfinished work through individualized tutoring, so I took it upon myself to mentor the student on behalf of the university because I wanted the Student to succeed. Now, the Student is silent, and the due dates are over without assignment submission per the agreement. So the six months are way out there, but I wanted the Student to wake up and finish the work. In the other column on the right, you will see my wake-up feedback to the student, and I hope to get a response.</i>	<p>Good evening, Mary!</p> <p>On February 17, 2023, we met to plan the removal of your “T” grade from your records. To remove it, you agreed to submit your assignments, and you have not advanced in your grade book or emailed them to me. I am very concerned because the time set for you to surrender these assignments is running short.</p> <p>Therefore, these are the dates to submit assignments.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Week One Assignments - 1A and 1B - Posting date February 20, 2023.</li> <li>2. Week Two Assignments - 2A and 2B - Posting date February 27, 2023.</li> </ol>

				<p>3. Week Three Assignments - 3A and 3B - Posting date March 6, 2023.</p> <p>4. Week Four Assignments - 4A - Posting date March 13, 2023.</p> <p>All these dates are overdue, and I want to know how to help you succeed.</p> <p>Please submit these assignments by emailing me as soon as possible. All of them are late, and I am concerned. So please let me see an email responding as quickly as possible.</p>
Mary			<p><i>Good morning professor Mbuva, my apologies that I have not replied. I haven't checked my email; I am still working on the assignments. I'll try to finish them this week and send them soon.</i></p>	<p>Mary, I am glad you responded to my late assignments feedback. I want to support you in completing your course successfully, and I have volunteered my time to help you. When finished, please submit your assignments and allow me time to evaluate them. I will want us to meet via zoom to go through your work to ascertain that you completed the learning outcomes of your course and that you are ready to face your teaching profession without difficulty.</p>
Mumbi	Email	March 7, 2023	<p><i>Good morning Dr. Mbuva,</i></p>	<p>Yes, that is correct. Feedback:</p>

			<p><i>My teammate and I were wondering if the reflection part of this assignment had to be done together because the questions asked in the assignment appear to be directed to us individuals by asking us what we learned from doing this assignment. Thank you so much for the clarification.</i></p> <p><i>Sincerely,</i></p>	<p>As you write it, you can use the information you gained as you discussed it together. But you are to present it as a personal reflection. So please take it as a summative analysis of your learning experience in the 3C field experience assignment. Please let me know if this feedback meets your academic need.</p> <p>Thanks, Dr. Mbuva</p>
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## THE GOAL OF FORMATIVE FEEDBACK

Shute (2008) continues to show that the main goal of formative feedback as, (1) to enhance learning, performance, or both, engendering the formation of accurate, targeted conceptualizations and skills; and (2) to shape the perception and cognition, or action of the learner (para. 1).

So, in a nutshell, the purpose of formative feedback as part of the formative assessment of learning is to influence and increase students' learning skills and content comprehension, enhance problem-solving and insights on specific content areas (Recep, Korkmaz, Bacanak, & Arslan, 2018; Easterday, Rees Lewis, & Gerber, 2017; Goldin, Narciss, Foltz, & Bauer, 2017; Halverson, 2010)

## SOME OF THE TYPES OF FORMATIVE FEEDBACK

Shute (2008) illuminates this study by demonstrating that we have different types of feedback, some of which are to be understood as response-specific, goal-directed, and immediately delivered.

However, we must be aware that regardless of the types of feedback we might have, we must consider students' attitudes and perceptions towards learning and feedback for effective results of growth and satisfaction (Sakuma, Yoshii, & Murota, 2021; Ogange, Agak, Okelo, & Kiprotich, 2018; Ferguson, 2011).

### The Functions of Formative Feedback

Shute (2008) speaks about the functions of feedback at length, but two stand out as "directive and facilitative" (p.156). Directive feedback informs students of what in the assignments needs fixing, amending, or embellishing, whereas facilitative feedback seeks to guide students to make their revisions and conceptualization of the content they are learning, thus, leading them to growth (Shute, 2008, p.157; Martin, 2020; Al-Hattami, 2019; Halverson, 2010; Ferguson, 2011)

## HOW FACULTY KNOW THAT THEY HAVE GIVEN GOOD FEEDBACK

We know that the feedback we give to our students is excellent and effective when we see that the students (1) are learning and that their work shows improvement; (2) they are becoming more motivated in their learning that they believe in themselves, can learn, and that they have control of their learning; and (3) our classrooms are developing a new democratic, social, and emotionally secure learning environment where students can exercise constructive criticism (Al-Hattami, 2019; Tarrant, & Thiele, 2016; Hein, 2016; Gordon, 2016; Lee, 2014; Ferguson, 2011; Brookhart, 2008; Stern, & Solomon, 2006).

Finally, studies show that effective feedback is one that students act on it to improve their future academic work and overall enhance their learning process, and as cited by Glover and Brown (2006) from extensive studies on feedback by Bibbs & Simpson, 2004, effective feedback must include these elements written below:

- *Is frequent, timely, sufficient, and detailed enough.*
- *Can be linked to the purpose of the assessment task and criteria.*
- *Is understandable, given the students' level of sophistication; and*
- *Focuses on learning rather than marks by relating explicitly to future work and tasks.* (Glover & Brown, 2006, para. 5; Bibbs & Simpson, 2004)

### **How Effective Written Feedback Looks Like**

Effective written feedback should include clarity, specificity, and a favorable tone. Feedback should be conveyed with clarity so that students can hear and understand, for they come from different linguistic contexts; hence, clarity is necessary. Specificity is required when giving feedback to students because feedback must not be too narrow or too broad, but it must be right and written in a specific vocabulary and context.

Finally, the tone of our feedback must be reasonable and right in that we include in our communication tone expressive quality, where students will hear and understand; and the tone must have fitting words and style, inspiring, with the ability to encourage and motivate and inspire learners (Al-Hattami, 2019; Lee, 2014; Brookhart, 2008).

### **Some Examples of Feedback**

In their study on how feedback could be delivered to students, Boyce, Markos, Jenkins, & Loftus (1996), showed that it can be delivered through peers, teachers writing it, and video. Also, other studies showed that feedback from a teacher whom students respect as credible is more effective. In addition, seeing that their teachers read and think about their work makes them happy and that their teachers care enough to examine their work, boosting their efficacy and enhancing learning (Brookhart, 2017; Boyce et al., 1996).

While Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) wrote on the role of collaboration in writing indicated that the teachers write some feedback in a corrective manner and that students when they observed students collaborate in pairs or team learning groups, their discussions and dialogues yielded feedback to all students in that group and enhanced learning greatly. Therefore, it is evident that when students study together, their conversations and reasoning boost understanding and efficacy. Hence, it is plausible that collaborative feedback is authentic, less mysterious, and compelling.

## **THE AMOUNT OF CONTENT CONTAINED IN FACULTY FEEDBACK**

### **The Power of Faculty Feedback**

Faculty feedback is a powerful teaching and learning tool when appropriately applied. It should contain helpful information for the learners, and the feedback's content should be constructed so that students can hear and understand it (Eva, Armson, Holmboe, Lockyer, Loney, Mann, & Sargeant, 2012; Brookhart, 2008; Cohen, 1985).

### **The Amount of Feedback**

Undoubtedly, it's hard to determine the amount of feedback various faculty groups should provide their students. But the amount of feedback we give students should meet students' learning goals, be useable, and connect to students' learning needs overall to move them to the next learning level (Al-Hattami, 2019; Lee, 2014; Brookhart, 2008; Brookhart, 2008).

Further, the feedback should "give students a clear understanding of what to do next on a point or points that they can see they need to work on" (Brookhart, 2008, p.24; Bansilal, James, & Naidoo, 2010).

### *How Healthy Feedback Looks Like*

Undoubtedly, healthy feedback is essential for students' learning because it touches on the affective dimensions of learning, which include students' moods, feelings and attitudes (Wijoyo, Santamoko, Muliansyah, Yonata, & Handoko, 2020; Jackson, 2018; Park, Plass, & Brünken, 2014).

Hence, healthy feedback must be specific to learning, clear, conceptual, and procedural learning tasks, and collectively, formative feedback is reasonable with general guidelines to direct meaningful learning (Eva, Armson, Holmboe, Lockyer, Loney, Mann, & Sargeant, 2012; Bansilal, James, & Naidoo, 2010; Shute, 2008).

## **TIMING APPLIED AS A SUPPORTIVE ASSET IN FEEDBACK**

### **Purpose of Timing**

First, the sense of timing is to provide immediate or delayed feedback to “help students hear it and use it” (Brookhart, 2008, p.20). Second, faculty should give feedback to students while they “are still mindful of the topic, assignment, or performance in questions”; then, we can say that we have had good timing when students are “returning tests and assignments promptly” (Brookhart, 2008, ps. 20, 21; Al-Hattami, 2019; Patil et al., 2015; Lee, 2014; Brookhart, 2008).

### **Timing Is Everything in Learning**

Indeed, timing is everything in learning. For instance, immediately a student responds to a question or a specific task, faculty needs to promptly provide feedback because it is necessary to enhance the effectiveness of student learning (Patil, Hoyle, Schlegel, Kapadia, & Lee, 2015; Hatziapostolou, & Paraskakis, 2010; Shutes, 2008).

### **Students' Ability Is Vital**

However, students' ability to respond or make some corrections to a given task will undoubtedly depend on their characteristics. But as far as good teaching is concerned, there is no excuse for providing feedback (Chong, 2017; Patil, et al., 2015; Hattie, & Timperley, 2007).

### **Immediate Feedback Is Necessary**

With one month PK-12 teacher preparation program at my university, I have noticed that immediate feedback enhances comprehension, retention of knowledge (because there are no gaps), efficacy, and preparedness to move to the next level of knowledge in the new class of a new month (Patil, et al., 2015; Hatziapostolou, & Paraskakis, 2010; Shutes, 2008).

## **DATA FROM SURVEYS**

I served twelve questionnaires to twelve students, and only six responded and gave their comments concerning their understanding of student success, formative feedback, intentional follow-ups, healthy feedback, examples of feedback, functions of feedback, when to know feedback is effective, timing, the amount of feedback given, and other ideas. These six students responded as follows.

### **Student Success**

In the area of student success, taking students' words verbatim, the questionnaires said,

- From my understanding, students' academic success is how our students perform in their coursework and their behavior while at school.
- Academic success is more than a letter grade or percentage. It is not just assignment or task completion. Instead, academic success consists of understanding the content and being equipped to implement what has been taught by demonstrating understanding.
- Students' academic success can be acknowledged and celebrated in various ways. A habitually absent student can be celebrated and praised for their change in attendance. A student who

strives for social acceptance may not seek assistance when needed. When this behavior is recognized and learned, the teacher can provide academic support in various modalities to support the student's academic success while considering their social pressures. Students who change their study habits and class participation should be acknowledged and praised for their change and desire for success. Students' successes can and should be acknowledged & celebrated in an individual format and tailored to their personal development.

- Student academic success involves the student's willingness to learn, apply content, and understand the subject matter they are taught. It also involves the institution's support and resources and the effective teaching of professors.
- Student academic success involves taking education as their own, setting and achieving a goal, and being self-motivated.
- Students achieve learning expectations, respond to questions, and complete their assignments on time.

### **Formative Feedback**

In the area of formative feedback, taking students' words verbatim, the questionnaires said,

- Formative feedback is the feedback regarding where the student is compared to where they should be in academic achievement.
- It is my understanding that formative feedback is when the feedback that is given addresses any gaps in a student's knowledge of the content and, at the same time, provides helpful feedback on how to improve along with strategies to do so.
- Formative feedback has particularly benefited me as an adult student and learner. Praising success has been significantly motivating, and understanding gaps have provided a clear understanding of how and where to make changes. I believe my students benefit and learn when I provide formative feedback and clear connections to develop a high order of thinking and overall academic success.
- Formative feedback involves formal and informal assessments.
- Is feedback that knowledge driven?
- Organized responses to students work to inform them of their academic progress., and providing direction on time.

### **Intentional Follow-Ups**

In the area of intentional follow-ups, taking students' words verbatim, the questionnaires said,

- My understanding of this concept would be to continue to check in on students for a specific reason.
- Intentional follow-ups with students allow the teacher to check for understanding, assess if learning objectives were achieved, and determine if further enrichment, reteaching, or review is necessary or if a different strategy needs to be used to help students succeed.
- Intentional follow-ups with students support social and emotional learning and aids in developing and creating an interpersonal relationship between teacher and student. Intentional follow-ups will also help the student's representation in the shared learning space.
- Intentional follow-ups mean the instructor earmarks time to provide additional feedback to students after their initial assessment. It's intentional because the instructor prepares to dive deeper into the conversation surrounding the students' results, progress, and understanding or lack of understanding.
- Intentional follow-ups of students is when the teacher or educator does follow-ups to help students succeed.
- Faculty are trying to follow students to ensure they do and complete their work on time and correctly.

## Healthy Feedback

In the area of healthy feedback, taking students' words verbatim, the questionnaires said,

- Healthy feedback focuses on the good and ways to improve; it touches on the weaknesses and offers suggestions.
- Healthy feedback is honest and should not be entirely negative. It should be given with positive comments first, where the teacher looks for areas that can be applauded for the student's efforts. Next, any criticisms or unmet expectations should be delivered with a warm yet concerned tone. Finally, healthy feedback gives constructive suggestions to the student that will provide meaningful directives and changes they can make that help move them toward success.
- Healthy feedback is personally direct, provides clear guidance in areas that need improvement, and celebrates a high order of thinking and mastery in the assignment.
- Healthy feedback starts with positive feedback and goes into areas of improvement, followed by solutions and support that sides in improvement.
- Healthy feedback is like a business model; both client and customer benefit, and healthy feedback satisfies both.
- One that meets students' learning needs on time. Answers my questions, makes corrections, and directs me to the next level of my learning.

## Examples of Feedback

In the area of examples of feedback, taking students' words verbatim, the questionnaires said,

- Verbal, written, or gestural.
- Some feedback examples include but are not limited to Compliments, Positive comments, Constructive Criticism that doesn't attack the person but gives helpful details for change, "I wonder if." statements, and suggest areas for growth.
- Good job, excellent work; keep up the good work. While these celebrate success, they are generic and not personal. Dr. Mbuva has provided comprehensive feedback that was personally connected to me as a student and focused on strengths and areas needing improvement.
- Surveys, interactive class activities.
- Feedback given me by teachers opened my mind to new ideas, feedback by parents helped me become a better person, and feedback at work sharpened my skills.
- Constructive reinforcement. You are on the right path. You work hard, and the results of your learning are showing up. Corrective feedback shows me where I need improvement.

## The Functions of Feedback

In the area of the functions of feedback, taking students' words verbatim, the questionnaires said,

- Faculty feedback offers different teaching styles and for others with non-biased behavior regarding students to contribute.
- Faculty feedback is essential in the learning process. It can encourage you and validate when you are on the right track. It can help you see what you may not notice about things you are doing well, mainly because we are often our worst critics. Feedback from faculty when they notice something we may have made a mistake or are not doing right allows us to correct course and adjust for our and our students' benefit.
- Faculty feedback allows students to be seen and acknowledged for their success and areas needing improvement; this has been particularly helpful in my current online setting.
- A better understanding of areas of improvement.
- It was a tool for success and motivation.
- Providing direction 2. Correction. 3. Encourage.

### **When to Know Feedback Is Effective**

In the area of when to know feedback is effective, taking students' words verbatim, the questionnaires said,

- You know faculty feedback is effective when you can see new ideas and gain a new experience.
- Faculty feedback is effective when you use that feedback to self-reflect and make any necessary adjustments to your work, participation, or implementation of the feedback.
- Faculty feedback is effective when there is growth in the higher order of thinking and when areas identified need improvement become comprehensively developed and improved.
- When I can apply the feedback to improve in future assignments/ tests
- It motivates me to desire to learn more and opens my mind to new ideas
- When I meet my learning goals. 2. When I understand the expectations of my studies. 3. When they are precise, prompt, and relevant.

### **Timing in Giving Feedback**

In the area of timing, taking students' words verbatim, the questionnaires said,

- I expect feedback from faculty in IEP meetings and weekly during PLC meetings.
- I usually anticipate faculty feedback within 2-3 days of submitting the assignment. That looks reasonable, yet at the same time, I understand that other circumstances may cause faculty to need more time to provide feedback.
- Timing is essential. I expect feedback when grading occurs and scores are available for student view.
- At least one week after assignment submission
- At least in the middle of the course, not at the end, if possible, as soon as possible
- Immediate feedback is the best because it helps me do my work on time.

### **The Amount of Feedback Given to Students**

In the area of formative feedback, taking students' words verbatim, the questionnaires said,

- I expect immense feedback and always have listening ears as a first-year teacher.
- I don't believe there is a specific amount of feedback as long as honest and healthy feedback on the assignment.
- I honestly did not expect feedback, but have been delighted to receive feedback and have had the opportunity to learn and make changes when necessary.
- Interactive classroom activities, surveys,
- The feedback that is helpful to the course.
- One that meets my learning needs is the questions I give to the faculty. 2. Detailed enough to enhance comprehension.

### **Other Ideas**

In the area of ideas, taking students' words verbatim, the questionnaires said,

- Some things I would add would be to make them routine with progress trackers or weekly notes that are organized along with frequent meetings with students/guardians/ staff.
- As long as faculty is knowledgeable, understanding, kind, encouraging, available for help if needed, and makes content meaningful for their students, that is what most students would agree is sufficient.
- I would add to formative feedback by keeping an individual log for each student to refer to and reflect upon how and when the feedback was best received and applied to their academic success. My intentional follow-ups would be trimmed to ensure that I am reaching each of my students intentionally with care and providing joy in their accomplishments.
- Follow-ups are just as necessary as feedback.

- Feedback is an essential tool.
- Keep the feedback brief, relevant and timely. 2. Constructive and encouraging feedback boosts the self-efficacy of students.

## **DATA FROM OBSERVATION**

Throughout my observations in my classes, I found that students appreciate faculty feedback, which can hear and understand experience because it helps them to know if they are on the right path in their learning and that they want to know that faculty cares about their education. Second, they want timely, comprehensive, precise, and relevant formative feedback. Third, students also wish to receive a measured amount of constructive feedback based on their hearing and understanding.

Fourth, they want to know that the faculty cares by providing frequent formative feedback. Fifth, they have expressed the desire to see faculty involved in their learning by being there, that is, feeling their presence, which is possible through feedback, calls, and Zoom video conferencing.

### **Data From Interviews**

In the interviews of a few students who represented the classes I have taught since January 2023, it was clear that there was a correlation between my observation report and their responses. First, students expressed satisfaction with timely, clear, precise, and meaningful formative feedback. Second, students affirmed that faculty feedback encourages and supports them and promotes their self-efficacy. Third, students confessed that they struggle with the questions in their minds and related assignments when faculty do not respond promptly, with feedback leading them to develop their high thinking skills and desire to learn.

Fourth, students expressed that since learning is in the online learning systems, their only communication with faculty is via formative feedback. Fifth, in the learning teams, students needed faculty to have a concerted effort to sharpen feedback by providing brief but detailed feedback for them to hear and comprehend.

### **Results of the Study**

The study aimed to understand the effects of best practices of formative feedback and intentional follow-ups (IFUs) on online students' success. The study examined nine questions, including, first, what is the definition of formative feedback, students' success, intentional follow-ups, and student and learner. Second, what is the goal of formative feedback? Third, what are some of the types of feedback? Fourth, what are the functions of feedback? Fifth, how do faculty know that they have given good feedback? Sixth, what does effective written feedback look like? Seventh, how does healthy feedback look like? Eighth, what amount of content should be contained in faculty feedback? And, ninth, how is timing applied as a supportive asset in feedback?

### **Q1. Definitions of Formative Feedback, Students' Success, Intentional Follow-ups (IFUs), and Student and Learner**

The study showed that formative feedback is new information communicated to the learners, intending to modify thinking or behavior to increase knowledge, skills, and understanding in any given content area of students' study and development of problem-solving skills. Further, the study showed that formative feedback must be clear in style and relevance, and students should hear it, understand it, and use it to improve their knowledge and how they respond to discussions and assignments. Data from the surveys showed that students perceive formative feedback as one that the faculty gives to address any gaps in a student's knowledge of a given content to provide help and to show how to improve along with strategies to do so. Also, students' responses showed that faculty feedback should be knowledge-driven and organized to inform learners of their academic progress and provide timely direction.

Second, the study defined students' success as academic achievement, satisfaction, acquisition of skills and competencies, persistence, attaining of learning objectives, and career success beyond the classroom experience. (York, Gibson & Rankin, 2015; Alyahyan & Dustegor, 2020).

Third, intentional follow-ups (IFUs) occur when faculty consistently monitor students' learning process, examining if the student is missing performance in assignments and discussions and if there are gaps that faculty might bridge to allow students to learn without barriers. For example, the faculty made a concerted effort to follow up with the students via email and organized Zoom video conferences, as shown in Chart 1, where faculty can understand students' preferences for feedback, help students with corrections, reteach, and redirect student learning to improve the overall comprehension of content and performance. Data from surveys agree with the rest of the study, showing that IFUs faculty makes an intentional check-up of students' learning, touching on the social and emotional learning which help in creating personal interactions between faculty and students, hence allowing the faculty to understand where the students are, assess whether learning objectives are achieved, check whether students are making progress, or are lacking understanding; and determine further enrichment and reteaching to help students to succeed.

Fourth, the study used student and learner interchangeably because they are engaged in the act and process of learning. Therefore, to effectively meet their learning needs, faculty must reach them. Their curriculum must be student/learner-centered, where learning is personalized to students' learning interests, styles, identities, experiences, and life challenges.

## **Q2. The Goal of Formative Feedback**

The study showed that the ultimate goal of formative feedback embraces intricate elements such as enhancing learning performance, influencing comprehension, learning skills, cognition, problem-solving, and insights into specific content areas.

## **Q3. Some of the Types of Formative Feedback**

The study found that some types of feedback include response-specific and goal-directed. The study also showed that faculty must deliver these types of feedback immediately and consider students' attitudes and perceptions toward learning and feedback to support students' learning, growth, and satisfaction.

## **Q4. The Functions of Formative Feedback**

The study found two functions of formative feedback: directive and facilitative. With directive feedback, faculty informs students of what needs fixing or amending in the assignment. Whereas, with facilitative feedback, faculty seeks to guide students in making revisions and conceptualizations of the content they are learning to support students' learning and growth.

Data from the surveys found that feedback is essential in the student's learning process because it encourages and validates when students are on the right learning path. In addition, formative feedback is a tool for success and motivation that faculty uses to correct and redirect students' learning, helping them understand improvement areas.

## **Q5. How Faculty Know That They Have Given Good Feedback**

The study found that faculty know that they are giving excellent and effective feedback when they discover that students are learning, their work is improved, are becoming motivated to learn, self-efficacy is enhanced as students believe that they can learn, can control their learning, students are participating in a democratic, social, and emotionally secure learning environment where they exercise constructive criticism and development of higher thinking skills and problem-solving skills.

## **Q6. How Effective Written Feedback Looks Like**

The study found that effective written feedback should include clarity, specificity and be beneficial to the learners. The faculty must clarify feedback for students to understand, considering their linguistic contexts. On the other hand, specificity requires faculty to provide feedback to students about its narrowness or broadness, but it must be correct and written in specific vocabulary and context. Finally, the tone of the

feedback must be reasonable, sound, expressive quality, fitting, and inspiring, with the ability to encourage and motivate students to want to learn.

Data from the surveys found that an effective feedback faculty could see new ideas and gain new learning experiences, students self-reflect on their learning, that they make necessary adjustments, show growth in the higher order of thinking, students are applying feedback to improve in doing future assignments, students are motivated to desire to learn more with an open mind to new ideas; and when students meet their learning goals, understand the expectations of the study, that the feedback is precise, prompt, and relevant.

### **Q7. How Healthy Feedback Looks Like**

This study found that healthy feedback is essential for student learning because it is personal and connects with the affective dimensions of learning, not limited to student moods, feelings, and attitudes, thus showing that healthy feedback should be specific to learning, clear, conceptual, should contain procedural learning tasks, reasonable, with guidelines to direct students' meaningful learning.

On the other hand, survey data showed that healthy feedback should focus on sound, meaningful, and constructive directives to help students succeed; it touches on the weaknesses and offers suggestions. Further, the study indicated that healthy feedback that is honest and should not be entirely negative; positive comments should lead to areas where the teacher applauds and celebrates high order of thinking and mastery of assignments and students' learning efforts; then following statements of the feedback should bring in the criticisms of unmet learning expectations and should be delivered warmly, yet in a concerned tone. Finally, healthy feedback must meet students' learning needs and should answer questions, make corrections, and direct students to the next level of learning. Overall, healthy feedback should benefit and satisfy both faculty and students.

### **Q8. Some Examples of Feedback**

Studies have shown examples of feedback to be delivered through peers, teachers writing it, or presenting it in the video. The teachers' respect and credibility in providing feedback is critical because students seeing that teachers are reading and thinking about their work shows teachers care, boosting learners' efficacy big time.

Further, when students study and work together, they provide feedback to one another effectively because their conversations and reasoning together promote their understanding of the subject matter studied and their self-efficacy.

### **Q9. The Amount of Content Contained in Faculty Formative Feedback**

On the other hand, data from student surveys showed that students expect verbal, written, and gestural feedback. Also, students expect faculty feedback to include positive compliments such as good job, excellent work, keep up the good work, you are on the right path, and constructive criticism, which does not seek to attack the person but gives helpful details for change, and statements which are corrective suggesting areas of change and improvement.

The study found that formative feedback as a tool for learning is powerful. However, it should contain valuable and helpful information for learners, and faculty should construct it so that students can hear and understand it without difficulties, regardless of the amount. Further, the study found that it's not easy to determine the amount faculty should provide to students because of varied situations of where all students are; however, feedback should meet students' learning goals, be useable, and overall aimed at moving students to the next learning level and it should give students a clear understanding of the expectations of the next point of their learning outcomes.

Data from surveys revealed that first-year student-teachers may need an immense amount of feedback. However, some data showed that a specific amount of feedback does not matter as long as it is honest and healthy. In contrast, others indicated that they do not expect feedback but are delighted to receive it because it provides an opportunity to learn and make changes when needed. Further, the data showed that feedback

should be interactive, inform of surveys, be helpful, meet students' learning needs, and be detailed enough to enhance overall understanding.

#### **Q10. Timing Applied as a Supportive Asset in Feedback**

Studies have focused on timing in responding to students concerning their assignments, writing, or work and have shown that faculty should give feedback to students while they are thinking about the topic, lesson, or performance questions. Further, the studies indicated that a quick response is mandatory to enhance the effectiveness of student learning. Also, the studies showed that educators should consider students' abilities in responding to corrections to a given task depending on their learning characteristics. Still, faculty must provide feedback at all times. Finally, the studies showed that immediate feedback enhances subject comprehension, knowledge retention, efficacy, and preparedness to move to the next level of learning.

On the other hand, data from student surveys showed that timing is essential because students expect feedback after their work is graded, sometimes in the middle of the course, not at the end, within two to three days after submitting the assignments to allow faculty some time to respond. Again, however, students expect feedback; if possible, faculty should provide feedback as soon as possible.

#### **Discussions of the Study**

In the discussion of this study, I want to start with a question: what does this study mean to faculty? The study aimed to understand the effects of the best practices of formative feedback and intentional follow-ups on online students' success. The study's results indicated the significance of defining three critical terms of the study's purpose: formative feedback, students' success, and intentional follow-ups.

Formative feedback, the new information communicated to learners by the faculty, seeks to modify thinking or behavior to increase knowledge, skills, and understanding in various content areas and develop problem-solving skills. Students' perception of feedback is significant in this study because they see formative feedback as a way faculty would provide information to bridge the knowledge gaps students might have and must be knowledge-driven but organized to inform learners of their academic progress timely. With student success the results of the study indicated that success deals with students' academic achievement, satisfaction, and acquisition of skills and competencies. In contrast, intentional follow-ups apply to faculty when they consistently monitor students' learning process, ensuring they are on the right path, identifying the learning gaps, and bridging them. For example, communication might be done via email or Zoom video conferencing. Further, essential to this study was the understanding of the goal of formative feedback, types of formative feedback, functions of formative feedback, how faculty know that they have given good feedback, how written feedback looks like, how healthy feedback looks like, some examples of feedback, amount of content in feedback, and timing in feedback.

Irrefutably, the study results showed that formative feedback aims to enhance students' performance and influence comprehension, learning skills, cognition, problem-solving, and related insight based on the subject learned. This understanding is critical because faculty must establish specific learning goals and provide feedback to achieve them. Further, the results showed two types of formative feedback, response-specific and goal-directed, and must be given immediately considering students' attitudes and abilities. Also, the results of the studies showed that the functions of formative feedback should be directive, where the faculty informs students of areas to be fixed or amended, and facilitative, where the faculty seeks to guide students in making their revisions and conceptualizations to support their learning process. Moreover, the findings of the study showed that faculty know that they have written effective feedback when they are precise, prompt, clear, and specific in the narrowness or broadness of the corrections students should make and that the faculty writes correctly and proper vocabulary with a reasonable tone which seeks to encourage, motivate, and inspire students to want to learn more. Faculty should consider students' moods, attitudes, and feelings when providing healthy feedback. Their feedback should be specific to learning, sound, meaningful, constructive directives, showing weaknesses and strengths, and conceptual and reasonable procedural learning tasks and guidelines for students learning.

Moreover, the study results indicated that feedback could be delivered to learners through peers, where students work together, faculty writing, and video presentations. Credibility was a characteristic I didn't know would come out in this study. Still, the results showed that faculty with credible respect who devote time to reading and thinking about students' work make students happy and boost their efficacy. When students converse and reason together, their feedback promotes understanding of the subject matter and their overall learning process. Regarding the amount of content contained in faculty formative feedback, the study showed that regardless of the content, students benefit when feedback is positive, contains valuable and helpful information, and faculty provides honest and healthy feedback. Finally, the timing of the feedback was highly regarded in this study. The results of the study showed that students expect feedback from their teachers. As such, a quick response from faculty is mandatory to enhance students' learning; however, faculty should consider learners' abilities and learning characteristics.

The meaning and interpretation of the findings of this study hinge on the faculty's respectability and credibility. Learners' knowledge that faculty cares to read, think, and honestly evaluate their work, they are satisfied, their self-efficacy is boosted, and their desire to learn is expanded. Hence, the findings of this study imply that faculty should provide response-specific and goal-directed feedback to students at all times to boost their learning and redirect them to the right learning path. More importantly, effective feedback should be specific, individualized, kind, constructive, sensitive to students' learning needs, and encouraging, with suggestions for the next step and improvement. Equally, effective feedback should be timely, positive, supportive, non-punitive, demonstrative of what the students did well and correctly, showing clear steps to meet learning outcomes, and clear enough for students to understand.

The study hypothesized that effective feedback and intentional follow-ups enhance students' success. Throughout the study's findings, the hypothesis was upheld with several surprises that faculty's respect and credibility are vital to changing the meaning and applicability of the feedback process. Second, my observations, conversations with students in the follow-up sessions, and student surveys showed that students expect feedback; thus, this means that if faculty do not provide feedback to students concerning their assignments, discussions, etc., we do not only cause a learning glitch, but we impede growth and student learning. Finally, the significance of this study is essential to me as a researcher-practitioner because I wanted to enhance my understanding of how I can use best practices in providing feedback to my students to improve their efficacy, desire to learn, and inspire teachers who will transform the classrooms of America and the whole world. This need was met, but to my surprise, I applied the elements I learned within the last three months since I started this study. The follow-up concept was helpful because I did follow-ups when I saw students late submitting their work, not joining online discussions, and not attending the voluntary video conferencing. I got positive results as students became interested in the class and submitted their work on time.

Therefore, knowing that I have the tools to provide healthy and effective formative feedback to my students through this study brings joy to me and my teaching. However, to improve the study, a more prolonged study time and a more comprehensive number of students are necessary to gather more understanding of feedback from the student's perspective. I desire to share this study with my colleagues at the university, and I hope that the published article will help faculty in other universities understand the best ways to provide feedback to their students to enhance learning.

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