

Advice from Teachers and Administrators



Who We Are

As current teachers and school administrators from across Massachusetts, we came together through our participation in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s 2015-2016 Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets to discuss and share our ideas about student and staff feedback. Our opinions and advice are based on our collective experiences, which represent a wide range of school types and roles. We believe that in order to create a culture of collaboration and continuous learning, every voice needs to be represented. Collecting feedback from students and staff allows for this, with positive impacts on teaching, learning, and leadership. After reading this report, please share it with your colleagues, or use it as a discussion piece.

**Using Student & Staff Feedback to Improve Practice**



Representing the expertise and experiences of teachers and administrators from ESE’s Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets, this resource provides teachers and school leaders with strategies for collecting and using staff and student feedback in support of continuous learning and growth.

* **Teachers** can use this resource to develop strategies to collect meaningful feedback from students that will inform and improve their instructional and classroom management practices, and to help them translate students’ observations and feedback into actionable steps that will improve student achievement.
* **School leaders** can use this resource to think about how to collect feedback from staff to drive school improvement planning processes and evaluation goals, to assist educators in collecting meaningful student feedback that positively impacts practice, and to establish a school climate that encourages the sharing of ideas between all levels.
* **School leadership teams** can use this resource to inform a shared set of expectations and objectives around collecting and using student and staff feedback to improve practice.

**How do I use this resource?**

**WHY Collect Feedback from Students & Staff?**

As educators, we embrace and value the feedback we receive from students and staff, particularly when it supports our growth and the growth of our students. We engage with assessment data on a regular basis, but there are other ways to collect and reflect on our impact as educators. Student and staff feedback can inform the art of our practice in varied and invaluable ways.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **As a teacher, you might wonder…** | * Do I have a solid grasp of each student’s learning needs?
* Did my students find this lesson engaging?
* Do my students feel safe and supported in my classroom?
* Are there any barriers in my classroom or in my teaching that are impeding student learning?
* What would my students like to learn more about?
 |
|  |
| **As a school leader, you might wonder…** | * Do teachers have what they need to be effective in the classroom?
* Is this new initiative working?
* Do teachers feel that their voice is heard in school-wide decision-making?
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**STUDENT & STAFF FEEDBACK IN EDUCATOR EVALUATION**

Feedback that informs professional growth opportunities for educators as well as targeted learning improvements for students should be viewed as an additional lens that teachers and administrators can use to reflect more deeply on their practice.

That said, you may still be jumping back and forth between these benefits to your work and the fear of the unknown. What will they say? It’s hard to put yourself *out there*! Many educators are also fearful that feedback from students or staff might be misunderstood or misused, especially when it plays a role in their supervision and evaluation. We can’t deny the important role feedback plays in illuminating our work—what’s going well, what’s really *working*, and where we can improve—so it’s important to push through these fears and find constructive, meaningful ways to collect and use feedback.

Using Feedback to Inform Goal Setting and Drive Practice

Feedback from students and staff is one piece of evidence used in an educator’s evaluation cycle. It is intended to be informative and helpful, not punitive or dispositive. Educators can use it in the following ways:

* **Determine meaningful goals** at the beginning of a school year by shedding light on areas of strength and areas for improvement.
* **Enrich conversations with their evaluator** by providing additional insight into the educator’s practice, helping the evaluator to reinforce and better target supports.

*I started using student surveys last year in an effort to bring a fresh, relevant perspective into my practice after almost a decade in the classroom. For the first time in my career, goal setting actually meant something, because I was able to connect it directly to feedback from my students, those who know best about my day-to-day practice.*

*My areas of strength and growth are no mystery to my students. Opting to let students discuss my practice through an anonymous survey allowed me to use relevant evidence to inform my practice, while, most importantly, increasing the intangible — student respect and engagement.*

*--High School Teacher*

Go here for more information about student and staff feedback in educator evaluation: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback/>

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Benefit #1 of Student & Staff Feedback

Engagement & Communication

* *Learn things that may not be immediately observable but that impact success*
* *Communicate and connect*

**Feedback from staff to school leaders…**

**Feedback from students to teachers…**

**…engages all learners.**

**…fosters communication.**

**…engages all building constituents.**

**…fosters communication.**



“As a teacher, the more I learn about my students the more I can help them be successful with the curriculum.”



“Collecting feedback allows me, as a school leader, to assess the clarity of my communication around schoolwide expectations and building based initiatives.”



* *Set goals, analyze effectiveness, and inform next steps*

Benefit #2 of Student & Staff Feedback

Teaching & Learning

**Feedback from students to teachers…**

**Feedback from staff to school leaders…**

**…informs and drives instruction.**

**…identifies barriers to student learning.**

**…assists in goal-setting.**

**…informs/drives school-wide initiatives.**

**…identifies barriers to staff success.**

**…assists in goal-setting.**

**…fosters communication.**



“I use the feedback to inform my next step [with my students]. Do we need to take a few steps back and revisit? Do I need to offer supports for some misconceptions. Do I need to challenge them more?”

-Middle School Teacher

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**…encourages reflection on teaching and learning.**

**…identifies areas of particular strength.**

**…encourages reflection on instructional leadership and support.**

**…identifies areas of particular strength.**

**…promotes a safe learning environment.**

**…fosters awareness of student needs.**

**…identifies opportunities for collaborative learning among students.**

**…promotes a professional culture of trust and respect.**

**…fosters awareness of staff concerns/needs.**

**…identifies opportunities for professional collaboration.**

**…fosters communication.**

Benefit #4 of Student & Staff Feedback

Reflection and Awareness

* *Ground reflections in data, not just your interpretation*

“As an administrator, I am often left to ‘read the tea leaves’ of my faculty’s perception of my leadership. However, direct responsive feedback allows me to use factual measurements of my impact on their practice as I reflect on my success.”

**Feedback from students to teachers…**

**Feedback from staff to school leaders…**

“In staff meetings, people can discuss strengths and areas for improvement without fear of reprisal.”

“In student driven courses [students] are highly engaged, not just because participation is most of their grade, but because they gave feedback to help design the course.”

-High School Teacher

**Feedback from students to teachers…**

**Feedback from staff to school leaders…**

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Benefit #3 of Student & Staff Feedback

Climate and Culture

* *Engage respondents in the process of analyzing feedback and developing solutions*

**HOW Do I Collect Meaningful Student and Staff Feedback?**

Just like anything else, collecting, receiving, and applying feedback to our practice actually *takes* practice, but it’s worth it!

**Consider the following three principles when choosing a feedback instrument:**

* Feedback should be **aligned to one or more**[MA Standards and Indicators for Effective Teaching Practice](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr35.html?section=03) or [Administrative Leadership](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr35.html?section=04) so that it yields information that is relevant to your practice.
* Feedback should be **informative and actionable** – it should tell you something about your practice that you can act on!
* Instruments must be **accessible to all potential students or staff members** so you can draw valid conclusions.



The first step into gaining valuable feedback is to decide where to start. Because you could collect feedback on just about anything, it’s important to think about your goals: Consider collecting feedback on something that you *think* you do very well to see what others think and/or why you do it well. Alternatively, seek out feedback about an area of your practice where you feel stuck or want to improve.

**How one teacher started to collect student feedback…**

**How one principal started to collect staff feedback…**

I realized that my means of asking for feedback had been limited over the years, so I am trying to incorporate more feedback this year. I do regular check-ins that not only assess what students know, but look for places where instruction may need to be clarified or corrected in the future. Along with that, I have students engage in regular reflections on assignments to not only self-evaluate, but to evaluate the process by which they received information and gained content. Finally, as the first trimester comes to an end, I will provide a student feedback form so that I can learn what students feel works best for them as a learner and what they might need more of in the classroom.

 –High School Teacher

After receiving feedback from the staff about my performance, I took the areas my staff had suggested needed improvement and shared the results at a faculty meeting. Staff were given red, yellow, and green stickers and asked to rate how they saw me moving toward addressing the feedback they had given me. When the stickers were on the charts, the whole staff had an opportunity to look with me at my growth. The process modeled for the staff what it looked like to be transparent about practice, which helped me to move forward in my work to promote a collaborative environment in the building; and it helped me monitor my own growth as a professional.

– Elementary School Principal

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 **TEACHERS FEEDBACK ADMINISTRATORS**

 **IDEAS**

* Exit slips (on meeting content/structure, collaborative work supports, etc)
* Suggestion box

QUICK DIPSTICKS

* Exit slips (on content, learning environment, lesson structure, etc)
* Mood Meter on activities

DISCUSSIONS

Go to

[www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback/)

for ESE Model Discussion Protocols

* Informal Conversations with teacher work groups
* Focus groups/small group discussions
* Student Interviews (small classrooms, students with special needs)
* Focus groups/small group discussions
* Short/recurring survey on school-based initiative progress
* Feedback survey on school leader’s goal progress
* Annual survey (school culture, professional learning environment, leadership supports, etc.)

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WRITTEN REFLECTIONS

Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4PJHag0zW8>

for one teacher’s idea

SURVEYS

Go to [www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback/) for ESE Model Surveys

* Shared (Google) document(s) for staff to provide written feedback to administration based on the rubric.
* Flipped Walkthrough
* Students’ written reflections (essay, diary entry, etc.)
* Letter to future students on classroom/learning experiences
* Short survey on how students learn best
* Feedback survey on teacher’s goal progress
* Annual survey of students (classroom culture, learning environment, curriculum, etc)

**HOW Do I Use Staff and Student Feedback in Practice?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **What this looks like…** |
| **1.** **LISTEN** to the feedback with an open mind. | * cultivate a positive outlook in modifying classroom practices based on student feedback
* listen with a curiosity stance to find the actionable information in the feedback.
 |
| **2. CELEBRATE** your strengths. | * share successes and support colleagues to improve the learning environment for all students
* identify strengths and share with others in the school or district
* share the places where students and staff feedback mirrors the work being done in the school and celebrate the success
 |
| **3. REFLECT** on areas of growth. | * reflect on the what may be behind specific pieces of feedback and consider opportunities to adjust practice
* identify a targeted area(s) of focus and establish practical steps to reach specific goals
 |
| **4. SHARE** your feedback. | * let feedback drive or inform reflective conversations with those who provided the feedback; brainstorm adjustments to practice or share best practices.
* share your reflections with a peer; identify opportunities for adjustments to practice, classroom structures and routines, etc.
* share your feedback and your reflections with your supervisor and discuss how it may inform upcoming practice or goal-setting
 |
| **5. ACT** on it! PAGE 8 Using Student & Staff Feedback to Improve Practice – *Advice from Teachers and Administrators* | * align feedback with instructional or leadership goals and share those goals with students/staff
* use this feedback to inform your self-assessment
* develop a new professional practice goal based on feedback
* develop follow-up survey to monitor adjustments to practice
* apply targeted student feedback to lesson design or assignments
* use staff feedback to inform faculty meetings, identification of professional development, teacher leadership opportunities, and the development of school culture and climate
 |

Creating a Culture of Collaboration and Shared Responsibility

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* **Video Resources and Guidance on Staff & Student Feedback in Massachusetts**: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback/>
* **ESE Model Feedback Surveys and Administration Protocols**: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback/surveys.html>
* **Adapted Model Feedback Survey for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities**: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/6b-adaptmodelsurvey.pdf>
* **Alternative Strategies to Obtain Student Feedback**: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/6d-altfeedback.pdf>

*We examine student and staff feedback together… I created a power point that benchmarked the feedback students had given to their teachers with the feedback the teachers had given me. I highlighted areas where we had done work and it was clear that it showed (giving students engaging, high level work). I also highlighted areas where we clearly needed to keep working (discipline and managing challenging behaviors)… There were some places where the teachers were confused about what the questions were asking - so I created a follow up survey (with the help of a teacher) that would allow for clearer feedback. This allowed teachers to be more specific in what they shared and allowed me to find more actionable information in the feedback. I used the feedback to create school improvement plan goals and a student learning goal for the next evaluation cycle.*

*- Middle School Principal*

*I find student feedback helpful for several reasons. First, it allows me to understand how the students view school. This has helped shape my thinking and teaching in the past.  Second, it provides insight on the way that I am impacting students and their learning. This has helped guide changes in my teaching practice. Finally, it has helped me become a more reflective practitioner. The perceptions students have to share are invaluable. Feedback from the survey last year has helped impact goals and plans I have made for this year.*

*--Teacher*

Feedback from students and staff is essential for creating a culture of collaboration, shared responsibility, and continuous improvement. When used effectively in a trusting environment, teachers and administrators can use this information to learn, reflect, and continually strengthen practice for the improvement of student learning.

Additional Resources

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**Diane Carreiro,** Middleton Public Schools

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Interested in learning more about staff and student feedback?
Visit **www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback/**