GIVING FEEDBACK: THE ALMOND JOY APPROACH

MARCH 2022

Purpose

This job aid is to provide a quick and practical guide to giving constructive feedback to students.

Background

An important part of instructing is giving feedback which informs students about how they are doing as they work to reach a goal (Wiggins, 2012). Sometimes as we work towards a goal, there is natural feedback. For example, if you are working at your basketball shot, it is clear to you whether you are progressing towards the goal of hitting a three-pointer with 90% accuracy or not. Other times, you rely on someone else to let you know how you are progressing. Feedback can come from an instructor, a peer, an experience, or a book (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Feedback is an essential part of student learning. As such, the quality of the feedback matters. The type of feedback and how it is delivered can change its impact. The Almond Joy approach can help ensure that the feedback you give is given in an effective way.

How To

The Almond Joy approach is to first give positive feedback, then give constructive feedback, and then end on a positive note.

Start with the first layer: positive feedback. Address what the student has done well or correctly. This can assert what the student has done for the assessment, as in "Great work on completing this case study. You identify the major factors in the case accurately." In this section, try to replace value-based comments such as "this project is good" with more specific comments such as "the specific instruction you included as part of this assignment would be helpful for someone who is completing the task for the first time"

Then move on to the second layer: constructive feedback. These are the harder and chewier things that need to be communicated so that students can learn. Was the student successful in meeting the assessment's learning outcomes? Did they miss any key parts of the assessment? Is there feedback you can provide them with here that has a real-world application around the workplace, or essential and employability skills? For example, "Please be sure to give examples to support your point. If you were writing this memo to your manager, you would need to include practical evidence." If they did well on the assessment, what would be the next step in their development? If they struggled to meet the assessment criteria, how could they do better next time?

For the final layer: end on a positive note to encourage students towards future learning. For example, a comment such as "I look forward to seeing you apply the skills you applied here on your final project" will help students carry their learning forward.

References

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, *77*(1), 81–112. https://doi.org/10/bf4d36

Henderson, M., Ryan, T., & Phillips, M. (2019). The challenges of feedback in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *44*(8), 1237–1252. https://doi.org/10/fj6z

Kimberly Chappell. (2019, March 11). The Almond Joy of Providing Feedback to Students Faculty Focus. *Faculty Focus | Higher Ed Teaching & Learning*. https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/educational-assessment/the-almond-joy-of-providing-feedback-to-students/

McConlogue, T. (2020). Giving Good Quality Feedback. In *Assessment and Feedback in Higher Education* (pp. 118–134). UCL Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv13xprqb.13

Wiggins, G. (2012). Seven Keys to Effective Feedback. *Educational Leadership*, *70*(1). http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept12/vol70/num01/Seven-Keys-to-Effective-Feedback.aspx