{Disarmed} [New post] Getting feedback right Part 3: How can we increase pupils' effort?

1 message

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New post on **David Didau: The Learning Spy**

Getting feedback right Part 3: How can we increase pupils' effort?

by David Didau

I started to explore how we might make feedback more meaningful a few weeks back but then got sidetracked. If you haven't already looked at them, it might be worth spending a few moments on Part 1 (which discusses the different purposes for giving feedback) and Part 2 (which looks at how to increase pupils' understanding) before reading any further.

Right. Still with me? Once we can be reasonably sure that pupils understand how to improve, our next step is to check that they can actually be bothered. It's become something of a cliché to say that success depends on hard work, but essentially that's the message we need to convey.

Tragically, far too many pupils would rather be seen as lazy than stupid. It's much more preferable not to try because then you have an excuse for failure: "Of course I could've done it, but I couldn't be arsed." Why is this considered so much more socially acceptable? Well, that's actually fairly straightforward. Most people see effort as something that is transient but intelligence as something that is fixed. It seems obvious that if we believe we can't get clever then it might not make much sense to try.

But we know not true, don't we? We readily accept that training improves sporting performance and that music and drama improve with rehearsal. Why is it that so many of are so convinced that practice won't make us smarter?

In Embedded Formative Assessment, Dylan Wiliam explores the effects of effort in forensic detail and synthesises the results of many different studies to arrive at some sensible conclusions. The table below is the result of a survey designed to discover why pupils invest effort and understand to what they attribute their success.

Attribution of	Ego	Task
Expenditure of effort	• To do better than others • To avoid doing worse than others	• Interest • To improve performance
Success	• Ability • Performance of others	• Interest • Effort • Experience of previous learning

Butler (1987) from Embedded Formative Assessment p 110

What would seem clear from this is that if our feedback is to have any impact on learning it must be directed at the task rather than at the pupil themselves. The research of Kluger & DeNisi confirms this supposition. They suggest that future research on feedback ought to focus less on the impact it has on performance and more on the sorts of responses triggered in pupils when they're given feedback. And, as luck would have it, Carol Dweck has spent her career doing exactly that.

Dweck posited that our perceptions of success or failure are dependent of three factors:

- Personalisation: the extent to which we believe success is influenced by *internal* or *external* factors
- Stability: whether success is perceived to be transient or long-lasting
- Specificity: whether success is one are is interpreted as being likely to lead success in other areas.

Attribution	Success	Failure
Personalisation	**Internal**: "It was a good piece of work." **External**: "The teacher likes me."	**Internal**: "It wasn't a very good piece of work." **External**: "The teacher doesn't like me."
Stability	**Stable**: I'm good at the subject." **Unstable**: 'I was lucky with the questions that came up."	**Stable**: "I'm rubbish at the subject." **Unstable**: "I didn't bother revising."
Specificity	**Specific**: 'I'm good at that but that's the only thing I'm good at." **Global**: "Il did well at that so I'll do well at everything."	**Specific**: 'I'm no good at that, but I'm good at everything else." **Global**: "I'm rubbish at everything."

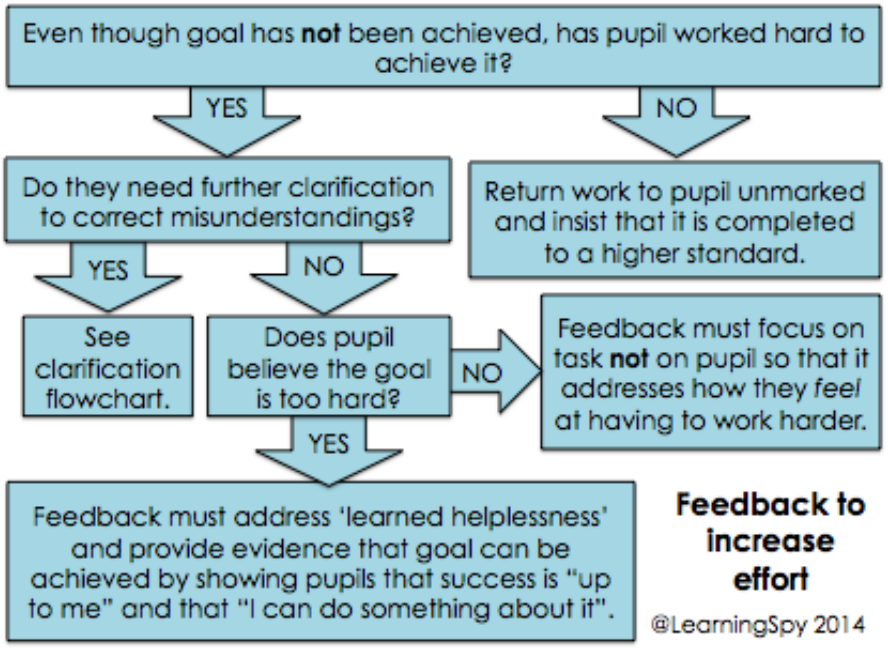
Embedded Formative Assessment p 117

This suggests that if our purpose for giving feedback is prompt pupils to make greater effort we need to do the following:

1. Target feedback to increase *task commitment*
2. Design feedback that will be attributed *internal* factors that pupils can control
3. Design feedback that makes pupils consider *unstable* factors that are dependent on effort
4. Make feedback as *specific* as possible (bit obvious this one!)

The point of all this, as Wiliam concludes, is for pupils to believe that "It's up to me" (internal) and "I can do something about it" (unstable).

To that end, I've designed another handy flowchart to capture all of this advice:



The final instalment in this series will consider how to provide feedback that encourages pupils to raise their aspirations.

David Didau | March 19, 2014 at 1:44 pm | URL: http://wp.me/p3KEoH-1p2

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