{Disarmed} [New post] Getting feedback right Part 1 – Why do we give it?

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

Getting feedback right Part 1 – Why do we give it?

by David Didau

It's become a truism that feedback is the most important activity that teachers engage in. Feedback, we are repeatedly told, is tremendously powerful and therefore teachers must do more of it. Certainly Hattie, the Sutton Trust and the EEF bandy about impressive effect sizes, but the evidence of flipping through a pupil's exercise book suggests that the vast majority of what teachers write is ignored or misunderstood.

Teachers' feedback can certainly have a huge impact but it's a mistake to believe that this impact is always positive. I written in detail about marking and the power of Directed Improvement Reflection Time. I've also considered some of the things we're not usually told about feedback and the fact that it might be worth thinking about delaying or reducing the feedback we give. These musings have been important in developing my thinking, but I keep coming back to this slide Dylan Wiliam uses in loads of his presentations:

Getting feedback right is hard

Response type	Feedback indicates performance...	
	exceeds goal	falls short of goal
Change behaviour	Exert less effort	**Increase effort**
Change goal	**Increase aspiration**	Reduce aspiration
Abandon goal	Decide goal is too easy	Decide goal is too hard
Reject feedback	Feedback is ignored	Feedback is ignored

The point he makes is that teachers' feedback often has unintended consequences; if we're not careful, it may have the exact opposite result to what we intended. I've been thinking about this for some time now and it occurs to me that it might be helpful if we

were a lot clearer about *why* we were giving feedback. Last week I spent the day with CPD leader, Alex Battison and together we decided that there are perhaps only 3 reasons that make giving feedback worthwhile:

- to get pupils to increase aspiration
- to get pupils to increase effort
- to provide clarity

If we understood which of these purpose we were engaged in, our feedback might be a lot more useful and a lot more likely to produced the desired results. As always, if we've dealt satisfactorily with the *why*, we are much better placed to think about *how*.

In my next post I'll have a punt at suggesting how we might go about giving feedback that fulfils these aims, but in the meantime, please do let me know if you think I'm on the right track.

David Didau | March 4, 2014 at 8:10 pm | URL: http://wp.me/p3KEoH-1mX

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