

Using Assessments to Make Decisions About Instruction

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Outcome: By the end of this workshop we will have experienced and/or discussed the major components of feedback loops and made some decisions about next steps.

Feedback Loops

A feedback loop is defined as "cyclical strategies for gaining information about the effects of actions so that those actions may be modified to better meet desired outcomes."

Art Costa and Robert Garmston, *Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools* (1994)

Feedback loops are both external and internal. External loops are those that provide data from outside of the immediate loop. Internal loops provide data within the immediate loop. For example, to schools and school systems, Maryland School Performance Assessment Program data is part of an external feedback loop. To a classroom teacher, observing for students' higher level questioning during literacy circles is part of her/his internal feedback loop.

Use the worksheet on the following page. Work with a partner. Discuss...

- (a) How our feedback loops function in Maryland?
- (b) How well do we use the data from our feedback loops?
- (c) What are strengths in relation to our feedback loops?
- (d) What are areas that need to be strengthened?

Be prepared to share with large group.

Overview Packet

Feedback Loops: Discussion

I. Maryland State Department of Education & Maryland School Performance Program:

II. School System

III. School Data

IV. Classroom Data

Overview Packet

Classroom Feedback Loops

Backwards Mapping*: Clarifying the Goal

Consider the steps listed below. Discuss with your partner/group which aspects of these steps are currently in place (a) solidly (b) moderately/somewhat (c) not at all. [How do school improvement plans address these steps?]

1. **Examine** available curriculum guides and Maryland Learner Outcomes and Indicators and/or Core Learning Goals [Content Standards]
2. **Clarify** in a clear statement what students are to understand. This statement or statements should be in language that the students can understand. These statements guide teachers and the students throughout their learning experiences.
3. After clarifying what students are to understand, **create** a list of all of the knowledge and skills that students will need to reach this understanding. NOTE: For teachers familiar with Dimensions of Learning, this list can be divided into declarative and procedural knowledge. These teachers can also consider the higher level thinking (Dimension #3) that will be required to reach the identified understanding.
4. **Share** the draft (the indicators that have been selected, the targeted understandings, and the knowledge and skills) with a critical friend on your grade level team or in your content area.
5. **Ask** key questions: Is the targeted understanding clear? Will it be understood by all students? Have I included all of the knowledge and skills in my master list? What suggestions do you have?

*See Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. (1998). *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development for more on backwards design.

Overview Packet

Classroom Feedback Loops Planning for Data Collection

Consider the steps listed below. Discuss with your partner/group which aspects of these steps are currently in place (a) solidly (b) moderately/somewhat (c) not at all. [How do school improvement plans address these steps?]

1. **Define** on-going assessment. [All of the information teachers collect minute-by-minute, hour-by hour, and day-by-day as they teach, observe students, evaluate their students' work, and reflect on their instruction and how it has had impact on their students' progress.]
2. **Clarify** the basics:
 - Assessment is aligned with instructional goals (student outcomes/ indicators); appropriate assessments are integrated throughout the learning process.
 - Students' responses to assessments are used as diagnostic information for "next steps" in instruction.
 - Teachers examine both the processes as well as the products of student learning [Ex. Teachers who use the writing process evaluate the final draft as well as the prewriting and drafting that students have done. In mathematics teachers examine both the final answer and the problem solving process the student has used.]
 - Assessment processes that include multiple measures provide feedback on student progress; this feedback enables teachers to make informed instructional decisions regarding teaching and re-teaching specific outcomes.
3. **Plan** a unit of study by designing the assessment measures that will guide the instruction.

Classroom Feedback Loops

Selecting Products

Consider the steps listed below. Discuss with your partner/group which aspects of these steps are currently in place (a) solidly (b) moderately/somewhat (c) not at all. [How do school improvement plans address these steps?]

1. **Define** the criteria that will be used to determine whether the student has or has not met the learning. [This requires an understanding of one or more indicators and/or the interrelationships among the indicators.]
2. **Consider** the range of products that may be used to assess these criteria. [A product is defined as something a teacher can use to gather information about student progress toward meeting a learning goal.]
 - ◆ **Selected Response** (Examples: multiple choice; true/false; matching)
Good for quick checks of understanding
 - ◆ **Constructed Responses** (Examples: fill-in-the-blank---words or phrases; short answers---sentences and/or paragraph(s); labeling---pictures/diagrams; oral explanations---explaining and/or interpreting; visual representations---webs, concept maps, flow charts, matrixes, illustrations) Good for more in-depth look at progress
 - ◆ **Observations** (Examples: interviews, conferences, think alouds, discussions) Good to record progress toward meeting standards.
 - ◆ **Products** (Examples: essays; research papers; logs/journals; lab reports; portfolios; art exhibits; models, video taping)
 - ◆ **Performances** (Examples: oral/dramatic presentations; science labs; competitions---games, athletic events; debates; recitals) Good to show application of knowledge/understanding of concepts
3. **Select** methods for pre-assessment. (How will prior knowledge and attitudes be assessed? What information already exists? What needs to be gathered?)
4. **Select** the most appropriate products. **Plan** a unit of study by designing the how the assessment measures will guide the instruction.

Overview Packet

Classroom Feedback Loops Designing Rubrics/Scoring Tools

Consider the steps listed below. Discuss with your partner/group which aspects of these steps are currently in place (a) solidly (b) moderately/ somewhat (c) not at all. [How do school improvement plans address these steps?]

1. **Review** the types of rubrics that could be used.
2. **Consider** the benefits and drawbacks of each.

TYPE	Characteristics	Benefits	Drawbacks
Checklists	List of criteria (What should be included or not included) Criteria can be weighted	Quick to use Easy for students to use to assess their own work	Little control over quality of criteria
Rating Scale	Similar to checklists, but includes a general quality rating of elements Criteria can be weighted	Quick to use for teachers and students Some control over quality of elements	Same as above
General Rubrics	Describes levels of performance of criteria	Clarifies expectations for students; can be holistic or analytic Students can use to assess their own work. Can be used for interdisciplinary tasks	May be too generic
Activity-Specific Rubrics	Develop for specific assignments and tasks	May be holistic or analytic Students can use to assess their own work.	Applies to only one assignment/ task

3. **Select** the most appropriate tool for the assignment. **Rule:** Before you assign and collect, know how you are going to score and use the feedback.

Overview Packet

Using the Results From Assessments*

Consider the concepts listed below that are supported by hundreds of research studies. Discuss with your partner/group which aspects of these understandings are currently in place (a) solidly (b) moderately/ somewhat (c) not at all. [How do school improvement plans address these steps?]

- 1. Feedback should be corrective in nature.** Students need to understand what it is that they are doing that is correct and what they are doing that is not correct. Research indicates that (a) telling students that answers are right or wrong has a negative effect on achievement; (b) providing students with correct answers has a moderate effect; (c) explaining what is correct and what is not correct has a greater effect; and (4) allowing students to continue working on a task until they are successful has the greatest impact.
- 2. Feedback should be timely.** In general, the more delay that occurs between the assignment and feedback, the less improvement occurs in achievement.
- 3. Feedback should be specific to the criteria.** Feedback is most effective when it is criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced. Norm-referenced informs where they are relative to other students. Criterion-referenced tells students where they stand relative to the targeted knowledge or skill.
- 4. Students can effectively provide some of their own feedback.** Students can effectively monitor their own progress, keeping track of their individual performances. This includes students having opportunities for self-evaluation.

*Excerpts from: Marzano, Robert J., Debra Pickering, and Jane Pollack (2001) *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for increasing Student Achievement*, ASCD: Alexandria, VA.

Overview Packet

Who Got It? Who Didn't Re-Teaching

Consider the steps listed below. Discuss with your partner/group which aspects of these steps are currently in place (a) solidly (b) moderately/somewhat (c) not at all. [How do school improvement plans address these steps?]

1. **Know what measures of success** will be used for each score in the rubric. It is helpful to create or select anchor papers or models for each score point.
2. **Use the rubric to sort student papers.** As the papers are sorted, search for patterns and/or anomalies among the criteria. For example, were the students successful on the first three criteria, but not on the fourth? Or did some students miss one or more criteria completely?
3. **Review the student products to determine what criteria needs to be re-taught.** For example, on a four-point rubric, with a four being a top score, students scoring 0, 1 or 2 need additional instruction.
4. **Consider the lesson sequence** that was used to develop student understanding of the criteria. What strategies were used to present the material? What worked for some students? What didn't work? For example, in teaching students to identify similarities and differences, what type of guided practice did they receive? What types of graphic organizers were used?
5. **Consider alternatives as the lesson is designed to re-teach the concept.** Do the materials presented to students need to be refined? Restructured? And/or do different strategies need to be employed?

Overview Packet

Classroom Feedback Loops Considering Our Next Steps

Consider the concepts that are involved in feedback loops:

- Targeting the indicators and clarifying their meaning for students
- Creating a comprehensive list of knowledge and skills from the indicators
- Defining data collection throughout a unit of study
- Selecting appropriate products to be used in the data collection
- Designing rubrics, including student input into understanding how they are developed and implemented
- Planning an assessment sequence
- Providing appropriate feedback
- Planning for re-teaching

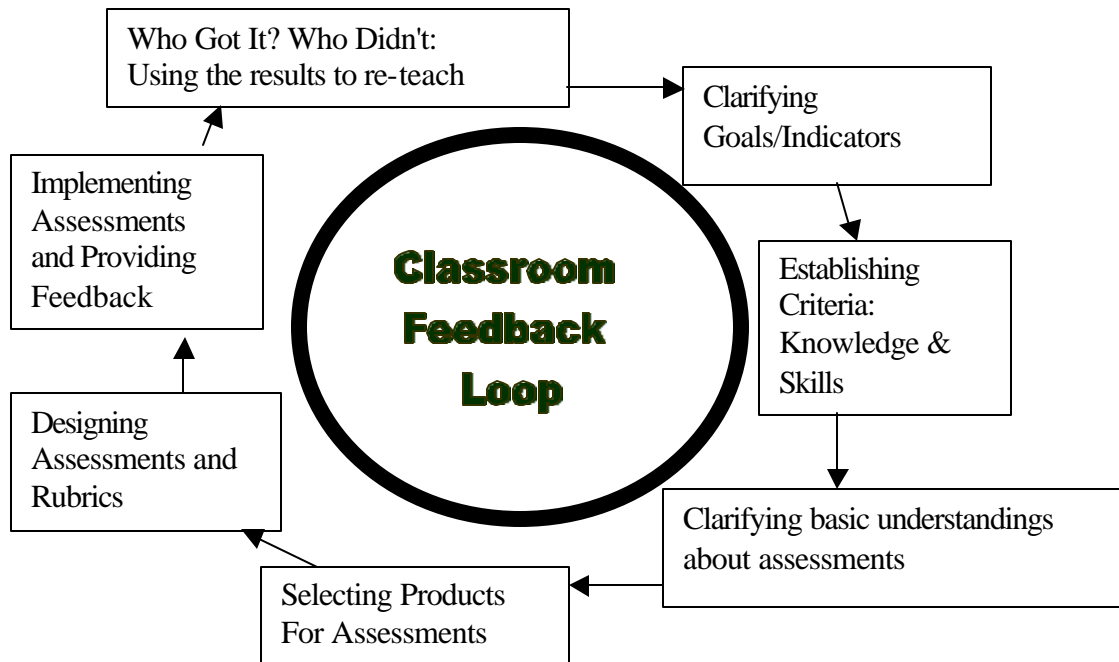
Discuss the following with your partner or in your small group:

- (a) What are our school/school system strengths?
- (b) What understandings do we need to strengthen?
- (c) What are our next steps for staff development?

Be prepared to share with large group.

Overview Packet

Summary: Classroom Feedback Loops



Consider the steps in the Classroom Feedback Loop. Discuss the following:

What are our school/school systems strengths?

What understandings and practices do we need to strengthen?

What are our next steps for staff development?

Overview Packet