‘Closing the Gap’
Feedback
The Toolkit

“I really enjoyed reading this story, Ben...”

“I was impressed that you remembered to use paragraphs and complex punctuation...”

“When you redraft your work, please ensure that you check all of your spellings carefully.”

“When will I ever get my level 4a?”
Instead of seeing your marking as that horrible thing that you have to do on top of all the real teaching, see it as the most important aspect of that teaching.

*Regular, high quality marking will:*

- Help students to get better
- Build positive relationships (they see that you care)
- Improve presentation
- Allow you to evaluate teaching
- Make students value what they do (they know you’ll read it)
- Improve behaviour (you are a teacher with high expectations)

‘If I had to reduce all of the research on feedback into one simple overarching idea, at least for all academic subjects in school, it would be this: feedback should cause thinking.’ (Dylan Williams, 2011)

Providing feedback should be less work for you and more for the students – whatever method you choose should make more work for the students to act upon it than it does for you providing it. Feedback should be more work for the recipient than the donor!

When student receive feedback it should make them question or reflect about what they have done. It should force them to think about what they know and what gaps they still have. It should encourage them to think about how to act upon the feedback in an effort to move their learning.

Feedback should answer the three questions – In Hattie and Timperley’s paper ‘The Power of feedback it was put forward that effective feedback should revolve around three key questions:

- Where am I going? *Feed up*
- How am I going? *Feedback*
- Where to next? *Feedforward*

*Do our methods create a Growth Mindset?*

We need to ensure that we are constantly reinforcing the message that listening to or reading feedback is an important aspect of learning. If we are to encourage students to have a growth mindset our continual message to them should be

- mistakes are good for learning
- good habits can be learnt and should be repeated
• effort and hard work are the key to help them to improve
Some students find feedback (poor performance or mistakes) dents their self esteem and confidence. To overcome this we can praise the effort and hard work and keep on reinforcing the message that success is achieved through practice.
Here are five practical strategies which can help instil a growth mindset in our classrooms:

1. Provide frequent formative feedback
2. High levels of challenge for all students
3. Explicitly welcome mistakes
4. Engage in deliberate practice
5. Reward effort not just attainment

‘Closing the Gap’ – Students acting upon teacher feedback
‘Closing the gap’ means getting students to act upon feedback they receive to ‘close the gap’ in their learning. Students need to close the gap between the work they have done originally and a higher level of work suggested by the feedback they receive. In other words, ‘closing the gap’ means ‘acting on feedback’. The mechanism for doing this is open to interpretation.
**DIRT time (students acting upon feedback)**

This method gives allocated time to getting students to read their feedback and actually act upon it.

Plan time within lessons where students act upon the comments and feedback that they receive. This can come in the form of a starter activity, end of a lesson or a dedicated lesson (essay redrafting for example). Providing feedback in books can easily be forgotten about or simply not acted upon. By creating dedicated time in lessons where students have to act upon it, the gap between where they are and where they should be can be closed.

**‘Find & Fix’ (A Dylan William idea)**

Place a dot or a mark in the margin of a piece of work near where the mistake is. Students have to locate the error independently. At the end of the piece of work, explain that there are X number of mistakes. Students have to ‘find’ and ‘fix’ them.

**Closing the gap lessons**

A dedicated lesson that allows students to ‘tidy up their understanding’ from a previous unit of work.

Carry out a mini test at the end of a unit, following 1-2 lessons students analyse their understanding and revisit weak topics once more. Students will know where their weak topics are as they will have performed less well on these in previous test/homework etc... Students can create revision material on these topic areas (mind maps etc) and answer further exam questions. The aim is to make that topic an area of strength.

**Burning Questions/Requests**

When a student submits a piece of work, they have the opportunity to request a specific part is given a closer inspection. When a piece of work is handed in the student highlights an area that they didn’t fully understand. This is not related to the task, but instead to the content. This method gives students the sense of ownership and responsibility. This involvement means that the comments you give will have a higher chance of being acted upon.

**Feedback Questions (A Dylan William idea)**

Give students questions as feedback to tackle misconceptions. Read through students work and place numbers against misconceptions. The number links to questions posed by the teacher at the end of a piece of work. Students need to respond to the questions and demonstrate that they have understood the information. By asking the questions students have to think about the error that they have made. Students have to engage with the feedback and act upon it.

**Triple Impact Marking (You, me, you)**
Provide feedback to students. They then provide feedback to your comments. You provide feedback again.

Read students work and provide feedback where necessary. This method engages students in a dialogue.

**Modelling and examples**

When providing feedback, use a model or an A* standard piece of work to model to students. This method helps students understand and visualise what quality their work should be aiming for. Students often find that when they have great feedback from teachers they can’t translate that into an image of what their work/learning should be. Sharing examples helps scaffold what the next steps actually look like and are more likely to get the students to act upon the feedback.

**The Dot Round**

The idea is that you assign students independent work and, as they are working, circulate to observe their work. If their work is wrong, you put a dot on their paper. Very subtle, not a permanent “wrong” mark, just a reminder that there’s something that needs checking. And here’s the best part - that’s ALL you do/say. The idea is that the dot reminds students, subtly, to find their own mistake and, in time, encourages self-reflect and self-correct. You could even then ask students to discuss: who got a dot and found it? Who got a dot and didn’t.

**Feedback Key**

Create a marking key and give students a copy to stick in their books. The codes could include T.V (Too vague), LOD (Lack of detail) or double ticks for well answered questions. Students receive their marked work back and know exactly what they need to do with their work. Students will be required to think about what they need to do and it is this thinking that will help progress learning further. This method will make marking much quicker. The key is quick to use and provides you with the time to write constructive comments where a student needs it most, rather than writing all over a piece of work. Less is more!!

Example below is taken from: http://blogsync.edutronic.net/
## Reduce workload AND increase impact!

*Student engagement with written feedback*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of...</th>
<th>The teacher...</th>
<th>The student...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing annotations in the body of a piece of work and giving an overall comment</td>
<td>Only writes annotations in the body of the work.</td>
<td>Writes an overall review highlighting two strengths and one area for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing annotations in the body of a piece of work and giving an overall comment</td>
<td>Only writes an overall comment.</td>
<td>Annotates areas of the work where the areas of strength are apparent and where improvements need to be made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing extensive comments</td>
<td>Only gives one strength and one possible improvement; WWW: EBI:</td>
<td>Works to &quot;Close the Gap&quot; on the one issue identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing 'well done you have...' next to good aspects of the work</td>
<td>Puts a double tick next to the best parts of the students work</td>
<td>Adds the reasons for the double ticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking every question in detail</td>
<td>Only marks the highlighted questions in detail. There is no expectation that all class notes will be marked. Check your area policy and mark tasks where your marking will have an IMPACT!</td>
<td>Marks (or peer marks) the work before it is submitted, highlighting the two areas where they would most like help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the same explanation on every piece of work when the same mistake is made by many students</td>
<td>Goes over this question in class</td>
<td>Writes their own correct answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing out a full solution when a student gets a question wrong</td>
<td>Writes WWWT? (What’s wrong with this?) Or RTQ! (Read the question!)</td>
<td>The student makes their own correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correcting work when a student makes a little mistake</td>
<td>Reviews in class students' initial plans for this work prior to marking the extended piece of work</td>
<td>Does not hand in rubbish!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking only extended pieces of work</td>
<td>Reviews in class students' initial plans for this work prior to marking the extended piece of work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving back work and moving straight on...Give students time to Close the Gap to make all that marking time worth it</td>
<td>Departments have lots of strategies for giving students specific skills to work on. A way of starting this can be if teacher asks students to &quot;put a tick next to my comment if you know how to improve and a ? if you don’t&quot;. This can be a first step to engagement. Paired work to resolve some of the ? prior to asking you for guidance is good practice and reduces workload.</td>
<td>Students read and start to engage with marking before working on the &quot;Close the Gap&quot; task the teacher has identified.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>