What is feedback from peers?

Peers can be a valuable resource to support learning in the formative assessment process. In addition to receiving feedback from the teacher, classroom peers can receive descriptive formative feedback from each other that is clear, specific, actionable, and timely to promote learning. Feedback from a peer could focus on what the student may need to do to achieve the success criteria, suggest how the student can make the needed changes or describe what the student providing feedback has accomplished regarding his or her success criteria for a learning target. Students can then reflect on and use peer feedback to move their learning forward.

Feedback from peers defined

Feedback from peers can be defined as the process through which a student gathers information and feedback from another student's learning in relation to a learning target. This process involves three steps:

1) Recognize the desired learning goal

2) Provide feedback on the quality of another student's thinking and performance relative to the success criteria so that the other student is able to gather evidence about his or her current position in relation to the learning goal

3) Provide information including understanding, strategies, and skills to close the gap between the student's current position and the desired performance

Feedback from peers is often referred to as "peer assessment." The term "peer assessment" in this context does not describe the practice when students grade

each other's papers and/or provide a summative assessment of the work (i.e., evaluative feedback such as "good job"). Peer assessment is an ongoing process in which students learn skills over time to provide descriptive and actionable feedback to peers as well as to reflect on the feedback from one another and use it to revise their skills or work.

Applications to practice

The teacher will need to foster a supportive learning culture in the classroom so that students are comfortable providing feedback to others that is useful to them

bric, checklist, or feedback protocol. The teacher should provide explicit instruction and model the peer feedback process for students. Then, students should be given opportunities to practice peer assessment. Students can use checklists, rubrics, or other criteria to support them as they provide descriptive feedback to another student.

Initially, students can focus on one topic for their feedback; but over time with practice, they can manage providing feedback on multiple aspects of the work of other students. It is important to note

> **Feedback is most effective when it is related to the learning target and identifies strengths and areas for growth. Then, students need time to reflect on the feedback from one another and to use it to improve their skills or work.**
>
> KINTZ ET AL., 2016

(and overcome possible inter-personal barriers). Teachers also should prepare students to engage in peer assessment and provide direct, useful feedback to one another. In addition, the teacher might develop a repertoire of instructional tools, practices, and strategies to support students as they learn to provide meaningful feedback to one another.

Once students are clear on the learning target and success criteria, the teacher may select a strategy or tool for students to use for peer assessment such as a ru-

that this is an iterative process of learning for the teacher and the students that develops over the course of the school year. The teacher should scaffold student learning over time, provide opportunities to practice giving and receiving feedback, and ensure the students have time to reflect on and use the feedback to improve.

An overview of steps involved in implementing peer assessment are outlined in Table 1. For more detailed information, see *Going Deeper with Self- and Peer Assessment*, Kintz et. al., forthcoming).

Table 1: Implementing Peer Assessment

1. PREPARE: Prepare students for peer assessment	• Cultivate a supportive learning culture and an environment of trust in the classroom, and provide opportunities for collaboration in learning. • Explain the expectations for students and the change from their role as a learner to being a resource for one another. • Ensure the learning target and success criteria for any peer assessment are clear and discussed with students.
2. GUIDANCE: Provide rubrics, guidelines, or other criteria with clearly defined tasks	• Provide rubrics, checklists, or visual anchor charts and clearly defined tasks to guide their feedback to peers. • Develop a repertoire of protocols and strategies that students can use to provide feedback to one another.
3. MODEL and TEACH the PROCESS: Model and explicitly teach the process of peer assessment with students	• Provide descriptive and actionable feedback to students through comments on their work and performance in relation to the learning target and success criteria. • Model and teach theprocess and skills of giving and receiving feedback.
4. PRACTICE: Facilitate opportunities for students to practice, engage in peer assessment, and receive feedback on the process	• Scaffold student learning by allowing them to practice one step at a time, and provide feedback so students are aware of what went well and what may need to be improved.
5. REFLECT and SUPPORT: Ensure students have time to reflect on the feedback from one another and use it to improve their skills and/or work.	• Integrate peer assessment into students; work toward a learning target. • Provide opportunities for students to review feedback from a peer and improve their skills and/or work accordingly.

Source: FAME Learning Guide (Kintz et al., 2016)

Teachers who have been successful in promoting peer assessment in the classroom report it is important to provide opportunities for peers to give and receive feedback as often as possible. These experiences help students to build trust in one another and become actively involved in the assessment process. Other teacher recommendations include the following:

■ Allow the same students to partner together for the first part of the year to develop relationships. Then they can switch partners more often as they get to know each other;

■ Gather data during peer assessment time on strengths and weaknesses of the process. If it is beneficial for the whole class, share feedback in general terms, or in one-on-one conferences as needed.

■ Choose a manageable strategy to begin with: lukewarm and cool feedback, two stars and a wish, or sentence frames (see Kintz et. al., forthcoming).

■ Focus on the learning goal rather than completing an assignment or getting it right.

■ Support students who are frustrated, not giving quality feedback, or taking feedback personally. Let them know it is ok if it does not work the first or second time and to keep working on manageable tasks.

■ After students engage in peer assessment, ask for their opinions on what worked and what could be improved, why, and where to go from here. When teachers provide consistent and ongoing opportunities for feedback from peers, students become familiar with the process, take ownership of their learning, and regard each other as instructional resources.

To learn more
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Learning targets: Helping students aim for understanding in today's lesson
Connie M. Moss and Susan M. Brookhart. (ASCD, 2012).
http://www.ascd.org/Publications/Books/Overview/Learning-Targets.aspx

Student centered assessment: Peer assessment.
Georgia Brooke and Heidi Andrade. (Students at the Center, 2013).
https://bit.ly/3hkoJi2

What do we mean by formative assessment?
ALN Learning Point (Michigan Assessment Consortium, 2016).
http://bit.ly/LP-FormativeAssessment

References

Kintz et. al., (forthcoming). Going deeper with peer-assessment. Michigan Department of Education.

Kintz et. al., (2016). FAME learning guide: Developing and implementing the formative assessment process in Michigan. Michigan Department of Education.

Wiliam, D. (2011). Embedded Formative Assessment. Strategies for classroom formative assessment that drives student engagement and learning. Solution Tree Press.

The Michigan Assessment Consortium's Assessment Learning Network (ALN) is a professional learning community consisting of members from MI's professional education organizations; the goal of the ALN is to increase the assessment literacy of all of Michigan's professional educators.