Resource 7.2

Feedback to Feed Forward: 31 Strategies to Lead Learning Book Talk/Study Guide

We encourage you to read through this book with partners or colleagues and use this guide to support the process. Because the skills and strategies outlined take time to master, it is important to plan how you will read as a group, build in time to practice in classrooms, debrief, reflect, and continue reading. We recommend that you and your team move through each chapter in the order presented as the skills build on each other. If you have not mastered standards RVL 1.A (aligning to indicators) and RVL 1.B (balance of evidence) of Chapters 2 and 3, you will struggle to analyze effectiveness and determine areas of growth and strength and next steps (RVL 1.C, D, & F) in the later chapters.

The "Stop and Think" questions that are embedded in each chapter are included here to help you plan your discussion. As you begin each chapter (2–6), we recommend that you start with unpacking the aligned ReVISION standard performance level defined at the beginning of each chapter and discuss the related core skills and challenge areas.

Chapter 1: *What does it mean to lead learning?*

This chapter provides opportunities for rich discussion on the definition and expectation of "instructional leadership" and an honest share about the obstacles that stand in the way for leaders in the pursuit of the goal to lead learning.

Thinking Questions:

- What keeps you from engaging in tasks related to the teaching and learning in your building(s)? What strategies do you use/could you use to find more time to do so?

- How do you challenge, yet support, your teachers?

- What are the current realities of your evaluation system? What assumptions were made about evaluator readiness and capacity in the creation of it?

- In the "Shifting From Summary To Analysis" section, what did you notice about the quality of the two types of feedback? How do they compare to the feedback your teachers receive?

- Stop and review your rubric. Do any of the indicators or attributes require analysis?

- What core skills do instructional leaders require to effectively supervise and evaluate teaching and lead learning? Do you feel like you are an effective instructional leader?

Practice:

Consider the section of Chapter 1 titled Finding Time to Lead Learning. Complete your own time study for the next two weeks and compare your findings with some of your colleagues.

Discuss how instructional leadership is defined and viewed in your school or district/region and find ways to make more time for practices related to the teaching and learning in buildings.

Chapter 2: *How can you use an instructional framework to improve observation and feedback practices?*

This chapter is essential in the process of developing feedback that feeds forward as it focuses on grounding all support in an instructional framework. Your team may feel as though it has already engaged in deconstructing the framework; however, each time you explore it, you bring your school/district/organization closer to collective definitions of teaching and learning. Additionally, this review may lead to a bigger conversation about policies within the school/district/organization that are directly impacting practice. The goal here is for your leaders to see the value in the rubric and to support a collective understanding with and among teachers as it serves to define effective teaching (and learning) and can be used to leverage growth.

Thinking Questions:

- You might have unpacked your new framework the year it was introduced. Who engaged in this process? To what level? How long ago? What steps were taken to ensure teachers understood the framework expectations?

- What are the broader fields or categories within your rubric? What indicators exist in your rubric that are best assessed through an observation in the classroom?

- How are your framework performance levels categorized? What are the perceptions or connotations of those in your district/region or system?

- How have you analyzed your rubric to determine the intent of each of the performance standards you use to assess teacher effectiveness?

- Did your country, state, district, region, or school create a profile of a graduate, answering what students need to know and know how to do upon leaving your K–12 system? Does the framework include these skills and dispositions?

- What research has been the basis for the development of your rubric? Which of your indicators highlight specific research-based strategies and what is your understanding of those strategies?

- Which phrases in your own rubric have been consistently challenging to you, your team, and/or your teachers? How can you build understanding of these?

- Considering the *behavioralization* process, how might you use this with your peers and with teachers and why? How can you deepen thinking if you have already "unpacked" the rubric?

- How have you communicated the level of practice to support your teacher's formative development? How does that compare to the claim process outlined here?

Practice:

Use the templates and sample behavioralizations in Chapter 2 (with additional examples in the Resource Center) to unwrap the teacher performance standards in your state, district, or school's instructional framework.

Chapter 3: *How can you collect evidence in the classroom to improve feedback?*

If our end goal as leaders is to create evidence-based feedback, what you are collecting and how you are collecting evidence in the classroom are critical, as your actions during an observation directly impact the quality of your feedback. This chapter outlines the core strategies that serve to improve your capacity to objectively observe a lesson, collecting a balance of specific information that will ensure you are able to directly examine student learning and engagement. (It is important to note, while working through this chapter, it is essential for you and your colleagues to come to a common definition of "learning" and "engagement," if you did not do so in Chapter 2.)

Thinking Questions:

- What do you notice about the opening example of feedback? Were you trained to do this? How does this compare to the feedback your teachers receive?

- How is it possible for two evaluators to observe the same lesson and leave the classroom with different evidence, conclusions, and/or ratings?

- After reading the descriptions of potential biases, think about your recent classroom observations. What biases did you bring into the work and why?

- What data do you usually capture, write down, or type during an observation? Why?

- Look through your instructional framework. When would it be necessary for you to note the absence of something during a lesson?

- Look back at the mapping examples and explanations for a moment. What type of feedback about teaching and learning could you provide a teacher using the evidence collected? How do the methods allow you to capture student evidence of engagement and learning efficiently?

- What is your (and your teachers') understanding or definition of learning? How do you know if students are learning?

- Using what you understand so far in this chapter, what specific quantitative and qualitative evidence could you collect during each stage of learning? Does your rubric include an indicator or attribute related to instructional progression, scaffolding, or the sequence of a lesson (not just planning but execution) or an indicator measuring student movement toward a learning objective?

- What is your (and your teachers') understanding or definition of engagement? Where is it addressed in your framework? Did you explore this as you moved through the strategies of Chapter 2?

- If you are interacting with students during an observation, what do you tend to ask them? Are you collecting what you need through these questions?

- Why is this sample considered a nonexample of clear and connected feedback that promotes growth? Based on what you have learned in this chapter, what is missing?

- How did the use of evidence improve the feedback in this sample?

Practice:

After you have completed an observation using the strategies outlined in Chapter 3, examine the specificity of your evidence and reflect on your actions in the classroom to see how you collected for the four elements of instructional practice outlined:

- Environment
- Purpose
- Process
- Understanding

If possible, observe with a partner or team and share collected quantitative and qualitative data and compare strategies. You will find examples of additional evidence-collection methods in the Resource Center.

Chapter 4: *How can you determine effectiveness of instruction and a teacher's impact on learners?*

Applying the three strategies in Chapter 4 is the difference maker when you are preparing to provide feedback to a teacher. Analysis of teacher effectiveness is the key ingredient in turning your feedback into a valuable learning tool. The focus of this

chapter—being able to review your evidence to determine the cause-and-effect relationships and how additional or alternate actions and choices would serve to increase student learning, ownership, and engagement—will allow you to provide targeted and meaningful support for growth.

Thinking Questions:

- Reflect on your own process of organizing evidence. What process do you use upon returning to your office with your notes? How similar is it to what we have outlined?

- Take a few minutes to revisit or reflect on what was discussed in Chapter 3 regarding learning theory and learning stages. What do we know about *how* students learn? What evidence do you need to collect to determine whether this is occurring?

- What can increase or decrease engagement in a classroom? What is within the teacher's control?

- How could a classroom environment positively or negatively impact learning and engagement? Level of challenge? The progression of a lesson or unit? Assessment and feedback within a lesson? The level of support?

Practice:

Complete an observation with cause-and-effect analysis in mind as you collect evidence (using evidence collection strategies from Chapter 3). You may choose to align your evidence collection and analysis for this observation to one of the five focus areas:

Focus Area #1: Environment

Focus Area #2: Level of Challenge

Focus Area #3: Progression

Focus Area #4: Assessment

Focus Area #5: Supports

Create a cause-and-effect chart like the ones found in Chapter 4 (Tables 4.3–4.10) or in the Debrief Board Examples in the Resource Center. Practice building "because statements" to convey those relationships.

Chapter 5: *How can you determine a teacher's areas of instructional strength and growth?*

Chapter 5 builds on the skills you developed in Chapters 2 to 4. This chapter focuses on ensuring teachers clearly understand where they are headed and how they are currently meeting expectations—with a focus not just on the teaching occurring but on the teaching and *learning.* Therefore, areas of growth and strength must reflect how the teacher is impacting the students.

Thinking Questions:

- How have you been helping a teacher answer "How am I going?" and "Where to next?"

- How have you determined a teacher's areas of strengths after an observation?

- Think about each scenario. Have you found yourself in any of these situations? Perhaps, you noticed how the observer used quantitative and qualitative evidence to increase objectivity and clarity.

- Look back at a feedback report you wrote or consider a coaching conversation you had with a teacher recently. How did those teacher's strengths relate to his or her impact on the students? Did you convey this?

- Notice the integration of rubric language along with Strategy 20: Focus on the learners. But is ongoing assessment the only area of growth when you start to think about what was happening instructionally? What else should be considered?

- What *truly* is the depth of your understanding of research-based strategies? Use a system like a familiar self-assessment "Fist-to-5" (in Table 5.4) for this reflection and as you move through this chapter.

- Looking at the lists of research-based strategies, where/how are those instructional elements integrated in your framework? Skim your rubric's performance descriptions; how do they represent what we know about teaching and learning in the 21st century?

- What/who are the untapped resources in your building?

- Which of these strategies to use research do you already utilize and which would you like to try implementing next?

- In the feedback sample, what did you notice about how the leader cited areas of strength? How did the observer use the three new strategies?

Practice:

Complete an observation and first focus on identifying any strengths observed during the lesson. (Make this a habit whenever you are working alone or with a group, beginning a debrief session.) Try to create cause-and-effect statements to show a teacher how or why the strength positively impacted learners.

Determine areas of growth and isolate which of your listed strengths are directly tied or related to this area of instruction. Try to create your "Because statements" (Chapter 4 Resource Center), but add "While . . ." stems to reflect the related strengths (Chapter 5 Resource Center).

Chapter 6: *How can your feedback feed forward?*

In this chapter, you will encounter the last two ReVISION Supervisory Continuum standards and the final strategies to help you ensure your feedback promotes growth and change. This is a good opportunity to assess your current skill set and quality of your feedback along with your influence on teachers' practice and student outcomes in your building.

Thinking Questions:

- Why would the opening feedback sample after Table 6.3 be deemed subjective?

- Does your framework include words that can be deemed subjective? Did you identify these within "challenging phrases" from Chapter 2?

- Have you ever visited a classroom after you have provided feedback and next steps and nothing has changed? Why do you think this is?

- What about that classroom where nothing has changed since your last coaching session? Did you set realistic and relevant goals? Or perhaps the time frame in which you expected change was not realistic?

- What steps have you been taking to determine actionable next steps?

- After reading the suggested strategies, how could you have supported one of your teachers differently who was struggling to make changes in instructional practices?

- Did you notice in the "Proficient" description of standard RVL 1.F that feedback "includes use of questions that invite reflective practice *when appropriate*"? When would it be appropriate to use questions in feedback and when is this not necessarily appropriate?

Practice:

Try to observe a lesson with a partner or group. Discuss different pathways or action steps for the teacher to answer "What's next?" and determine which attributes or indicators align to this. Craft aligned questions using suggested stems in the chapter that would help the teacher reflect on, "Where am I going?," "How am I going?," and "What's next?"

Share written feedback with colleagues and review each other's feedback against the ReVISION Supervisory Continuum standards. (You will find samples in the Chapter 6 Resource Center.)

Chapter 7: *What professional learning builds your capacity to lead learning?*

Without the proper professional learning for leaders, feedback may not feed forward. In this chapter, you will encounter five approaches to professional learning models that not only serve to improve individual instructional leadership practice but also generate a consistent and coherent vision of teaching and learning across a district/region.

Thinking Questions:

- What would/do the survey results reveal from all of your teachers? Do they view you as an instructional leader? Remember, we mentioned that effective and highly effective teachers want to grow as well. How are you specifically supporting their growth and providing leadership opportunities?

- How have the professional learning experiences in which you participate included or not included the essentials and four fundamentals outlined?

- You may have been ahead of the game or submitted a well-crafted rubric for Race to the Top, but have you revisited your evaluation system and instructional framework since 2010? How are you taking advantage of newly found autonomy through the ESSA rewrite?

- How is your professional learning aligned to district goals and teacher needs?

- Is your professional learning progressive in nature or is it a more wash-rinse-repeat method every year? How is your professional learning for leaders impacting your teachers and your school and district/region culture?

- How are leaders supporting each other in your district?

- How are your observation and feedback skills assessed and supported?

Practice:

Discuss with your supervisor the professional learning approaches used to support you as an instructional leader or used within your district/region to promote improved observation and feedback practice.

Identify your own professional learning needs based on the specific skills and strategies outlined in the book and determine what professional learning will support your improved practice. Identify how all instructional leaders, including coaches and/or teacher leaders, could align and collaborate in professional learning to create coherence across your school, district, or region.