

Wise Framing of Feedback

Instructional Strategy – What is it?

Instructors can provide written or verbal comments to students in order to prepare students to receive discrete feedback on a piece of work that they have submitted. These comments communicate that: 1) the class/instructor has a high standard for student work, and 2) you believe that students are capable of reaching that standard.

Why does it work?

Even when students are doing well, they can interpret any critical feedback as evidence that they don't belong and can't succeed. They may feel like their instructors don't believe in them and are viewing them through the lens of a stereotype. To develop students' trust in the feedback and their beliefs in themselves as doers and learners, priming critical feedback with framing comments is essential. These framing comments should emphasize:

1. The **purpose** of the critical feedback
2. The teacher's belief in their **ability to learn**
3. That the class is meant to be **challenging, but that students can succeed**

How to do it?

1. *Decide on the assignments you will give constructive feedback on:* As you plan for a unit or semester, decide on which assignments will receive feedback and budget time accordingly. These framing comments should include the following design principles:
 - Highlight the purpose of the critical feedback
 - Communicate high expectations for success
 - Convey the teacher's belief in their ability to learn
 - Remind students that the class is meant to be challenging, but that ALL students can succeed
 - Be combined with specific feedback about what can be improved and the resources and strategies available to the students.
2. *After providing constructive feedback (comments, edits, suggestions), write a framing comment to the student:* At the top of the assignment, write a short comment to the student explaining that you know that they can be successful and want them to keep working hard. This comment should be placed in a spot where the student will read that comment before reading the specific feedback provided on the content of the work.
3. *Track Student Data:* Pay attention to student performance in the class. Follow up with students who seem unreceptive to feedback and ask questions to understand why that might be.

Suggested adaptations:

- Have a conference with students to discuss the feedback in person, and say the wise framing for feedback aloud in addition to/instead of the written version
- If this is a new protocol, ask students how they want to receive feedback in the course (e.g., in writing or through conferencing with the teacher)

Potential pitfalls/challenges:

- Student just reads specific feedback and skips the wise framing comment.
- Wise framing comment feels canned/inauthentic if they are too scripted or out of character for the teacher.
- Not every statement can include all design principles of wise framing; instead, create multiple phrases that you can use together to convey the purpose of feedback, high expectations, your belief in their capacity to learn, and that some aspects of the course are meant to be challenging.

Examples

The examples given below are only suggestions. You are encouraged to create your own based on the design principles so they feel natural to you and are more relevant to your students.

Wise Framing for Feedback

1. “I am giving you these comments because I have high standards and I know that you can meet them.”
2. “These comments I am giving you are critical, but I hope helpful. Remember, I wouldn’t give you this feedback if I didn’t think that you could meet the goals of the assignment.”
3. “This lesson/module/class is challenging, but I believe in you and your ability to succeed.”

“Unwise” Framing for Feedback

1. “I am giving you these comments so that you have feedback on this essay.”
2. “Overall, nice job. I have suggested several areas that could be improved.”
3. “This class is really challenging for some students. Not everyone can learn this material.”
4. “Just keep trying.”
5. No framing provided