



Artisan teacher NOTES

Artisan Teacher Tips for Online Learning

Part 2: Performance Feedback

We know through multiple studies across many years that skillful teaching is the prime mover of student success. It is not the only mover. It is, however, the largest effect size, most durable variable that drives student success. This is true for traditional classroom style learning and also for other approaches and platforms such as online learning.

Since how we teach is so important for student success, and since the Coronavirus outbreak has forced many classrooms into some sort of online learning platform, I thought it might be helpful to take a look at which of the 23 *Artisan Teacher Themes* have particularly positive applications for online learning. We'll take these *Artisan Teacher* inspired online learning tips one at a time. Let's continue with Theme 18: *Performance Feedback*

Theme 18: **Performance Feedback.** *The ability of the teacher to increase students' persistence at learning tasks by providing abundant, immediate, and specific knowledge of the results of students' efforts.*

Some things are hard to quit. A good conversation with a friend, a video game, a good book, social media, a hobby or craft, or an interesting Netflix series all capture our attention in ways that lead to persistence. When engaged in these activities, our sense of time becomes distorted. What seems like just a few moments on the phone with an old friend can turn into the fastest forty-five minutes ever.

It seems that whenever a human brain is engaged in a recurring loop of “do something – receive feedback – adjust and go again” it doesn’t mind exercising the loop again and again. In fact, if the loop is tight and rich, the brain just can’t help itself. Over-eating, gambling, and binge-watching can result, but so can persistence, stick-to-it-ive-ness, grit, and stamina.

The three essential characteristics of effective performance feedback, whether provided face to face or online, are:

1. **Abundant.** Lots of feedback is better than just a little.
2. **Immediate.** Make the feedback loop as tight as possible.
3. **Specific.** Feedback is not merely praise, encouragement, or advice. It is specific information about students’ current work that can be applied to improvement.

To maintain the amount of vital feedback we provide to students as instruction shifts to online settings requires us to come to terms with a new reality. If feedback is to be abundant, immediate, and specific, it must come from multiple sources. Especially in an online setting, if feedback for 25 students, must all pass through a single teacher, there will be a bottleneck effect.

Here are some practical tips for providing students with the feedback they need and avoiding the bottleneck.

1. Have students provide self-feedback. Provide examples, exemplars, and age-appropriate rubrics. Then, ask students to provide feedback on their own work. It can be as simple as “What am I doing well?” + “What could I do better?”
2. Ask students to obtain family feedback. Ask them to show the rubrics and exemplars to parents, grandparents, friends, and siblings. Becoming more comfortable with seeking feedback on one’s work is an important life/work skill.
3. Connect students virtually so they may provide peer feedback. The act of providing feedback on a peer’s work is not only helpful to the recipient but is also a high-level learning experience for the provider.

4. Provide formative feedback rather than waiting on final completion of the work. For example, if students are working on persuasive paragraphs, ask them to send in their opening sentence only. Then, provide feedback on just that- how the opening sentence invokes curiosity, focuses attention, or activates an emotional response. If students are practicing setting up simple subtraction problems, provide feedback on the initial step of lining up the number columns. Perhaps they could use a ruler to show the alignment, snap a pic and send in in.

5. Less grading, more feedback. Providing students with abundant, immediate, and specific performance feedback is time intensive. But, it's worth it. With respect to student achievement, the effect size of providing students with effective feedback is high. The effect size associated with assigning grades is low. So, especially for online learning, spend less time and energy marking/grading student work and more time providing abundant, immediate, and specific performance feedback.

These tips do not imply that self, family, peer, or formative feedback will be as clear, valuable, and insightful as the teacher's personal feedback would have been in a face to face classroom setting. They will, however, increase the amount and timeliness of feedback and have a positive effect on student persistence and engagement.

For more information on Performance Feedback and the other 22 Artisan Teacher Themes, see The Artisan Teacher: A Field Guide to Skillful Teaching ©2013 by Mike Rutherford, ISBN: 978-0-9914724-0-6. Available at www.rutherfordlg.com.