

## Expert Insights

**Narrator** [00:00:00] What kind of feedback is most helpful to you? When writing a paper for publication, comments from anonymous reviewers received weeks, sometimes months after submission are important. Heeding them is often expected to get published. But we also receive feedback along the way before the paper is submitted from colleagues and mentors, in discussions at conferences, and with students in class. Their ideas can shape the questions we investigate, the works to reference, and how to best explain our findings. Our own experience suggests how we can provide useful feedback to students so that it's not merely a one-time, high-stakes event, but part and parcel of their writing and intellectual process.

**Thomas A. Angelo, EdD, Clinical Professor of Educational Innovation & Research; Director, Educator Development for The Academy; UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill** [00:00:43] There's almost nothing that people learn in a straight line by trying at once, nothing significant. And so real learning is iterative. It means we have to practice, be assessed, get feedback, practice again, be assessed, get feedback.

**Narrator** [00:00:59] Research on learning indicates that feedback is most useful when it's aligned to course outcomes. These objectives are your students' course compass. Feedback that promotes the larger aim of the assignment and helps students keep their learning on track. Feedback should also be timely, more often than not within a week or two. This is especially important when it's necessary to correct foundational knowledge or skills so that misunderstandings don't take hold.

**Thomas A. Angelo, EdD** [00:01:27] It turns out from the research that I've read, my reading of this, is that students need immediate feedback on things that are lower down in Bloom's taxonomy levels. So if we're talking about knowledge and understanding, then the more immediate the feedback, the better, so that we avoid letting students go ahead with misunderstandings.

**Narrator** [00:01:48] Feedback should also be actionable. As tempting as it might be to write in the margins, the various thoughts that a paper might trigger, save that for class discussion. Instead, provide comments that help students improve this assignment or the next one in specific ways, whether to do less or more of something, change word choice for paper organization, or take a different analytical approach.

**Thomas A. Angelo, EdD** [00:02:12] I think it's important if we're going to be really helpful to students who aren't already very good at what they're doing, which is most students, for us to be very explicit about when we're giving them feedback, why we're giving them feedback, and how to use it. So a good coach will tell you how to practice in order to get better. They won't only tell you what to improve, but they'll tell you how to improve.

**Narrator** [00:02:35] As your time is scarce, limit and focus your feedback. Students are more likely to use it and not feel overwhelmed.

**Thomas A. Angelo, EdD** [00:02:44] So the things that matter, most of the things we're grading them on, are the things that we should give students feedback on. And we know that the more feedback we give students, the more it diffuses the impact of that feedback. So most people who study in this area would say on any piece of work, we want to give students no more than three or four or five direct and very focused pieces of feedback. The more you give them, the less they're likely to pay attention of it or be able to work on it.

**Narrator** [00:03:13] Feedback should also be consequential. Nothing is as frustrating as taking the time to provide clear and actionable feedback that goes unheeded. Ensure that students have the opportunity and they're expected to use your feedback.

**Thomas A. Angelo, EdD** [00:03:29] We need to tell them what to improve, why it's important to improve it and how they can go about improving that and then make sure they have opportunities to demonstrate whether or not they've improved it. If those things don't happen, feedback isn't going to seem or be consequential.

**Narrator** [00:03:45] Just as we're motivated to make necessary revisions to get published, you can incentivize your students to get a better grade and improve their learning when they act on your comments. Finally, feedback should be user-friendly. It's hard to escape the fact that your comments are judging students' work, so keep your phrasing as positive as possible. Try posing guiding questions that allow your students to arrive at needed improvements.

**Thomas A. Angelo, EdD** [00:04:13] Well, it turns out to matter a lot how we give feedback and probably the single most important thing to remember is to give feedback on the learning, not on the person. And that's a mistake that many of us make.

**Narrator** [00:04:28] This is where technology can be a big help. Video or audio recordings with individual or whole class feedback can be fun and an efficient use of your time. Think of it like leaving a voicemail. You can convey more information than writing. Personalize your feedback with an encouraging tone and your students are more likely to watch and listen. For the camera shy, blogs and online discussions can serve the same goals and extend learning beyond class time. During the semester, it can also be helpful to model how to use feedback. For example, you can give students a sample paper containing feedback that they can practice revising on their own or in groups followed by a class discussion. Based on the changes they make, you'll learn if your sample comments were sufficiently actionable, user-friendly, and aligned to cause outcomes. This practice also makes learning more active and brings collegial discourse to life.

**Thomas A. Angelo, EdD** [00:05:27] The research on teaching and learning are quite clear that feedback is one of the most important things that teachers do to help students learn.

**Narrator** [00:05:37] The impact of these techniques can be evident quickly and rewarding. And when you see students incorporating your feedback and improving their work, you'll know you're providing effective feedback.