

Faculty Matter Teaching Tip #27: Helping students take the reins: Providing “*feedforward*”

At this point in the semester, students may be particularly eager to get a sense of how they are doing in your class, and what they can hope for, for a final grade. As we strive to help our students “engage” and step up to take control of their own academic success, **it is useful if we can provide guidance to them, so that they can decide where and how to direct their energies.**

In this *Teaching Tip*, I share a construct articulated by Dr. Manju Banerjee, an internationally recognized expert in higher education teaching and learning: the notion of “**feedforward**”. Her point is fairly straightforward: In addition to providing *feedback* – about the strengths and problems with students’ work as we return it to them once we have graded it, we should also consider ways to help students figure out how to adjust their studying as they go *forward* with future assignments. **What should they do, do more, do differently, or not do, as they manage their time, as they study, as they assess their level of mastery of course material, as they review for tests, as they write and so on?**

You might apply this concept in the **written comments** you provide to students, or in **conversation** during office hours when students come in to check on their standing in your course.

As you plan how you might provide this guidance for your students, consider **two suggestions**:

1 – **Be concrete** If a student’s writing was unclear, for example, help them identify **easy-to-implement strategies** to check for clarity next time: “There were a lot of good ideas in your answer, but I also found I lost the thread a few times. Next time, you might want to try reading what you wrote *out loud to yourself*, and see if it sounds clear and complete to you. That should help you check to see if you are saying what you intended to say.” **Simple, easy to do, no special materials or technology required.**

2 – **Let them “own” the idea.** Once you offer your advice, have them think about **how they could do what you suggest**. “Yeah – I could print my answer out and read it, and I could underline the places where I think it doesn’t make sense, or where I think I should add something or change the wording.”

At your leisure, we invite you to skim through prior [Faculty Matter Teaching Tips](http://www.sjsu.edu/cfd/teaching-learning/FacultyMatterTips/) (at <http://www.sjsu.edu/cfd/teaching-learning/FacultyMatterTips/>). And please **add your own strategies using the comment link** on the [Provost’s Academic Spotlight blog under the category “Faculty Matter”](#)