

The Four Ps to Better Feedback

If we expect teachers to grow, then we must be willing to provide them with regular and meaningful feedback on their practice. But giving meaningful feedback is not always easy. Many administrators report that giving quality feedback to teachers is a real challenge. And many teachers complain that the feedback they get after observation—if they get any—often tells them what they did, rather than helping them reflect on the impact of their decisions.

The Four Ps give administrators a simple way to generate meaningful and usable feedback on observed lessons. The Four Ps stand for...

PROVIDE EVIDENCE: Collect evidence that supports what you observed.

For example:

- *“Standards were clear and posted as Student-Friendly Learning Targets”*
- *“Hook was used to activate prior knowledge”*
- *“Used the Backward Learning tool to help students understand what they needed to know and do by unit’s end”*

PRAISE: Recognize positive teaching behaviors that had a positive impact on student learning.

For example:

“Great hook! Using a ‘what if’ question really engaged students and got them to tap into their prior knowledge.”

POSE: Ask questions that foster reflection on the teacher’s decisions and their impact on student learning.

For example:

“I was really interested in how you used the Backward Learning tool. What effect does it have on student focus and self-assessment over the week?”

PROPOSE: Decide (collaboratively, if possible) how to improve the teacher’s practice.

For example:

“The targets were posted, but I think it’s important that all students really internalize these targets. You might try the 5-S Goal Sharing tool to accomplish this.”

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The Four Ps are more than just a list; they represent a feedback habit, a way of making sure that the conversation and culture we are striving to build are focused squarely on teaching, learning, and how they can be improved. Below are three different ways you can use the Four Ps.

- 1. Guide post-observation conversations.** As you observe a lesson—and as you reflect on it afterwards—use the Four Ps to collect notes. Then, when you sit down to share your feedback with the teacher, use the Four Ps to guide the conversation.
- 2. Provide quick written feedback.** The Four Ps are ideal for writing up observation notes and sending them to teachers to foster reflection and spur growth.
- 3. Develop thoughtful and comprehensive written evaluations.** Sometimes, written evaluations that accompany formal observations amount to summaries of what was observed. While summarizing a lesson can be an important part of written evaluation, summaries do not help teachers improve their practice. Use the Four Ps to move written evaluations beyond simple summaries.

Note: “The Four Ps to Better Feedback” has been adapted from *The Thoughtful Classroom Teacher Effectiveness Framework [Resource Guide]* (pp. 69-70), by Silver Strong & Associates, 2012.