

60-Second SoTL

Episode 16 – Dialogic Feed-Forward

(Piano Music)

00:03

Jessie L. Moore:

Does supplementing written feedback with a meeting to discuss a student-led action plan for improvement have long-term implications for student learning? That's the focus of this week's **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. I'm Jessie Moore.

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In "Dialogic Feed-Forward in Assessment: Pivotal to Learning but not Unproblematic," published in the open access journal, *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, Jennifer Hill and Harry West share a case study analysis of a learning-focused model of future-oriented feedback, also known as feed-forward.

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The researchers tracked second-year students enrolled in a 12-week undergraduate geography unit, or course, at a British university and followed the students' assessment behaviors through their third and final year of study. During the 12-week unit, students submitted an essay draft which they were encouraged to discuss in a face-to-face meeting with their instructor. At the meeting, the instructor asked students to summarize the strengths and weaknesses of their draft and to self-assess the draft using the assignment criteria. In addition to being encouraged to ask questions and to receiving written comments from the instructor, students left the meetings with student-led action plans for revision. The meetings were audio-recorded, so students also could listen to the conversation as they continued to work on their essays.

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Prior to submitting their revised essays, students submitted a self-reflection of their essay progress and once again used the assignment criteria to self-assess their essay grade. Collectively, this feedback process produced 4 data sources per student: a draft essay with teacher commentary, the recording of the student-teacher dialogic meeting, the student's self-reflection, and the final essay with teacher commentary. The researchers added a 5th data source by conducting and recording semi-structured group interviews with the students at the end of their final year of study.

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The case study focuses on four students, and I encourage listeners interested in feed-forward strategies to read the article for a deeper dive into the students' individual experiences with feedback.

Overall, analysis of their essays, dialogic feed-forward meetings, self-reflections, and subsequent interview responses suggest that the dialogic feed-forward strategy promoted student feedback literacy. Students developed greater appreciation for feedback, and the meetings helped them manage their emotional response while developing action plans for acting on the feedback. The dialogic feed-forward meetings also helped students clarify their understanding of the assignment, and students reported feeling more empowered in their learning. Most also reported seeking out feedback for subsequent assignments after learning through the dialogic feed-forward process how important feedback could be to learning and improvement.

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While dialogic feed-forward meetings offer a strategy for facilitating students' transfer of learning from a specific feedback exchange to their future assignments, addressing the transfer or adaptation challenge raised in our last 60-Second SoTL episode on future-oriented feedback, Hill and West caution that the dialogic feed-forward model has limitations. Some reluctant students, for instance, were not prepared to participate in feedback opportunities, and students who submitted strong first drafts sometimes did not engage with feedback because they didn't want to risk making substantive changes that might lower their grade. Dialogic feed-forward meetings also are time-intensive and are most effective when instructors establish relationships marked by honesty, empathy, and trust.

Nevertheless, the researchers conclude that "personalized dialogic feed-forward can act as a fulcrum, changing passive teacher comments, via a process of negotiated sense-making, into outputs of active intellectual engagement, better regulated emotions, and positive student motivation, learning behaviors, and performance."

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To learn more about Hill and West's study, follow the link in our show notes to read this open access article and to review our supplemental resources for this episode.

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Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. Learn more about the Center at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org.

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