

Characteristics of Formative Feedback

- Promotes **reflection** as part of a dialog between the giver and receiver of feedback. Both parties are **mutually involved** in observing, thinking, reporting, and responding.
- Focuses on observed **behavior** rather than on the person. Refers to what an individual does rather than to what we think s/he is.
- **Descriptive** rather than judgmental. Avoiding judgmental language reduces the need for an individual to respond defensively.
- **Specific** rather than general.
- Promotes **reflection about strategies** and the students' or observer's responses to a specific strategy.
- Directed toward behavior which the receiver can **change**.
- Considers the **needs** of both the receiver and giver of feedback.
- **Solicited** rather than imposed. Feedback is most useful when the receiver actively seeks feedback and is able to discuss it in a supportive environment.
- **Well-timed**. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the observation.
- Involves **sharing information** rather than giving advice, leaving the individual free to change in accordance with personal goals and needs.
- Considers the **amount of information** the receiver can use rather than the amount the observer would like to give. Overloading an individual with feedback reduces the likelihood that the information will be used effectively.
- Requires a **supportive, confidential** relationship built on trust, honesty, and genuine concern.

(adapted from McEnerney & Webb from Bergquist and Phillips.)

Building Community through Peer Observation

American Association for Higher Education, Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards