

Claim, Connect, Action: A feedback frame to support constructive student feedback that goes beyond grades

Co-Authors: Amy Tepper and Patrick Flynn

As our students transition to new learning environments, they will require high quality feedback to help them recognize their progress in key areas of learning (some of which will feel very new to them) and strengthen their ability to reflect and work independently. In a virtual environment, concentration on building student ownership at developmentally appropriate levels is more essential than ever, and feedback becomes the critical driver for student success. John Hattie (2012) reminds us that feedback should be developed with the intent of supporting learners in answering three important questions:

- **Where am I going?**
- **How am I going?**
- **What's next?**

Our feedback should

- help the students see the purpose of learning
- make it clear how their current performance aligns to that purpose and,
- provide strategies and resources to support achievement of that purpose.

While Hattie focused on feedback from teachers to students, the same expectations can be applied to feedback for all learners, whether the receivers are children or adults. With this in mind, we initially designed a feedback frame, "***Claim, Connect, Action***" (Tepper & Flynn, 2019, 2020), to support instructional leaders, coaches, and peers in providing feedback to teachers about classroom practice and outcomes. The provider

- Formulates a **claim** based on the assessment criterion/criteria
- **Connects** and support that claim with objective and relevant evidence
- Supports learner growth through **action** and reflection.

This same frame can be adapted to support high quality feedback to students across grade levels through varied delivery methods. (For example, think about how you can use this beyond written feedback, such as in voice memos or through video conversations). Our goal in providing formative feedback is for students to ***learn about their learning***, to inform their next steps and promote growth against the criteria we set, not just provide a grade. Teachers will find that using ***Claim, Connect, Action*** allows this to occur as long as clear and rigorous learning targets and specific criteria are in place for the tasks.

When preparing to provide feedback to a student using the ***Claim, Connect, Action*** frame, you will want to be sure you have organized your thinking and notes about the student's current performance. Ask yourself, "what am I seeing in the student's work that tells me about ***how*** they are learning?"

As you process and prepare the feedback you will give, be sure you:

1. Familiarize yourself with the learning target and aligned success criteria (and have clearly spelled those out for your student)
 - a. *What was I intending the student to demonstrate and how can they demonstrate it?*
 - b. *What does mastery look like? How will I know when they have it?*
2. Organize the most important evidence about the level of performance currently being demonstrated by the student
 - a. *How are they doing against the criteria? Toward mastery of the learning target?*
 - b. *What did the student demonstrate (say, do, or write—depending on assessment) that validates my claim about their performance?*
3. Consider how the student’s current performance and actions are leading to the success criteria
 - a. *How can I connect their current actions to desired or anticipated outcomes?*
 - b. *How can I help them see what is causing their current level of performance?*
 - c. *What is the learner’s progression revealing in terms of feedback needs?*
4. Identify areas of strength and areas of need or growth
 - a. *Does the learner need feedback on task, process, self-regulation, and/or self? (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)*
 - b. *What current practice can I build upon to help them see “What’s next?”*
 - c. *What will ensure the “What’s next?” is actionable? Are there resources available/I can provide to ensure they can move forward?*

Answering the questions above ensures your feedback to the student will directly support learning and growth.

As you provide written or verbal feedback just be sure to

- Remain objective, providing an analysis of the learning against the criteria
- Construct your feedback so that it allows the student to reflect and make adjustments and/or celebrate success.

Remember, you are looking to build student ownership by cultivating the capacity of the student to recognize the purpose of the learning, how they are doing so far against the expectations, and how to act upon insights you share about their performance. Please note, using **Claim, Connect, Action** to provide feedback to students will not always be necessary. At times, completion of a task is enough. Rigorous learning, however, especially learning that builds towards higher levels of student ownership of the most important skills and competencies requires more in-depth feedback. While this type of feedback may take longer to create and provide than a simple completion grade, the benefit is in the development over time of student reflection and growth in real-world, 21st c./global skills, and practices.

Personal Interest Project (PIP)

As a way to support your understanding of the use of this feedback frame for an authentic online assignment, we have created two feedback samples for a key formative moment in a **Personal Interest Project** created by [Skills21](#) at EdAdvance in Litchfield, CT. The following examples demonstrate feedback to an elementary level and secondary level student completing [Phase I, Task 4](#) of the project. The task and criteria are spelled out in the project assignment and corresponding rubric as follows:

4. [Project Proposal](#) - *What will your final project look like? This project plan will be a proposal for what you want to do for your project. Will you be conducting research? Creating a prototype of a solution? Starting an action campaign to raise awareness? Designing an app or game to educate people? Make a short movie (documentary, sci fi, drama, comedy) about your topic? Remember, be creative! **Artifact: Project Proposal***

As you examine Task 4 the success criteria that rises to the surface includes the following:

- *Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.*
- *Utilize multiple media technologies, and know how to judge their effectiveness and assess their impact*
- *Use a variety of communication tools for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade) and there is evidence of thoughtful selection of strategy to align with message, audience, and purpose.*

(Skills21 EdAdvance, 2020)

Remember, the first step in ensuring your feedback will be impactful is alignment to and clarity of the criteria. Be sure you spend time reviewing the rubrics your district has provided or the rubrics provided to you through Skills21. Ensuring the students understand the expectations before they complete the assignment is obviously of great importance, and your formative feedback should support students throughout the learning by reiterating those expectations.

On the pages that follow you will find examples of feedback and an analysis of each. These are designed to support you in understanding how to apply this framework with your students and for any tasks or assessments you may design. Be sure to adapt elements such as sentence structure, word choice, and/or overall length based on your students' needs and your time constraints or number of students you are supporting. You know your students best and we know for many of you, this is new instructional territory!

For more information about use of the **Claim, Connect, Action** frame or for additional resources to support your work as you shift to virtual instruction, contact Amy Tepper amy@tepperandflynn.com or Patrick Flynn patrick@tepperandflynn.com.

Feedback Examples

Elementary Example (Based on Project Proposal Student Sample: [“A Day in the Life of me with JIA”](#))

Claim: Your topic and idea to create a video about your own life will be a very informative way to teach others about JIA.

Connect: Sharing your experiences and creating a project from your own viewpoint on video will be very powerful for the viewer because you are an expert in what it means to have JIA and you will make it real for us. It takes courage to share your own story! We all learn a great deal when we hear stories firsthand, which is why we use primary sources, whether they are poems, letters, papers, books, music, etc. Many may not realize that children can get arthritis like you mentioned and don't know what challenges you face. Also, because you have chosen a topic that is familiar, it will be easier to learn new skills like filming a movie and editing it.

Action: Though your new learning will involve videoing and editing, it will be important to plan before you start creating your video to ensure it becomes a valuable tool that will go beyond just to “tell more people” (informing) but to actually teach others about JIA (instructing). This is where your mom and dad, who you said could be a part [or Mrs. J the Library Media Specialist] can be a big help, because 3-5 minutes goes by in a flash! Sometimes when we are excited to just make a video, especially an informative one, we end up needing to edit so much, which can take a lot of time! Some suggestions:

1. Write down some ideas first about your experiences and then work to find a few key or important ideas you want your viewers to learn. You said it was “A day in the life,” so does it start with you waking up? I wonder, to continue to stretch yourself, how you could also include some important research or statistics? (These can either be visuals you hold up or read/say). Eventually, you can learn how to add them right into your video!) Sometimes even writing a whole script like they do for movies can help you stay on track.
2. You started to consider who will be in the video (your sister) but what will her role be? What can she share?
3. Practice! Watch yourself, reflect on what could be improved, and try again before your final shoot.

Analysis of the elementary feedback

Notice in the feedback example how the teacher's claim is built from the language and expectations from 21st c. skill #3 (Where am I going?) *“Use a variety of communication tools for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade) and there is evidence of thoughtful selection of strategy to align with message, audience, and purpose.”* In the connect, the teacher supports the expectation by reinforcing why the student's choice of media will be effective, and also connects directly to student statements or work “Many may not

realize that children can get arthritis like you mentioned.” (How am I going?) In the action section, notice the teacher is building from the question on the proposal, “How will this project be a learning stretch for you?” and also provides direct strategies and next steps, along with reflective questions that will enable the student to meet the goal—to create an informative video, while also learning new tech skills. Notice the teacher builds on the student’s work to do this: “You started to consider who will be in the video (your sister) but what will her role be? What can she share?” (What’s next?) This feedback offers the student opportunities to keep growing and learning, while sharing something very personal and important.

Secondary Example

Claim: Your project proposal identifies an interesting topic, “The expansion of professional soccer in North America” and what inspires you about the topic. It is not as clear yet what your project goals will be related to your topic or how your choice of media will help you convey those.

Connect:

You describe what inspired you to select this topic when you state that “you have played soccer for many years and soon “will be playing in college” and that you “hope to continue to play for several years after college.” While these are identifying your inspiration, it isn’t clear what is happening with soccer in North America that is driving your desire to pursue this topic of expansion. (Ex. Are you inspired because it is your passion and people are missing out? What is the state of soccer currently in North America compared to around the world?) Project proposals such as this help you to advocate for something you believe in and to express your passion, which can motivate or persuade people to think like you or take action. When you have a clear idea of your own “why” behind your work, the current state of affairs, and what needs to change, the resource you are creating becomes a more powerful message aligned to that.

Action:

Consider your description of what is inspiring you to engage in this topic. Reflect on your years of dedication to the sport and how that is leading to a long-term commitment to advocacy of its expansion in the US market in particular. As human beings, we find our greatest success when we can attach a deep individual meaning to the work we do. This project is meant to provide you with that opportunity to express your passion openly and build connections for others. Are there moments in particular that you can think of that caused you to develop such a passion for the sport? What goals do you have that make this project important to you and your future let alone the future of the sport in the US?

Take 15 minutes to reflect on these questions and your initial response to the prompt. Then, jot down your ideas. Think: What is the issue or problem you want to address within this idea of expansion and what are some solutions? Start to brainstorm a research or thinking question that will stretch you. (Ex. What is contributing to

the increase in popularity in the US and how/why should we continue to expand...? How would soccer compete with say, the NFL or NBA?) Try to think beyond what you already know. What can you learn as you work on this while conveying important information to others? These steps will then allow you to determine the best product that will convey your message.

When you have a chance, feel free to resubmit your “question you want to answer” and think about your product of choice. I will review and we can continue to talk about how this can be a motivator and guide for the rest of the project.

Analysis of the feedback

Again, the feedback is built from the language and expectations from 21st c. skill #3 “*Use a variety of communication tools for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade) and there is evidence of thoughtful selection of strategy to align with message, audience, and purpose.*” (Where am I going?) The teacher provides evidence directly from the student’s project proposal to help the student make connections to the purpose. He begins by stating that the student has “identified the topic” and what “inspired the topic.” He then uses quotes directly from the students’ work to help the student connect to where he is seeing evidence of the criteria being met. This helps the student see their current level of performance, offering the first opportunity for the student to self-reflect. (How am I going?) The teacher clarifies the next level of performance available to the student by clarifying the need for additional planning, thinking, and details to persuade the reader and build interest. Finally, the teacher provides next steps and reflective questions for the student’s consideration to ensure growth and improvement. (What’s next?)

Works Cited

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About the Authors:



Amy Tepper has served as a teacher, administrator, and program director in various K–12 settings and start-ups that include virtual, home school, blended, and public schools. She held the position of executive director of a Sylvan Learning Center; opened an alternative sixth-through twelfth-grade school in Okaloosa County, Florida; and later was actively engaged in Florida high school redesign and career education reform, providing technical assistance across the state. Amy had the opportunity to collaborate with a team of parents to develop the Ohana Institute, an innovative blended school, focused on global citizenship and discovery learning, serving as director in its first year. As a consultant, she provided instructional and administrative coaching at an international school in Panama until 2013 when she returned to

support schools in the U.S. Amy has since completed countless classroom observations through work as a peer validator, evaluating practices in Newark and New Haven schools, and in providing embedded, ongoing support for instructional leaders and teachers in the areas of high-quality observation, feedback, and teaching and learning. She is the coauthor of *Feedback to Feed Forward: 31 Strategies to Lead Learning* (Corwin, 2019) and *Learner-Focused Feedback: 19 Strategies to Observe for Impact* (Corwin, 2020).



Patrick Flynn has worked as a teacher, teacher leader, curriculum director, and executive program director in K-12 settings in over eleven different states. As the Executive Director of High Schools for Edison Schools and the Chief Academic Officer for Great Schools Workshop in Sacramento, CA, Patrick worked with building and district administrations in nine states to implement systemic high school reform. In his coaching and as a professional development director for a Regional Service Center in CT, he provided professional learning in the areas of transformational leadership, performance management systems, standards-driven instruction, and data-driven decision-making. He has led several school improvement initiatives in rural and urban settings and internationally in the United Arab Emirates with the Abu

Dhabi Education Council. He has presented nationally and internationally, including as a keynote speaker at the Forum on Big Data at the Tianjin University of Technology, in Tianjin, China. Patrick is highly sought after for his leadership in providing the highest quality professional learning opportunities for teacher, administrators, and district personnel. Patrick is the co-author of *Feedback to Feed Forward: 31 Strategies to Lead Learning* (Corwin, 2019) and *Learner-Focused Feedback: 19 Strategies to Observe for Impact* (Corwin, 2020).