

## Supporting Distanced Teaching and Learning Through Feedback that Feeds Forward A 4-part Series by Amy Tepper & Patrick Flynn

### Part 3: Building the Foundations of Feedback

As we make dramatic shifts in our learning environments, everyone is experiencing varying stages of teaching and learning and varying phases of change (Part 2). Peers, coaches, and leaders can provide support in this challenging time through collaboration and feedback to best meet teachers' needs. Already, the awesome power and impact of teacher feedback to students has been realized, especially in those schools who are not grading or are providing minimal grades. With states waiving grading policies and teacher evaluation requirements, we can realize positive outcomes through feedback with our teachers as well. Suddenly the world is wide open to provide and receive feedback for growth without the pressure of a score or a rating.

#### How to Build Feedback that Feeds Forward

High quality feedback is built on key pieces of information about the teaching and learning taking place. To ensure teachers receive individualized support, feedback providers should use purposeful strategies to gather information that will allow for collegial conversations, clear identification of needs and starting points for actionable next steps. In Part 1, we reminded you that teaching strategies (e.g., developing and communicating clear learning targets or providing feedback to students) will crossover or remain important regardless of the environment. Similarly, the strategies that feedback providers as “observers” have utilized before the shift to gather information about teaching and learning will also crossover in many regards (e.g., reviewing student work or watching direct instruction or modeling).

However, we also recognize that online teaching and learning requires adaptations (Part 1) for students and teachers. Therefore, “observers” will also need to make adjustments in the new environments. They will need to understand specific online teaching and learning pedagogies and skills (e.g., supporting learners to work successfully asynchronously). In addition, “observers” must consider new ways to access information based on varying formats and different modes of instruction and varying methods students will use to submit work and show learning. Based on our 50 strategies from our two books, to aid you in your information gathering in online environments to ensure you can provide feedback that feeds forward, we have created 4 recommendations for leaders, coaches, and peers.

#### **Recommendation 1: Deepen your understanding of our 4 Stages tool (from Part 2) to leverage growth & support**

##### **Aligned Strategies:**

**Mindfully plan for effective observation and feedback** (*Learner-Focused Feedback Strategy 1*)

**Understand the research** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 3*)

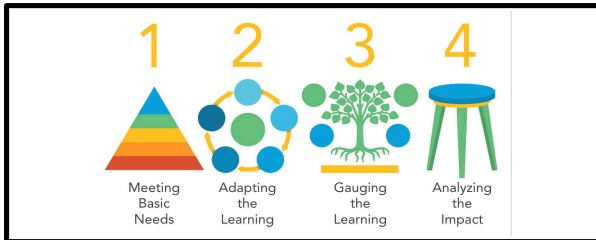
**Identify key levers** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 5*)

**Engage in the “behavioralization” process** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 6*)

Just as a district’s instructional framework serves as a foundational tool to support teacher growth beyond evaluation, our *4 Stages of a Shift* can be utilized in a similar way. In Part 2, we provided you with descriptions, related student outcomes, potential teacher actions, and aligned standards for each stage. To realize the tool’s full potential, it is critical to engage in collaborative planning with teachers before you begin providing more targeted support. Once you have done this, you will find our upcoming next 3 recommendations will support the use of the tool and lead you to more accurate identification of current stages.

It is important to work to:

- Build an understanding of the crossover and online-specific teacher and learner skills, tools, and dispositions and review suggested standards as guides to the research and pedagogies (Part 1).
- Develop a common short- and long-term vision of online teaching and learning while ensuring learner and staff needs remain as a top priority.
- Dive into the *4 Stages of the Shift*, “behavioralizing” the descriptions to further identify what they might look and sound like. Identify what we call “key levers” or the differences between the stages. Engaging in this work can help you refine your vision as well and can initiate teacher self-reflection.



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- Establish the goals for feedback that will be provided **(Remember, our tool is for growth and process nonevaluative.)**

Initially, the tool can be used as a checklist or guide to help you identify a general starting point and to set goals with each teacher. Leaders, coaches, and peers can use information they have gathered about the teaching and learning along with teachers’ self-reflection to engage in collaborative conversations. Feedback can be provided based on each teacher’s current point in the progression/shift and their learners’ needs and readiness for deeper engagement and learning. As you go forward and teachers are working on next steps to progress through the stages, you will find you can refine your information gathering and feedback.

**Recommendation 2: Use the same evidence-collection strategies (that you used when visiting classrooms this year) and remain focused on the learning not just the teaching**

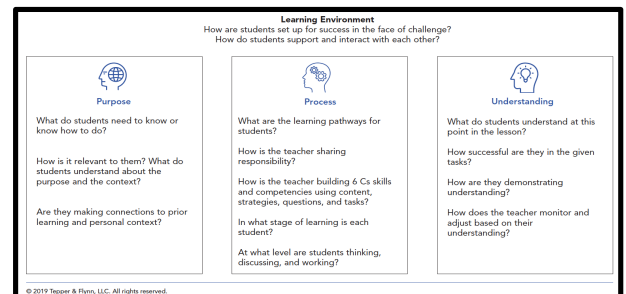
**Aligned Strategies:**

- Observe with a Wide Lens** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 8*)
- Collect a balance of evidence with purpose** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 9*)
- View teaching and learning** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 14*)
- Listen to teaching and learning**, (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 15*)
- Interact with learners** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 16*)

Anyone who will be providing feedback to a teacher should start the process by maintaining a big picture perspective (even if a teacher is asking for help in a specific area), especially if this is the first opportunity to “visit.” To guide your information gathering, try to determine what is happening for learners across several broad aspects of teaching and learning (Figure 3.2).

Observation and feedback opportunities become anytime, anywhere opportunities, just as the learning has become for our students. For example, if teachers share access to platforms like Google Classroom, “observers” can look at student artifacts and teacher tasks, or view recorded instruction without taking time away from a teacher by asking for emails or uploaded items. Observers can also join chats or lessons being delivered in real time. To help you adapt to synchronous and asynchronous and live and recorded virtual teaching and learning, we have modified our Evidence Collection Methods Table 3.10 from *Feedback to Feed Forward* (2019) in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.2 The Big Picture** (Resource Center 1.2 *Learner-Focused Feedback*)



**Figure 3.1 Understanding Distanced Teaching and Learning**

<b>Strategy 14: Listening</b>	
<b>Modality</b>	<b>What is available for listening?</b>
<b>Listening to Learning</b>	S questions/responses during small or large group chats/meets/instruction S-S discussions in small/breakout or large group chats/meets Created products (e.g., created read alouds, voice memo responses, podcasts, TED talks, songs) Ss responses to teacher check-ins for wellness, access, needs, etc.
<b>Listening to Teaching</b>	T initiation to tasks/day/community building (e.g., routines, morning meeting, check-ins) T introduction to tasks, direct instruction T-S questions/feedback (e.g., voice memos, Q & A during small or group chats/meets) Live delivery or created/recorded products (e.g., read alouds, think alouds, tutorials/ resources/verbal directions like in Seesaw, as podcasts, as voice memos, using Screencastify without camera) T responses on calls or check-ins with leaders or teams (for wellness, access, needs, etc.)
<b>Strategy 15: Viewing</b>	
<b>Modality</b>	<b>What is available for viewing?</b>
<b>Viewing the Learning</b>	Live engagement or recorded whiteboard actions, collaborative tasks (e.g., Padlet) gaming responses (e.g., Kahoot), student check-in forms/responses (e.g. Mentimeter) Live/created products (e.g., blog posts, discussion board responses, writing samples, videos, digital stories, infographics) using apps like Seesaw, Jigsaw or Google Classroom Submitted, scanned/photo of work, or quizzes Peer-Peer interaction or feedback using apps like Google Classroom, Jigsaw, or Seesaw Ss responses to nonverbal check-ins for wellness, access, needs, etc. (e.g., emojis)
<b>Viewing the Teaching</b>	Design/layout of tasks within the platform, directions for tasks, options for choice/varied levels T posted prompts/questions for discussion Live/recorded/created products (e.g., whiteboard instruction, polling, modeling, charts, resources) Tasks, prompts, inquiry questions in discussion boards/blogs, selected texts, copied packets Emails/communications with families and students T feedback on student work through emails or tools (e.g., in Google Classroom, Jigsaw) Ts responses to surveys from leaders and coaches
<b>Strategy 16: Interacting*</b>	
*Though there are some limitations to interacting with learners directly in a virtual setting as an "observer," we can still engage with them to some degree to learn more about experiences, thinking, understanding, and needs.	
<b>Modality</b>	<b>What is available?</b>
<b>Interacting with Learners</b>	Real-time chat (e.g., chat room texts set at private, breakout room discussions) Post-lesson email communications Surveys, phone calls for academic, social, & emotional check-ins
<b>Interacting with Teachers</b>	Chat room texts (set at private) Post-lesson email communications Team or 1:1 virtual/video meetings Surveys, phone calls for academic, social, & emotional check-ins



[Click here to see an example of our Recommendations 1 & 2 in action \(right click for new window\)](#)

**Recommendation 3: Identify levels of engagement and learning**

**Aligned Strategies:**

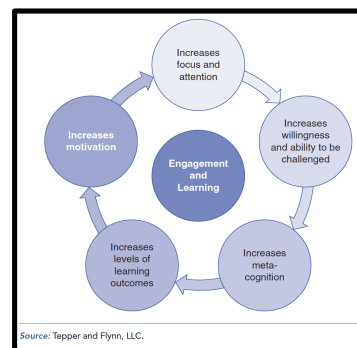
**Understand how learners learn** (*Learner-Focused Feedback Strategy 4*)

**Understand how teachers create outcomes** (*Learner-Focused Feedback Strategy 5*)

As you consider answers to the Big Picture questions, try to identify levels of student engagement and consider our Rec 2 and how you will need to adapt to arrive at this. Are they compliant and completing tasks, somewhat engaged, participating and attentive, or cognitively and metacognitively engaged? We can help teachers build a cycle for continuous improvement (Figure 3.3) based on the current point of engagement levels.

*“If we can start with just gaining student focus and attention, then we will increase student willingness and ultimately, their ability to be challenged (think: skill and will), thus leading to higher levels of engagement. If we increase student willingness to be challenged, then they will be more open to think metacognitively about how they are learning...”* (Tepper & Flynn, 2020).

**Figure 3.3 If-Then Relationships**  
(Figure 2.7 *Learner-Focused Feedback*)



**Recommendation 4: Use our 5 Focus Areas to consider impact on engagement & learning**

**Aligned Strategies:**

**Organize your evidence** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 17*)

**Ask questions about what you observed** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 18*)

**Determine causes of outcomes** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 19*)

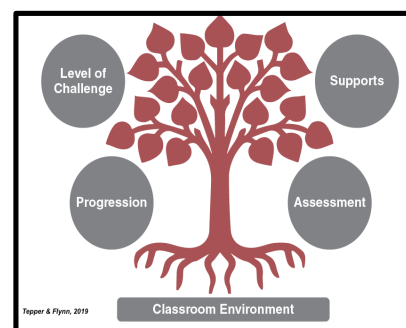
**Focus on overall observed impact** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 20*)

**Use what you know about research-based strategies** (*Feedback to Feed Forward Strategy 22*)

We know, “there are many factors that influence student achievement and success. Some of these are not at all within a teacher’s control. We know developing brains are significantly impacted when Maslow’s basic safety and physiological needs are not being met. ‘Very high levels of stress over time are damaging and can impair cognition’ (Jensen, 2005, p. 74), and ‘stress does impair verbal and working memory’ (Jensen, 2005, citing Lupien, Guillin, & Hauger, 1999)” (Tepper & Flynn, 2020). Beyond basic needs and equity or access issues, it is important to always consider additional factors that may be influencing student success or their ability to engage in the learning (e.g., their parent is working in or out of home, siblings require devices, there is an ill family member, etc.) or a teachers’ ability to engage to their fullest capacity (e.g., need to homeschool their own children, ill family member, etc.)

These factors will be critical to integrate into our analysis of why outcomes are occurring or not. However, we can also try to focus on teacher impact and five main areas of instruction (Figure 3.4) that fall within a teacher’s range of control. As we identify what is causing outcomes, we move closer to collaboratively determining a stage, a starting point, and potential area of focus for next steps.

**Figure 3.4 Focus Areas Impacting Engagement**  
(Figure 4.3 *Feedback to Forward*)



[Click here to see an example of our Recommendations 3 & 4 in action \(right click for new window\)](#)

Though educators everywhere are experiencing significant challenges in the shift to online teaching and learning, even in times like these, there is much opportunity for personal and professional growth. We can cultivate a culture of learning in our schools while remaining mindful of students' and teachers' needs if we:

- Maintain a continued focus on overarching goals for learners (Part 1) using the *4 Stages* to identify stages of the teaching and learning in the progression toward these goals
  - Goal 1:** Students need to learn how to think conceptually
  - Goal 2:** Students need to learn how to think about their thinking (metacognition)
  - Goal 3:** Students need to develop the ability to self-regulate and self-monitor (Tepper & Flynn, 2020)
- Maintain transparency and develop feedback that feeds forward based on information gathering and analysis, teacher self-reflection, and collegial conversations
- Establish a short- and long-term vision and goals for collaborative professionalism and inquiry (Part 4)

Remember, any team member can become a valuable second set of eyes for teachers who are working tirelessly each day navigating new territories, using new tools, and finding new solutions for new problems...they cannot do this alone.

#### Suggested Reading:

*Supporting Online Teaching and Learning Through Feedback that Feeds Forward*

**Part 4: Continuing to Cultivate a Culture of Learning**

*Feedback to Feed Forward: 31 Strategies to Lead Learning* (2019), Amy Tepper & Patrick Flynn  
Chapter 3 p. 67-89 & Chapter 4

*Learner-Focused Feedback: 19 Strategies to Observe for Impact* (2020), Amy Tepper & Patrick Flynn  
Pages 20-25

#### References

Tepper, A., & Flynn, P. (2019). *Feedback to feed forward: 31 strategies to lead learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Tepper, A., & Flynn, P. (2020). *Learner-focused feedback: 19 strategies to observe for impact*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.