

# Feedback Case Study



## ENGAGING STAFF IN LEADING CHANGE

**RICHARDSON PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
CANBERRA, ACT



- 🌀 METROPOLITAN
- 🌀 GOVERNMENT
- 🌀 PRIMARY F-6
- 🌀 ICSEA 943
- 🌀 15 TEACHERS
- 🌀 150 STUDENTS
- 🌀 LBOTE 25%
- 🌀 INDIGENOUS STUDENTS 13%

(Accessed from MySchool - March 2017)

### Identifying a need

Although Richardson Primary School prided itself on a firm focus around improving student outcomes, the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) data in 2012 showed that student achievement was below benchmark in all areas. The leadership team looked at high-performing schools with similar demographics to identify the foundations of their success. What they found was a strong focus on student writing, feedback and engagement.

School leadership identified feedback and collaborative learning as two key areas to explore at Richardson Primary School. They formed two working groups to review the research on each focus and to determine how it could work within their context. The cooperative learning working group sought to understand how this could be used to support the schools learning culture, particularly student engagement in learning.

“ Feedback should be creating a cognitive response not an emotional reaction. That’s what we want the feedback to do. ”

Mitch Bartholomew, Executive Teacher

---

## KEY IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES

---

**Alignment to strategic plan and performance and development goals.** Feedback is built into the schools' strategic plan. All staff have a goal connected to feedback in their performance and development plans.

**A leadership professional learning community** was established to lead the implementation of feedback. *Embedding formative assessment* by Dylan Wiliam and *Advancing formative assessment in every classroom* by Moss and Brookhart provided guidance to staff on implementation and changes to look for in the school.

**A teacher-led working group** was established to explore feedback research and to develop recommendations for the school.

**Agreement scales** were used to ensure staff agreed with, and were willing to trial, the identified feedback practices within their classrooms.

**Building staff capacity** through regular professional learning meetings focused on feedback. Attending a professional learning session run by Dylan Wiliam in 2013 deepened their understanding about practical strategies for feedback in classrooms.

**Scoreboard and walk-throughs.** The school developed a scoreboard as a way to measure and monitor the use of feedback in classrooms. The scoreboard details four feedback practices that are further unpacked into a series of statements around what that practice looks like in the classroom. Both teachers and school leaders use the scoreboard during classroom walk-throughs.

---

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

---

1. **Identified a need** to address issues with student achievement.
  2. **Researched** similar schools to Richardson Primary School's demographic, that were high performing
  3. **Established** two areas for the school to investigate: cooperative learning and feedback
  4. **Small teams** initially researched and trialled different strategies to inform a whole school approach
  5. **Built staff capacity and supported implementation** through professional learning, team meetings, performance and development plans, scoreboards and classroom observation.
- 

## Implementation narrative

The feedback working group looked at setting specific learning targets, developing student understanding about what they were learning and why, and how to move learning forward. Through a process of reviewing research on effective feedback and formative assessment, the work of Dylan Wiliam became the focus of their work. Group members identified some classroom strategies, trialled them with their students, and then came back together to discuss outcomes and effectiveness. They kept journals, observed each other's practice and collected student work samples to inform collaborative discussions about their progress.

The working group developed several recommendations about implementing feedback based on the research and the strategies they trialled. These were shared at staff meetings and progressed by the leadership team.

The leadership team formed its own professional learning team to develop their understanding of the research underpinning feedback and explored ways to support teachers to implement it, using texts such as *Leadership for teacher learning* by Dylan Wiliam and *Advancing formative assessment in every classroom* by Moss and Brockhart.

The leadership team identified what was needed to enable all staff to be involved, such as professional learning to build knowledge and skills in feedback, and time to undertake the work.



---

## KEY FEEDBACK PRACTICES

---

**Learning intentions and success criteria** are shared at the start of each lesson. The success criteria is differentiated for students whereas the learning intentions are applicable to the whole class. Feedback is connected to this success criteria and linked to the learning in the classrooms.

**Building student capacity.** Students are explicitly taught the social skills connected to giving and receiving feedback, including building resilience and supporting students to have a cognitive rather than an emotional response to it. The school also places a focus on developing student skills in understanding the learning process and how to use the feedback they receive.

**Self and peer assessment.** Students review their own and each other's work against success criteria. With peer feedback they provide both positive and constructive comments. Students are expected to act on peer feedback and to show how they have addressed feedback to their peers.

**Classroom techniques** include:

- C3B4ME – students seek feedback or support from three peers before they approach the teacher
- using pop sticks to randomly pick students to respond to questions, including an option for seeking support if they cannot respond
- questioning to understand where students are in relation to the learning intentions. Students respond in a range of ways such as verbally, using whiteboards or feedback tools such as Plickers
- exit passes at the end of a lesson for students to record something they have learnt.



Agreement gradients were an important tool used to secure staff buy-in and they shaped how feedback would look at Richardson Primary School. Before implementing new practices the staff were asked about their level of agreement using a scale with:

- disagree and cannot support
- disagree can support
- mixed feelings
- agree with a reservation
- fully endorse.

Before any practices were implemented, the leadership team secured agreement to trial them.

Richardson Primary School produced a scoreboard to monitor the changes in teaching practice. Developing the scoreboard was a highly collaborative task; many staff meetings over several months had been dedicated to unpacking and shaping the statements that appeared on the scoreboard. Each of the statements comprises about 10-15 things to look for in the classroom.

Staff saw developing and using the scoreboard as an extremely valuable professional learning activity, as it meant exploring and understanding feedback practices and how they translated to the classroom at the different year levels.

When agreed and implemented, the scoreboard held teachers and school leaders to account on the agreed practices. In walk-throughs and classroom observations they looked for the practices detailed on the scoreboard. This scoreboard data was regularly shared with staff to inform discussions about how the implementation of feedback was going and where they could improve. The data allowed staff to examine questions such as, "Why is peer and self-assessment low in the middle session?"



---

## ENABLING CONDITIONS

---

**Growth culture.** Teachers are committed to improving their practice and to improving student outcomes.

**Keeping it REEL** (Richardson Engaging Effective Learners). This approach outlines five principles to engage students in every classroom including: students can explain what they are learning and why, teachers identify the needs of every student and feedback is given to move learning forward.

**Stable team** with little staff movement at the time of implementing feedback. This enabled continuity in staff development.

**A cooperative learning approach** was introduced to the school. This supported students in understanding the learning process and in working with feedback.

---

## IMPACT

---

- NAPLAN results demonstrate significantly higher growth between years 3 and 5 when compared with other ACT schools
- Increasing numbers of students performing at or above the normed range in PAT Maths and PAT Reading
- Increasing numbers of students are achieving expected and better than expected growth in Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) assessment data.

The implementation of a cooperative learning approach ran alongside the work in feedback. This introduced cooperative learning structures and the social skills needed to understand the learning process, which helped students to give and receive feedback.

Richardson Primary School teachers were able to evaluate the implementation of feedback through their monitoring processes, and to measure its effect through assessment data, demonstrating improvements in student outcomes.

Professional learning at the start of each school year is focused on feedback and posters in the staffroom reinforce the school's approach. Staff meetings throughout the year maintain a focus on feedback, helping to ensure it remains at the forefront of their approach. Teachers are able to further build and improve their feedback practices through a teacher peer-to-peer feedback model and instructional coaching.

“ It has to come from the staff and they've got to want to do it. And the staff buy-in here has been a huge part of this success. ”

Mitch Bartholomew, Executive Teacher