Evidence Based Practices Spotlight: Corrective Feedback

Specially Designed INSTRUCTION
The Heart of Special Education

What is Corrective Feedback?

Corrective feedback is an easy to implement and effective evidence-based practice that supports student learning by providing timely, specific, and constructive responses to errors. Corrective feedback is used to clarify misunderstandings in the moment and reinforce correct responses in a way that promotes skill acquisition and retention. Effective feedback should be immediate, focused on the task rather than the student, and delivered in a manner that encourages persistence and self-correction (Collins et.al., 2018).

Who Benefits and Why it Matters

According to the CEEDAR Center, corrective feedback is especially beneficial for students with disabilities. Students developing foundational academic skills such as early literacy, numeracy, or language acquisition benefit significantly from this approach. It is particularly effective for learners who require additional support, including those with learning disabilities, attention difficulties, or those acquiring English as a second language. When implemented consistently, corrective feedback fosters a growth mindset, reduces repeated errors, and builds student confidence and independence in learning.

Corrective Feedback IS:

- **Specific and Clear:** Focuses on the exact nature of the error and provides guidance on how to correct it (e.g., "You need to capitalize the first word in a sentence").
- **Constructive and Supportive:** Aims to help students improve without discouraging them; it's framed positively to encourage effort and persistence.
- **Focused on the Task, Not the Student:** Addresses what was done incorrectly, not who did it. For example, "This math step needs revisiting" instead of "You're wrong."
- **Aligned with Learning Goals:** Helps students move closer to mastering the intended skill or concept by reinforcing correct strategies and understanding.
- **Interactive and Dialogic:** Encourages student reflection and response, often involving questions or prompts that guide self-correction.
- **Consistent and Ongoing:** Used regularly throughout instruction to reinforce learning and prevent repeated mistakes.

Correct Feedback Is NOT:

- **Criticism:** Many teachers mistakenly believe that pointing out errors is inherently negative. Effective corrective feedback is constructive, specific, and focused on helping students improve, not judging them.
- **Delivered at the End of an Assignment:** Some educators wait until a task is completed to provide feedback, but research shows that immediate feedback during learning is more effective, especially for students with learning challenges.
- **General or Vague:** Vague comments like "Try harder" or "Be more careful" don't help students understand what went wrong. Effective feedback is specific, such as "You forgot to regroup the one in this step."
- **Used Only for Academic Errors:** Teachers may overlook the value of corrective feedback in behavioral or social-emotional learning, where it can guide students toward more appropriate actions or responses.
- **Discouraging for Students:** When delivered respectfully and paired with encouragement, corrective feedback builds confidence by helping students succeed and understand expectations.

Corrective Feedback Steps and Examples

Read the chart below to review the steps of the corrective feedback process side by side during a math lesson.

Corrective Feedback Step	*Corrective Feedback Example*
Step 1: Identify the Learning Goal or Skill Clearly define what students are expected to learn or demonstrate. This ensures feedback is aligned with the skill you are teaching. Remember, this skill may be academic, or behavioral.	A student solves: **7 × 6 = 42**, but writes **7 × 6 = 36** on their paper.
Step 2: Observe and Detect Errors Promptly Monitor student work or behavior in real time to catch mistakes as they happen, allowing for immediate correction of any errors.	**Teacher says:** *"Let's take a closer look at 7 × 6."*
Step 3: Deliver Feedback Immediately Provide feedback as soon as the error occurs to maximize its impact and help students make corrections while the context is fresh.	**Teacher follows up:** You wrote 36, but let's check it using skip counting 7s:
Step 4: Model or Guide the Correct Response Show students how to correct the error or guide them with prompts and questions that lead to self-correction.	*"Teacher models skip counting 7s: 7, 14, 21, 28, 35, 42. What number did we land on?"* **Student responds:** "42." **Teacher says:** *"Exactly, so 7 × 6 equals 42. Let's update that answer and think about how skip counting helped us catch the mistake."*
Step 5: Check for Understanding Ask students to explain the correction or apply it in a similar context to ensure they've internalized the feedback.	*"Can you explain why 36 didn't make sense for 7 × 6? What strategy could you use next time to double-check your answer?"* **Student responds:** *"I could skip count or use a multiplication chart."*
Step 6: Provide Opportunities for Practice Allow students to try again with support, reinforcing the correct approach and building confidence.	**Teacher says:** "Great! Let's try a few more together to practice that strategy. Use skip counting to solve these:" » 6 × 8 = ? » 9 × 7 = ? » 4 × 6 = ?
Step 7: Reinforce Success Acknowledge when students apply feedback correctly to encourage continued effort and learning.	**Teacher Says:** "You used skip counting to correct your answer and explain your thinking, awesome work! That shows you're really building your multiplication fluency. Keep using that strategy when you're unsure, and you'll get faster and more confident every time."
Step 8: Monitor Progress and Adjust Support Continue to observe student responses and adjust the level of support as needed, gradually fading assistance as students become more independent.	The teacher monitors the student's responses daily through the lessons and repeats the corrective feedback cycle as needed.

Research

- **Corrective Feedback Improves Early Academic Skills** – Fyfe, Borriello, and Merrick (2023) conducted a comprehensive review of 44 empirical studies examining how corrective feedback influences children's learning in literacy, mathematics, and problem solving. Their findings show that corrective feedback significantly enhances performance when tailored to developmental stages and individual learner differences. Available at *https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37520029/*.
- **Feedback Models and Theories in Education** – Lipnevich and Panadero (2021) reviewed major feedback models and theories, concluding that corrective feedback is a foundational element in improving student learning outcomes. Their work highlights how feedback mechanisms, especially those that are timely and specific, can positively influence motivation and engagement. Available at *https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/education/articles/10.3389/feduc.2021.720195/full*.
- **Effective Feedback Practices in Higher Education** – Williams (2024) explored feedback practices in higher education, identifying corrective feedback as a key strategy for improving student performance and self-regulated learning. The study emphasizes the importance of clarity, timing, and student-teacher dialogue in feedback delivery. Available at *https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1426687.pdf*.

Resources

- **CEEDAR Center – High-Leverage Practices in Special Education Resource Page** – This resource outlines essential instructional strategies, including corrective feedback, and provides guidance on how to implement them effectively for students with disabilities. In addition, innovative online tools, like the new HLP Chat GPT system, are available to support teachers by embedding HLPs into daily instruction. Available at *https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/high-leverage-practices/*.
- **Council for Exceptional Children High-Leverage Practices Website** – Developed in collaboration with CEEDAR, this site offers practical tools, videos, and examples for applying high-leverage practices like corrective feedback in diverse classroom settings. Available at *https://highleveragepractices.org/*.
- **What Works Clearing House Practice Guides** – What Works Clearninghouse is a repository for information about evidence-based practices. The Practice Guides are developed to help educators implement EBPs in their classrooms. Available at *https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Search/Products?productType=1*.

Resources

Collins, L. W., Cook, S. C., Sweigart, C. A., & Evanovich, L. L. (2018). Using performance feedback to increase special education teachers' use of effective practices. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 51*(2), 125–133. Council for Exceptional Children. *https://exceptionalchildren.org/journal/using-performance-feedback-increase-special-education-teachers-use-effective-practices*

Fyfe, E. R., et al. (2023). A developmental perspective on feedback: How corrective feedback influences children's literacy, mathematics, and problem solving. *Educational Psychologist, 58*(3), 130–145. *https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37520029/*

Williams, A. (2024). Delivering effective student feedback in higher education: An evaluation of the challenges and best practice. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science, 10*(2), 473–501. *https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1426687.pdf*