

Getting feedback from your students can help identify where you should focus your attention to improve your practice. If what you are doing in the classroom is not working from the student's perspective, then making some changes is likely to be beneficial (*for them AND for you*). If students are disengaged, for whatever reason, they have an impact on our stress levels. Their disengagement may present as poor behaviour that disrupts the learning of others and demands our attention OR withdrawal that also causes us stress, by challenging us to find a way of reconnecting with them.

Whilst students should be at the centre of what we do, you as the teacher are the person with the most impact in that classroom. Honest feedback from your students can be very insightful. At times the feedback can be challenging and confronting. However, I would argue that your students are already feeling that way. By finding out what is and what isn't working, from their perspective, puts us in a position where we can take action to improve the situation. Here are three ways you can seek feedback from your students.

## Focus Groups

Set up focus groups by having students sit in a circle (*half a class works better than all in together so perhaps split into two or more groups and have the others complete a task and then swap*). Vicki Davis of *Cool Cat Teacher* blog advocates using Evernote to audio capture the feedback. She suggests starting by explaining what a focus group is and then asking the following questions.

*First of all, what did we learn that you loved this term?*

**[Each student answers, go around the circle for every question]**

*What were the things we learned that you liked the least?*

*So what was the most boring thing we did? How could we make it more interesting?*

*Is there anything you wish we'd had more time to do?*

*Was there anything you wish we'd done more of?*

*How about \_\_\_\_\_? What can I do to improve that? [Insert specific initiative]*

## End of Term Surveys

An end of term survey can be used to seek anonymous, formative feedback from your students. This can be set up using Survey Monkey or Google Forms or a purpose built strategy such as *SurveyMyClass*. The following questions are the most insightful.

*I enjoy being in this class.*

*My teacher tries to make lessons interesting.*

*My teacher knows me pretty well and cares about me.*

*I feel like I am learning and making progress in this class.*

*My teacher gives me feedback to help me learn.*

*My teacher makes it clear how we're being assessed and what to focus on.*

*Students in this class are treated fairly.*

*To help you learn, what would you like your teacher to do **more** of...?*

*To help you learn, what would you like your teacher to do **less** of...?*

**Feedback is the  
breakfast of  
champions.**

**Henry Ford**

## Anonymous Notes

Davis also invites students to type or write their feedback and put it on her desk at any time. She suggests that you invite anonymous notes because sometimes students want to tell you important things but don't want to be a "snitch". However, Davis advises to keep anonymous notes in perspective. She received one note from an angry student. It was vitriolic! These things happen. Learn from it if you can, even if it is to know that some kids are angry. Hurting people, sometimes, hurt people.

It is acknowledged that we can't please all of the people, all of the time. However, if a significant number of your students are not finding your approach beneficial to their learning, then I believe, as a professional, you have a responsibility to take that on board. If it isn't working from their point of view, it is up to you, as the teacher, to reflect.

## Key points

Disengaged students impact our stress level.

Teachers are the person with the greatest impact on the classroom.

Honest feedback from students can be insightful.

Whilst feedback can be challenging and confronting, we are better off being aware.

We can't please all of the people all of the time.

However, if a significant number of your students are not finding your approach beneficial it is time to reflect and adjust.

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