

Giving Descriptive Feedback





What is Descriptive Feedback?

Descriptive Feedback is the third skill set of effective communication. Descriptive feedback is non-evaluative. It specifically describes what has been accomplished by the team and serves as a basis for self-adjustment. Effective feedback directs attention to the desired outcome(s), highlights progress and provides specific information to guide next steps. Descriptive feedback serves as a Global Positioning System telling the team how close they are to their desired outcome(s) and what steps they can take to reach their goals. (Jan Chappuis, 2009)

Why is Descriptive Feedback important?

Descriptive Feedback is used to encourage open-ended thinking with no hidden agendas and provide maximum benefit to the receiver of the feedback. Thoughts become organized, things are seen from different perspectives, and team members are encouraged to move forward in their thinking and actions. It is the key to unlocking the chamber that was holding thoughts captive and helps team members gain a clearer understanding of what is actually happening, leading to clarity of thought and new insights and actions.

How does a coach help the team develop the skills and competencies to function independently?

First, the coach shows the team how to give descriptive feedback. This is accomplished through a process of modeling descriptive feedback during team meetings. The coach can use the *Observation Checklist for Descriptive Feedback* as a self-monitoring tool. As the team's skill for giving descriptive feedback improves, members of the team can use the *Observation Checklist for Descriptive Feedback* as a tool for giving each other feedback on their use of descriptive feedback.

The coach recognizes and celebrates the team's ability to self-monitor and provide descriptive feedback related to their progress toward meeting their outcomes.

Job Aids

Observation Checklist for Descriptive Feedback

- This checklist helps the team monitor their progress toward providing descriptive feedback related to their goals.

Descriptive Feedback Guidelines

- This tool is list of skills for giving descriptive feedback.



Resources and References

Descriptive Feedback Online Module available at <http://www.schoolimprovementcoach.org/>

Results Coaching: The New Essentials for School Leaders by Kathryn Lee, Karen Anderson, Vicky Dearing, Edna Harris, Frances Shuster, 2010, Available thru Corwin Press (corwinpress.com) Reflective Feedback is addressed in Chapter #5, pages 129 – 139 and in Appendix Resource G, pages 221-234.



Guidelines for Giving Descriptive Feedback

1. Be Candid

- *Clearly state what you have observed.*
- *Match your assessment of the team's performance to specific skills and behaviors.*

2. Be Specific

- *Avoid using labels, acronyms, professional jargon, or broad terms.*
- *Choose one feature of the team's work as your focus for feedback. Providing too much information at one time can make it difficult for the team to determine next steps.*

3. Be Timely

- *Provide feedback at the earliest opportunity.*
- *Be attentive to the team's readiness for feedback.*

4. Describe Rather than Evaluate

- *Help teams identify strengths and next steps in the planning process.*
- *Avoid evaluative statements; focus on observations.*

5. Use the Teachable Moment

- *Help the team identify specific competencies that are performed effectively.*
- *Capitalize on opportunities to share information that will help move the team's skills forward.*

Adapted from Induction for the 21st Century Educator



Descriptive Feedback Observation Checklist

This checklist can be used by team members or the coach (with permission) to assess the team's skills of giving descriptive feedback.

District/School/LEA: _____

Date: _____

Specific Goal for Observation: _____

Observer: _____

Criteria	Observed Y or N	Observed Evidence	Notes and Suggestions:
Be candid			
Be specific			
Be timely			
Describe rather than evaluate			
Use the teachable moment			