
Show Notes: www.coolcatteacher.com/e85

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Today we're talking about five fantastic peer feedback strategies for your classroom. This is episode 85.

The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every week day you'll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.

VICKI: Today we're talking with Starr Sackstein [@mssackstein](https://twitter.com/mssackstein) about five fantastic ways to build peer feedback into your classroom. So Starr, how do we get started?

STARR: Well, peer feedback really does take a whole cultural approach. Kids need to feel like they're in a trusting environment. So the first really important thing if you want peer feedback to work in your classroom is developing a classroom culture of trust and of student participation where student voice really matters.

VICKI: But that sounds so hard.

STARR: I think that if we build relationships with students and foster relationships between peer while we're doing it, it's not as hard as it might sound.

VICKI: And I know in my experience we have to extra vigilant at the beginning when we kick off peer feedback, don't we? Because [that's when we set the ground rules].

STARR: 100%. And I think it really does matter when we model expectations, which is the second really important thing, making sure that we are setting up protocols and we're modeling the actual expectations that we have on a regular basis. And then also being really explicit about what we're modeling so that kids don't have to guess.

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So if we're teaching a class and we're using a feedback technique that we may want them to use later, actually calling their attention to what you're doing so that they could see you doing it and start to connect the behavior with what they'll be doing later. So, it's a great way to start bringing it into the classroom before we allow kids to do it with each other.

VICKI: Can you give me an example? I know in my classroom I have the complement sandwich and it's so funny when they use that and it's like, "Oh yeah, you learned something about how I want you to treat one another." Could you give me an example of yours?

STARR: Sure, absolutely. So, as a writing teacher, when I want kids to give positive feedback to grow on what's going I always tell them that you can't just say good

job. What I really want them to do is draw on the language of the standards, what about it made it a good job. So, I would model – like, I think you gave a really great answer when we were talking about *Pride and Prejudice* because you were able to use evidence from the text and also added some of your own thoughts. So really being explicit with what skill we’re working on and then explaining why.

VICKI: So your first is building a classroom culture, second is modeling the feedback expectations and third is teaching students appropriate feedback protocols. So are expectations and protocols kind of intertwined in some way?

STARR: Yes and no. I think the expectations on some level is just what it’s going to look like and the protocol is maybe how they’re going to do it. So maybe with kids you start with certain stem depending on how old your students are. Make sure that they really understand the skills that they’re giving feedbacks on and start small. You can’t give them a whole piece and say, “Give your peer feedback on this.” Really focus on very small pieces at first.

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So if we’re looking at introductory paragraphs, for example, and we want students to really zero in on the effectiveness of a thesis section, let’s say. And we’ve done a whole lesson on what a thesis section can look and what strong ones look like and what weaker ones look like and how to improve those. One protocol might be making sure that they have a strong stem in place where they could talk about the effectiveness of the thesis wand just being really clear about what the expectation is around it. So they’re using the protocol to meet the expectation.

VICKI: Love that. What’s our fourth?

STARR: The fourth one is allow students to practice giving feedback and then give them feedback on the feedback that they’re giving so that they know if they’re doing a good job in providing it. Because a lot of times when you’re doing peer feedback in the classroom you’ll notice that two or three kids end up becoming really good at it and then a lot of kids get lazy – at least that’s my experience at the high school level.

So it’s really important that kids know that you’re looking at the feedback that they’re providing and that you’re giving them feedback on that feedback. Because it’s really a learned skill, I don’t think that we’re necessarily great at giving feedback just naturally, I think our inclination is to say it’s good or it’s bad but not really know how to put that action.

VICKI: That is so true. And I know when I have my students do peer feedback I don’t let them just check on the rubric, you know, perfect at everything. And I’m like, okay, who’s perfect? If you’re self-evaluating or if you’re evaluating somebody else you just can’t just turn in a sheet that says everything was perfect because in that sense there’s no room for growth.

STARR: Right. Exactly. So even I there was – if say once in a blue moon you do get a kid who's really done an exceptional job, there's still a level of feedback that you could comment on that's very specific, not just from the rubric, it's identifying pieces in the writing so the feedback giver has a special task of having to be able to identify those specific areas and highlight them and talk about what makes them effective.

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And that's also a good way to help other kids see what effective looks like.

VICKI: And I love telling kids, okay, this is excellent, let's take it to epic. Like, are there some ways to make this epic? There's always conversations that you can have with those kids who need a way to make more than a 100. And sometimes the teacher's attention gives them that. What's our 5th?

STARR: Our 5th and final is empowering students to be the experts. So once they have the protocols and once they've practiced, we really need to give them the opportunity to take the lead. I've had expert groups in my class where they work on skills in small groups and then before the student could come to me for feedback I expect them to go to their peers.

When you have a classroom of 24 kids and people always ask how could you effectively give feedback to all your students all the time. You can't. But if you have students who are trained to give really good feedback and we allow them the space to do so and we trust them to do so. It takes some of the onus off of us in those really tough times when more kids than we could help at any given time need the feedback.

VICKI: And that makes it so important because I don't know any teacher that doesn't sometimes end up with more kids than they think they can handle. But we still want to be excellent, we still want to give back feedback. So teachers, you have some remarkable ideas for building a classroom where peer feedback really helps students thrive. Starr, do you want to tell us real quickly about what we're going to be giving away for our giveaway contest for this show?

STARR: So I have a copy of my latest book with ASCD, Peer Feedback in the Classroom: Empowering Students to be the Experts. <http://amzn.to/2qmmJZc> And I hope that if you guys follow me on Twitter you could get a copy of this book. Have on to give away.

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VICKI: Cool. So check the show notes www.coolcatteacher.com/e85 and use our giveaway widget to enter the contest and follow Starr. Thanks for listening.

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