

Preface

When we finished writing *Feedback to Feed Forward* in January of 2019, we were already well into the draft of this book. We realized our work in supporting those who support teachers through observation and feedback was not done.

We asked ourselves if we were overcomplicating things. Friends and colleagues asked us why the first book was so long, seeking guides that were shorter, quicker reads. Well-respected thought leaders, long in the field, told us that this work is simple: Observers should just seek to answer whether students are learning.

Yet we have spent day after day (and year after year) with observers—intelligent, well read, advanced-degreed teachers, coaches, and administrators—who are not sure how to answer this question. It is not a simple question, and therefore, it is not simple to answer. Observing to determine how and if students are learning is complex because the concept of learning is complex. Observing for *why* this is occurring or not or how the teacher is impacting learners is even more complex. *Feedback to Feed Forward* (2019) and this book, *Learner-Focused Feedback* (2020), are written for all observers who recognize that this is complex and important work—that feedback must support teachers as learners with a focus on impact.

We know the quality of evidence collected while observing is directly related to the quality of the feedback. Observers we support through embedded sessions and collaborative classroom visits have begged for the “magic list of questions” that we ask learners. (*Spoiler:* We adapt our list every time we step into a classroom, but Chapter 3 will get you started with a comprehensive list of possible questions.) We watch as observers run through a litany of questions, move quickly around a room to maximize time, and leave a classroom with pages of notes yet are still unable to clearly determine if students were engaged and learning, to what level, and why.

Building on our foundational standards of effective observation and feedback and twenty-one core skills introduced in *Feedback to Feed Forward*,

Learner-Focused Feedback offers new strategies for engaging with learners in a variety of ways within different instructional structures. This book is meant to serve as a companion or extension to our first book and to welcome a new audience—teachers as observers—both of their own classrooms and those of their colleagues. Whereas our first book addressed the roles of observers and administrators, we’ve made extensive efforts in this book to address the additional needs of teachers as their own observers and as observers and mentors to their peers.

If you are holding this book, we expect that you have been reflecting on the actions you take during an observation and the quality of your feedback. Whether you are a veteran or just beginning as an observer, you might find yourself facing challenges, such as the following:

- You have the sense that you are not collecting enough data from students.
- You are missing evidence.
- Your feedback statements lack specificity.
- You are unable to clearly determine a teacher’s effectiveness and impact on engagement and learning.

These challenges are common and most likely due to how you are collecting evidence of the *learning* occurring during a lesson. If those challenges resonate, then this book is for you. This book will serve as an explicit “how to” for collecting evidence during a classroom visit and for video observations.

Regardless of your experience level or role, we suggest reading the chapters in order, though we know this will require time, patience, and dedication to the process. As a result of reading this book, we expect you will improve your ability to effectively observe for impact to support teachers with learner-focused feedback. More specifically, you will be able to do the following:

1. Identify outcomes we are seeking for our students as global citizens (Chapter 1)
2. Recognize what *learning* means and how students learn (Chapter 2)
3. Plan evidence collection in order to observe for learning (Chapter 3)
4. Modify and adjust evidence collection approaches at the beginning and as the lesson progresses or learning unfolds (Chapters 4 and 5)
5. Conduct an analysis to develop feedback that supports teachers in understanding their impact based on evidence (Chapter 6)
6. Set a plan in motion to build a culture of observation and feedback to drive a culture of learning (Chapter 6)

Each chapter begins with an essential question, and throughout each chapter, you will find authentic classroom examples, observer think alouds, and detailed graphics and tables, in addition to stop-and-think questions that will allow you to reflect on your own practices. We also provide supplemental online resources for support found at resources.corwin.com/learnerfocusedfeedback. In Chapters 2 through 5, we begin with a field story and end with suggestions found under the section titled “Give It a Try,” for specific next steps based on your role. All of these tools will set you up for success and will open the door for rich discussion within your team.

Your practice as an observer will improve by reading this book, but you may find you benefit from taking the time to build the foundations from the first book at some point. If you are jumping in with us without having read *Feedback to Feed Forward*, we provide a list of the original thirty-one strategies in the front matter of this book and an overview of essential understandings in Chapter 1.

Ultimately, the strategies offered in this book are bigger than just observation. Readers who implement these strategies will become stronger members of a learning community (students, teachers, coaches, and administrators) focused on impact as they learn to own their own learning.

Clearly, we did not succeed at creating a short guide because that is not what you needed. You needed us to recognize the complexity of the work of an observer and to help you break it down into manageable pieces. This book was not written to be read in one sitting. It will take time to master the strategies included. Put the book down (not back on the shelf!) every so often to try out the strategies in real classrooms or while watching video lessons. Ask yourself as an observer, “How did that go?” Call or e-mail us with questions—we live for talking about instruction (www.tepperandflynn.com)! We are hoping you work through each chapter placing stickies, writing in margin notes, and highlighting text for rereads. We hope you revisit sections as you practice new strategies, share your learning with your team . . . and, most importantly, that you come to rely on this book as a valuable resource for understanding the teaching and learning occurring in your classrooms and how to support teachers with learner-focused feedback.