



---

**Question:**

Descriptive feedback—what is it, and what does it do?

**Andie's Answer:**

I was observing a teacher last week, and as the students entered the classroom, they immediately collected graded papers from a side cabinet. I expected to hear all sorts of moaning and complaining about grades as students opened papers and reviewed what I thought were grades. But that is not what happened. You are not going to believe this, but the students took the papers and opened their notebooks and began without delay to revise and correct their papers. I was amazed.

I talked with the teacher, Ms. Ramirez, about this strange behavior I had observed in her class. She laughed—at me I think. She attended a summer institute hosted by The Institute for Innovative Community Learning (ICL) that focused on formative assessment and descriptive feedback. I looked at her and said, “How do you have time to provide narrative feedback on every assignment that your students complete?” She quickly assured me that descriptive feedback does not have to be lengthy. She said, “Dr. Pilcher, the facilitator of the summer institute, constantly told us it is quality of feedback that matters, not quantity.” According to Ms. Ramirez, we should focus on one thing that the student did well and one thing that needs to be improved. The teacher is not overwhelmed with quantity of feedback and neither is the student. Ms. Ramirez used a sticky note entitled “ActOnItNow” to provide the feedback to her students. It is like a graphic organizer. She ordered this handy teacher tool from the **e-store** at teacherready.net.



Notice the feedback is two statements—

- What could be improved:
- What you did well:

Like Ms. Ramirez, if we create and teach a procedure for using this ActOnItNow tool, our students will take control of their learning and use the information to improve their performance.

Try the ActOnItNow tool; I am! Then let me know how you like it by sharing your ideas at ShareItNow on the teacherready.net site.