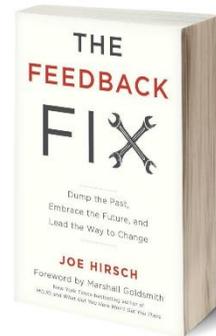# Companion Guide – Questions for Educators

The Feedback Fix: Dump the Past, Embrace the Future, and Lead the Way to Change (Rowman & Littlefield)

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Dear Educator,

I'm thrilled to be joining you on your feedback journey! Below you'll find some guiding questions to consider as you read each chapter. This companion guide can be used for individual reflection or to facilitate team discussion.

Enjoy the read!

Joe

FOREWORD

1. Complete the sentence: "Feedback makes me feel/think of _____." Now ask another person on your team to do the same. How do your responses stack up? What does that tell you about the associations we make with giving and receiving feedback?
2. Who in your life gives you the most feedback?
3. Kevin Ochsner, a Columbia University psychologist, estimates that people apply only about 30% of the feedback they receive. The rest of the time, they reject or ignore it. Does that surprise you? What do you think holds us back from putting feedback to work?
4. Do you consider yourself more of feedback giver or receiver? Which role is most comfortable for you?
5. Do the people in your immediate work circle share feedback with one another freely? If not, what is holding them back?
6. Marshall Goldsmith, one of the world's most admired leadership coaches, points out that feedback that is focused on the future allows leaders to "accept a challenge without the burden of negative judgment" (p. xi). Do you feel the same way?

CHAPTER 1

1. How is traditional feedback affecting your school environment? Do any of the issues faced by Deloitte (p. 18) come up in your own workplace?
2. Could you adopt the "performance snapshot" (p. 22) in your school? What challenges or opportunities do you foresee?
3. "Getting what we want means giving others what they need (p. 24)." As a team leader or classroom educator, what do you think others want or need from you? How often do you feel you're giving them what they're looking to receive?

CHAPTER 2

1. How can your school use Pixar's "plussing" strategies (p. 31) generate more ideas and bring them to action?
2. More experienced teachers may prefer negative feedback, as long as it's constructive, while less experienced teachers may want to receive more positive communication (p. 39). Does your feedback style take these generational differences into account?
3. Research shows that the transfer rate of theory to practice increases to 95% when teaching is joined with coaching (p. 45). Does feedback at your school include follow-up opportunities for coaching and guided practice? If not, what's standing in the way?
4. How likely are you to adopt some form of "creative abrasion" (p. 49) in staff trainings or school-wide planning? Would these mixed-group assignments lead to breakthroughs or breakdowns?

CHAPTER 3

1. Are your assignments and activities too narrow and limiting? Do they keep students from doing their most creative work (p. 65)?
2. Has your school adopted inquiry-driven approaches like Genius Hour or project-based learning (p. 68)? If so, what have been the challenges and opportunities?
3. Do you, as a teacher or team leader, operate from a point of "detached connection (p. 72)"?

CHAPTER 4

1. Do you make time to examine your own "interior" (p. 79)?
2. To what extent could "self-talk" strategies (p. 84) make a positive difference in your school?
3. Mindfulness techniques have been shown to reduce stress, increase attention, and even boost academic performance (pp. 87-89). To what extent does your school use mindfulness techniques? Where might they be used?
4. Which of the five presence-building strategies (pp. 90-92) resonate most strongly with you?
5. Anxiety among students, especially adolescents, is on the rise. How much of that should be attributed to the expectations placed on kids by teachers? Parents? The school system?

CHAPTER 5

1. "Culture grows out of micro-messages that get passed person to person, unit to unit, until it finally emerges, undeclared (p. 102)." At your school, what are the micro-messages that form your culture?
2. Researchers discovered that "social cueing" – the facial expressions we show when we communicate – can tell a much different story than the one we're trying to share (pp. 105-106). Giving positive feedback with negative social cues (a frown, for example) can mute our message. When you're giving feedback to a teacher or student, how aware are you of the feedback you're actually *showing*?
3. Leaders who laugh with their teams build social capital and can even produce greater productivity (p. 108). How often do you laugh with your team? Would your colleagues describe you as someone with whom they'd feel comfortable sharing a laugh?
4. Psychological safety – the feeling that we can be ourselves, without judgement or social repercussion (p. 113) – plays a key role in how teams behave and perform. How "safe" is your school environment? To what extent does your culture of feedback affect the psychological safety of the workplace?

CHAPTER 6

1. Of the four beliefs to beating adversity (p. 129), which resonate most strongly with you?
2. To what extent do you think incentives diminish autonomy (pp. 134-136)? How can they be used constructively?
3. Think about the way you praise your students. Are these feedback messages focused on effort or achievement?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of a process-driven feedback model like SE2R (p. 139)?
5. Within the natural limits of the school day, where do you think educators can find time and space to give students greater autonomy in their learning (p. 141)?
6. In which of the REPAIR steps are you strongest? Weakest? If you could make any of these steps your school's top growth priority, which would it be?

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