Aloha everyone. Below are updates for this week.

**The Write Stuff**

During this week’s observations, we heard or saw several effective teaching practices. For instance:

**Bobbye** is committed to implementing bell work and increasing writing activities in general. In addition, she said the students wanted more times to use MyAccess!

During this week’s visit, **Shiloh’s 7th** period class spent about 25 minutes writing. Activities included journaling, a warm up activity, and an exit pass (summarizing what they learned for the day). She also did an excellent job providing individual feedback to students when they were working in groups.

**Korean** started her class with written bell work about math formulas. She provided descriptive feedback during her review session before she had the students take a quiz.

**Juliana** administered a test the day we observed. She had 5 short-answer questions and made a point of reminding students to write each response as a complete sentence. What we noticed is that it is easier for students to respond to words such as “describe” and/or “explain” versus “list” or “name.” We also observed Juliana and her students providing descriptive spelling feedback to a student writing on the board. Juliana shared letters she asked her students to write to their future children about a recent health topic.

**Greg, Leah, and Marc** were absent on the day project staff were at the school to observe them.

If you are going to be absent, please email or call to let us know – it saves us gas and time!
My Access

Leah used MYAccess! to facilitate students’ reflecting on their first semester’s performance.

**Writing prompt:** Reflect on your semester one performance and progress. Brainstorm your ideas and then write a formal essay in which you explain how and why you received your grade/score in English to date.

Below is a sample response from Leah’s 6th period class.

I’m just going to go out on a limb here and say; I did fairly well this past quarter! Although I started out with an extremely pitiful grade it evened out towards the end. I can’t say I got the best grade I could have gotten, but I didn’t get the worse grade either. I started out the year thinking that English class was going to be another walk in the park like it was in Intermediate; I quickly found that to be false. I struggled heavily with turning in assignments on time or that were even finished. For half of the first quarter I was unwillingly maintaining a C to borderline D and I wasn’t happy about it. By the end of 1st Quarter I had been able to bump my grade up to a very low B and although some would be happy with that I was very unsatisfied. I was lazy, loaded with apathy, and didn’t care much about doing work in general. I knew I would need to make a change and was determined to do so. I put on my try hard underwear and set out on an epic journey towards a good grade.

Although I had started off the year with a mediocre performance I was determined to bounce back. I decided that the only way I could achieve my goal of a high B or greater I would need to focus and work hard. Which of course, I did. Staying up late doing homework, studying, or simply practicing my writing skills really helped me to improve. I took my time on essays, going over every detail however small or insignificant they were, everything mattered. If adding a period here or comma there would help to improve my grade, by god that comma is going in! If I ever felt that a paper had a problem that I could not see with my own eyes I would give it to my parent or teacher to look over and critic. Now I can produce high quality work every time and see my grade prosper because of it. Now instead of an, “Work harder”, or, “You didn’t even try”, I’m getting feedback from my English teacher saying, ”Thanks for your dedication! Your hard work has allowed you to maintain a B this quarter, you should be very proud of yourself; I am”, Trust me Mrs. Cooper, I’m proud. Reading that shot my confidence up to an all time high. I could say that confidence was the defining factor in improving my grade, without it I don’t think I would have been able to maintain a high B this quarter. It’s all about confidence!

I started out this year struggling and to be honest, not caring. But I ended 1st semester satisfied and content with the work that I ended up putting into everything I did. I feel proud of myself and definitely feel ready and willing to take on 2nd semester and challenges high school has in store for me. I’ll never give up; I will always keep walking straight with my head held high. As I said before, it’s all about confidence and if you have it then you’re bound to do well.
More on Feedback

At our recent professional development session we focused on feedback, in particular descriptive feedback. Below is a recent publication that supports what we discussed.

Goodbye to "Good Job!"—The Power of Specific Feedback
Margaret Berry Wilson

Your principal has come to your classroom to observe a lesson. At the end of the lesson, she smiles, says "Good job!," and leaves. After a moment's satisfaction, you begin wondering what she meant. Was your pacing effective? Did she notice that you've made progress using positive language?

Now suppose the principal had added specific feedback to her general praise: "You used positive language many more times than when I last observed you. I know you've really worked hard to change your language; the students seemed to really respond to your efforts." With those few words, she's acknowledged your hard work, the specific strategy you've used, and the positive outcome that's resulted.

Students, as well as adults, often feel frustrated by general praise. Although the intention is good, using general praise on its own does little to help students understand your expectations and recognize their own achievements. In contrast, when we name specific academic and social behaviors in our feedback, students become more aware of what they're doing well and what they can do to improve.

Three Tips for Giving Great Feedback

• **Name only behaviors that have actually occurred.** When students are giving you their attention, it is the right time to say "I see you all sitting quietly." If you give that feedback to a squirming, restless class with the hope of improving their behavior, they will feel as if you are disingenuous and are trying to manipulate them. Instead of helping them improve, you run the risk of undermining your relationship with them.

• **Say what you see, not how you feel.** "I love it when you turn in your homework so quickly" emphasizes your personal approval, suggesting that the primary purpose of good behavior is to please you. In contrast, saying "You turned in your homework quickly and quietly today, so now we'll all have more time for the lesson" emphasizes their capabilities and suggests the most important purpose of good behavior: enabling students to learn and enjoy school.

• **Avoid naming some students as examples for others.** Saying "Kaaikare's doing such neat handwriting today" to encourage other student's neat writing can lead to resentment of Kaaikare and feelings of discouragement. It's best to save remarks about specific students
for private conversations. When speaking to the whole class, use direct, inclusive language: "I bet you can all write neatly today. What might help you do that?"

**Sample Phrases for Helpful Feedback**

Here are a few examples of specific feedback for various classroom situations.

**During transitions**
"You moved into your groups quickly, which gives us more time to complete the task."
“When you finished your quiz, you immediately got out a book to read.”

**During group activities**
"I notice people giving supportive clues. Have you noticed other things that are helping this activity go smoothly?"
"Listen to the respectful words you're using!"

**During independent work time**
"Many of you are remembering to put the books back in the bins so others can find them."
"You used several adjectives in your poem. That helps readers hear what you're describing."

**In one-on-one conversations**
"Remember when you thought fraction problems were really hard? Today you did them all with no trouble."
"Jason, you offered to help Alexis clean up the lab table. That's an important way of helping her and our classroom."

Every day, you have many opportunities to give feedback to your class. Use those opportunities to offer **specific feedback** focused on the student's positive behaviors. Each bit of such feedback will help them understand your expectations, build on their strengths, and recognize themselves as competent and independent learners.

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**TOWL Prep**

If you are interested in doing picture prompts for bell work, in preparation for the TOWL, we will begin to provide some pictures that you may use. Here is the first one that, with a little creativity, may work for any content area:
“It’s not where you start that matters, but where you finish.”