


Keep, Start, Stop: A Student Feedback Strategy

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January 3, 2024

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At this point in the school year, you have had time to establish classroom routines, nurture your relationships with students, and design and facilitate entire units of study. It's the perfect time to ask your students for feedback. Employing a simple feedback strategy like "keep, start, stop" helps you quickly take the temperature of the class and make any necessary adjustments to ensure the rest of the year is as productive and positive as possible.

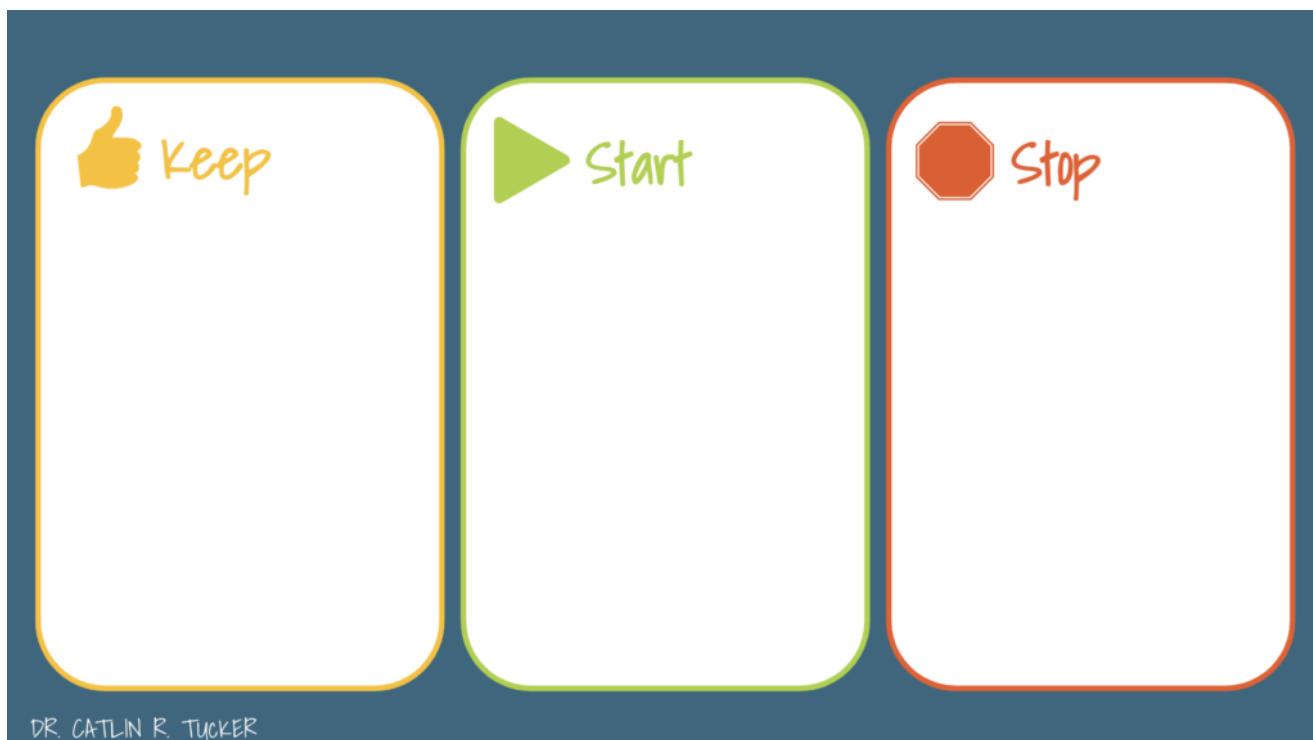
The Keep, Start, Stop Feedback Strategy

My friend, who manages a team of designers, described this strategy to me. He uses it when he meets with each member of his team to exchange feedback at the mid-point and end of the calendar year. Both he and his team members think about and provide feedback through this lens. As I listened to him describe his experience using this strategy, I thought it would be a simple way to gather feedback from students. Teachers who conference with students can also use this strategy to provide focused feedback about what they would like their students to keep, start, or stop doing.

Keep: What would you like to keep because you are enjoying it, finding it valuable, or it just works well for you? What would you like me to continue doing in terms of my interactions with you, my approach to our lessons, or the specific learning activities you regularly engage with in this class?

Start: Is there something you wish we would do that we are not currently doing? Is there something you did or do in another class that you would like us to try in this class? Is there something that worked for you in the past (e.g., routine, strategy, activity) that you'd like to do in this class?

Stop: What would you like to stop doing? Is there a routine, activity, or way in which I interact with you that you are not enjoying or struggling with? What isn't working well for you?



Scaffolding The Process

Even though the strategy is simple, it's important to do a few things to ensure students understand the purpose of feedback and what strong feedback looks like in this format.

1. Explain the WHY or value. First, I suggest being explicit about *why* you are making time in class to collect student feedback. Let students know you do your best to interact with them in ways that are kind and respectful and to design learning experiences that are enjoyable and beneficial. That said, we don't know what their experience is like our classes unless we ask.

I like to remind students that all of us are learning in the classroom. Even though we are teachers, it doesn't mean we stop learning, growing, and improving and their feedback can help us improve our practice. Telling students that kind and specific feedback is helpful to us as educators, the same way feedback is helpful for them when they are working on an assignment, underscores the value of feedback as a critical part of the learning process.

2. Model the process and/or analyze examples. Next, it is important for students to see a model or analyze examples. You can either present a model, thinking out loud as you provide feedback to someone in your life (e.g., principal about staff

meetings, kids about their helpfulness around the house) using the keep, start, stop strategy.

Alternatively, you could provide some examples of keep, start, stop at various levels of quality, kindness, or specificity and ask students to work in small groups to analyze and rank them in order of effectiveness. Getting them thinking critically about what strong feedback looks like is a great way to establish expectations for their work. You might even have a conversation about how high-quality, positive feedback is more effective at creating meaningful change than shallow or overly negative feedback.

3. Provide support with sentence starters. For some students giving feedback will be a new and unfamiliar experience. It may be helpful to provide sentence starters to guide them as they begin their responses. In the template I created for teachers, there are two additional slides with sentence starters for elementary and secondary students. You can copy and modify these to use with students online or offline. Younger students may also pair drawings with simple phrases to answer these questions.

Elementary



Keep

I appreciate how you teach us about...

One thing I really like about your teaching is...

I enjoy when you use activities like...

I think it's important to keep... because...



Start

I think it would be great if you could start...

It might be helpful if we could start doing more...

I'd like you to start teaching us about...

Can we start having activities that involve...



Stop

I think it would be better if you could stop...

I don't really enjoy it when you...

We could stop doing...

I'd like you to stop...

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Secondary



Keep

One thing I like about your teaching is...

It's important to me that we keep...

I think it would be helpful for us to continue...

I want to keep...because...



Start

I believe it would be helpful if we started...

It might be a good idea to start...

I'd like you to consider starting...

I think I'd benefit if we began...



Stop

It might be better if we stopped...

I find it challenging when you...

Can we please stop...

I'd appreciate it if you could stop...

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Students are the customers in education; they consume the learning experiences we design and facilitate. Student feedback can help us understand what *they* think is working, what's not, and what might need to be adjusted or reimaged. It's important to note that just because a student says they want to stop something, that does not mean we just eliminate things, but it may signal that something isn't working the way we intended.

For example, I remember early in my career when I would collect feedback at the end of each semester, my students almost unanimously told me to stop assigning annotations each night with the reading. Despite the feedback, I was immovable on this point. Annotations had worked for me as a student, so I assumed it was good for all students.

After receiving student feedback several semesters in a row requesting to eliminate annotations from our class, I begrudgingly realized I needed to reimagine this reading routine. Ultimately, I wanted my students to actively engage with the texts we were reading so they would understand and retain the information. Yet, I knew there were other strategies teachers used to encourage active reading.

I explored a few options and decided to make a change. Instead of providing one option for active reading, I onboarded my students to a few different options, spending one or two weeks practicing each. Once students had the opportunity to

try each strategy a couple of times, they got to decide for the rest of the year how they wanted to engage with their texts, selecting their strategy from our active reading choice board.

The results were shocking! On the next round of feedback, only two students said they wanted to stop having “reading every night.” They did not mention annotations or any of the active reading strategies. This moment was a reminder of how important it is to 1) check in with students about the strategies I was using, and 2) provide flexible pathways by providing students with meaningful choices.

Wrap Up

When you proactively seek input from your students, you can tailor your instruction to better align with their needs and interests, address concerns or issues they have, and cultivate a more inclusive, enjoyable, and productive learning environment. In essence, gathering mid-year feedback empowers you as an educator to make informed decisions about how you design and facilitate lessons. I encourage you to model the value of feedback for learning by using this simple strategy with your students.

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