

Tip Sheet

Helping Students Learn from Failure

By Robyn Jackson

Learning is a messy process and some failure is inevitable. It isn't *that* we fail that determines our path in life; it's *how* we respond to failure that makes the difference. Below are some ways that we can help our students learn from their failures.

- 🍃 **Error Analysis:** Have students review their first assessments to analyze their errors. Require them to explain why their answer was incorrect, and what they should have written instead.
- 🍃 **Frustration Models:** When helping students understand a new concept, use a Frustration model. In the first box, have students define the concept. In the next box, have students write its characteristics. In the third box, have students write examples. In the fourth box, have students write non-examples of the concept. It is this box that students can use to learn the most from their failures. Any mistakes students make in their understanding or any close confusers can be recorded in the non-example box. Distinguishing between the examples and non-examples helps students increase their understanding of the concept. You can download a copy of the Frustration model at www.mindstepsinc.com.
- 🍃 **Verbal Responses:** When students give incorrect responses to questions in class, don't immediately tell them the correct answer or move on to another student. Ask follow up questions to help them discover the error on their own or work together as a class to take their incorrect response and turn it into a correct answer.
- 🍃 **Rewrites:** If you are using a rubric to grade writing assignments, have students review the rubric and identify trouble spots in their writing and set goals for their re-write. Then, allow them to rewrite their essay under similar conditions with those specific goals in mind. Rather than grading the entire essay, look to see that the student has met their goals and addressed the concerns on the rubric.
- 🍃 **Share Your Own Experiences:** Talk to students about times when you took a risk in your own life. Explain to them how you felt and the benefits you derived from taking such a risk. Ask students to talk about times they took risks and the benefits of doing so. Then relate these experiences to taking risks in the classroom.
- 🍃 **Give "Not Yets":** Rather than give students a failing grade for their work, give them a "not yet," and require them to re-do and resubmit their work.
- 🍃 **Allow Re-takes:** If students fail a test, allow them the opportunity to take corrective action and then re-take the assessment. See our *Corrective Actions TIP Sheet* for suggestions on how to give more meaningful re-take opportunities.
- 🍃 **Debriefs:** When students misbehave, apply logical consequences that are directly connected to their infraction. Then, debrief with students to help them understand why their behavior was inappropriate and how they can behave more appropriately in the future.