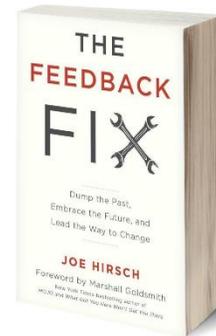# Book Discussion Guide – 20 Questions for Educators

Based on *The Feedback Fix: Dump the Past, Embrace the Future, and Lead the Way to Change*

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Rowman & Littlefield

FOR EDUCATORS

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 only apply 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? Does your position change depending on the setting you're in?
5. Do faculty 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 is more likely to receive buy-in from recipients. He writes: *"While they don't particularly like hearing criticism, successful people love getting ideas for the future. That's because successful people have a high need for self-determination and are more likely to accept ideas that they 'own,' not those that feel forced upon them."* Do you agree with Goldsmith? Is buy-in the key to better feedback?
7. How can the "plussing" strategies used by Pixar help your faculty more constructive ideas for action?
8. More experienced teachers actually prefer to receive negative feedback, as long as it's constructive, while less experienced teachers benefit from more positive communication. Does your feedback style make allowances for the different needs of your faculty?
9. Research shows that the transfer rate of theory to practice increases to 95% when accompanied by coaching. Does feedback at your school include follow-up opportunities for coaching and guided practice? If not, what's standing in the way?
10. How likely are you to adopt some form of "creative abrasion" in staff trainings or school-wide planning? Would the differences among teacher teams lead to breakthroughs or breakdowns?
11. Are the assignments and activities we typically use in school too narrow and limiting? Do they keep students from doing their most creative work?
12. Is your school ready to adopt inquiry-driven initiatives like Genius Hour or project-based learning? If not, what's standing in the way?
13. Mindfulness techniques have been shown to reduce stress, increase attention, and even boost academic performance. To what extent does your school use mindfulness techniques? Where might they be used?
14. 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. Giving positive feedback with negative social cues (a frown, for example) can make the message seem darker. When you're giving feedback to a teacher or student, how aware are you of the feedback you're actually *showing*?

15. Leaders who laugh with their teams build social capital and can even produce greater productivity. How often do you laugh with your staff? Would your faculty describe you as someone with whom they'd feel comfortable sharing a laugh?

16. Psychological safety – the feeling that we can be ourselves, without judgement or social repercussion – plays a key role in how teams behave and perform. On a scale of 1-10 (10 highest), how "safe" is your school environment? To what extent does your culture of feedback affect the psychological safety of the workplace?

17. When giving feedback to another teacher, do you find yourself prescribing solutions or describing possibilities? Does the person receiving feedback from you have an opportunity to shape the outcome or have you already shaped it?

18. Think about the way you give praise to your students. Are these feedback messages focused on effort or achievement?

19. Is your feedback tailored to a specific message? Is it communicated in plain and concrete language that offers a call to action?

20. 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?

Additional questions or comments: