

# Feedback Practices of Jamaican Teachers

Clavia Tashnie Williams-McBean

University of the West Indies – Jamaica

---

**Abstract:** *Feedback is indispensable if the potential gains of formative assessment are to be realised in the classroom. Therefore, this explanatory sequential mixed methods study sought to describe the feedback content and process of 1088 Jamaican secondary school teachers in general before exploring the practices of 32 teachers of English. Data analysis showed that teachers predominantly gave summative feedback, delivered orally and to the whole class for efficiency and to address the most frequent student errors. The findings imply that formative assessment implementation can be improved by including information on where students are, where they are going, and how they can get there in teachers' feedback. In the Jamaican context, the learning function of assessment, not the grading function, must be emphasised.*

**Keywords:** feedback practices, formative assessment, grades, Jamaica, English language

## INTRODUCTION

Assessment is essential to effective teaching and learning because it can be used for formative purposes, that is, to improve teaching and learning (Daquiaoag-Andres, 2023; Ijiwade & Alonzo, 2023). However, this improvement largely depends on the content and process of the feedback. Therefore, feedback is a crucial component of formative assessment (Lui & Andrade, 2022; McBrayer et al., 2023). Formative assessment includes five aspects: sharing the learning targets, effective questioning and classroom activities, self-assessment, peer-assessment, and teacher assessment (William 2013; Williams-McBean, 2021). Self-assessment, peer-assessment, and teacher-assessment all include feedback. Therefore, when I set out to investigate how formative assessment could be more effectively infused into the teaching of English and decided to describe the assessment practices of Jamaican teachers before implementing a formative assessment intervention, it was necessary to describe the feedback practices evident in these classrooms. Additionally, there is an international need for research on teachers' feedback practices, including the types of feedback teachers provide to their students in different contexts (Ferris, 2014; Irwin, 2017). In the Jamaican context, there is a dearth of research on teachers' assessment practices, in general, and their feedback practices. Therefore, the primary purpose of this paper is to describe the types, content and process of the feedback provided by teachers in various types of secondary schools in Jamaica generally before focusing on the practice of teachers of English. The findings from this study will also inform the design and implementation of a Formative Assessment in English Intervention (FAEI). The paper provides answers to the following research questions:

1. What type of feedback, if any, is given to students by Jamaican secondary school teachers?

- a. What is the level of feedback provided by Jamaican teachers to secondary school students?
- b. How complex is the feedback provided by Jamaican teachers to secondary school students?
- c. By what mode (oral, written, visual, computer-assisted) is feedback most frequently delivered by Jamaican teachers to secondary school students?
- d. To what audience (individual, small groups, whole class) is feedback most frequently delivered by Jamaican teachers of English to secondary school students?

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

Feedback has been given much attention, especially since increased attention is being placed on formative assessment. Consequently, there are many definitions of feedback. After reviewing feedback models in education and amalgamating the elements of the definitions, Lipnevich and Panadero (2021) defined feedback as:

information that includes all or several components: students' current state, information about where they are, where they are headed and how to get there, and can be presented by different agents (i.e., peer, teacher, self, task itself, computer). This information is expected to have a stronger effect on performance and learning if it encourages students to engage in active processing (p. 25).

This definition encapsulates how feedback was conceptualized in this study to include the content, agents, active participation of students and impact of feedback on student achievement. Additionally, the inclusion of information about where students are, where they are headed and how they can get there is reflective of Ramaprasad's (1983) three key processes in learning and teaching (establishing where the learners are in their learning, establishing where they are going and establishing what needs to be done to get them there). Ramaprasad's (1983) three key processes are integral in the comprehensive formative assessment framework (William & Thompson, 2007; Williams-McBean, 2021). Therefore, the definition highlights the importance of feedback in formative assessment.

Similarly, although feedback has been generally found to impact different student outcomes positively, the results are variable and sometimes contradictory. Notable variability has been reported on its impact on student motivation (Brookhart, 2008; Fonseca et al., 2015; Shute, 2008; Wisniewski et al., 2020), self-regulated learning (Winne & Hadwin, 2008) and achievement (Brookhart, 2008; Fonseca et al., 2015; [Hattie & Timperley, 2007](#); [Shute, 2008](#); William, 2018; Wisniewski et al., 2020). Additionally, teacher feedback efficacy is hampered by many factors related to the sender, receiver, content, process and context of the feedback (Brookhart, 2008; Panadero & Lipnevich, 2022; Winstone et al., 2017). Research on feedback is also hampered by the proliferation of feedback models with limited empirical support (Lipnevich & Panadero, 2021). Consequently, researchers need to focus on validating relationships, concepts, and explanations of existing models to unify the field (Lipnevich & Panadero, 2021). To that end, two feedback models with empirical validity (Hattie & Timperley, 2007 and Shute, 2008) were used to classify the types of feedback used by the teachers in this study. Therefore, this study also provides insights into the usefulness of the typologies used in both feedback models. Hattie and Timperley's model also

acknowledges the link between formative assessment and feedback by focusing on the three key questions (Brookhart, 2008).

### **TYPES OF FEEDBACK PROVIDED BY TEACHERS**

The types of feedback provided and used in the classroom are differentiated by its use (formative and summative), level of cognitive complexity, (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008), timing (immediate and delayed) (Brookhart, 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008); mode (oral, written, visual, computer-assisted) (Brookhart, 2008; Shute, 2008; Wisniewski et al., 2020); and audience (individual, small groups and whole-group) (Brookhart, 2008). The variability of the results of review and empirical studies on the efficacy of each type have led researchers to conclude that there is no one correct answer to the question of what the most effective type of feedback for improving student learning (Brookhart, 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008). What is important is that suitability is assessed in the context of specific classrooms, learners, teachers, classroom climate and tasks. There is, however, greater consensus that formative rather than summative feedback improves student achievement and motivation.

Summative feedback (usually grades) is reported to students, parents, and administrators as measurements of students' achievement. It is the most common type of feedback classroom teachers provide and the least effective in improving learning (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016). It is also deleterious to student motivation (Selvaraj et al., 2021). In contrast, formative feedback is descriptive information used to improve student learning (Shute, 2008). It includes information on students' specific learning difficulties and provides insights on what they should do next to improve their performance (Obro & Gift, 2022; Wiliam, 2010). It is less effective if grades or evaluative comments accompany it because when grades are present, students tend to ignore descriptive comments (Brookhart, 2008; Shute, 2008). Most importantly, it requires opportunities for students to use the feedback to improve learning (Brookhart, 2008). Shute (2008) explains that formative feedback scaffolds learning by providing descriptive information about where the students are, where they are going, and how to get there, which facilitates learning, especially for low-achieving students.

### **TYPES OF FEEDBACK BASED ON LEVEL OF COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY**

Hattie and Timperley (2007) have identified four major levels of feedback based on cognitive complexity (see Table 1): feedback about the task (FT); about the processing of the task (FP); about self-regulation (FR); and about the self as a person (FS). Brookhart (2008) also uses these feedback levels to classify feedback by content. In revisiting Hattie and Timperley's (2007) model, Wisniewski et al. (2020) explained that at the task level, feedback provides information on the content, facts or surface information, including how well the tasks have been completed and the correctness of the result. Surface-level information allows learners to store and reproduce knowledge but not identify relationships. They also explain that process-level feedback contains information that allows the learner to choose or develop strategies to understand the information needed to perform the task. It allows the learners to identify relationships and transfer understanding to novel situations (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It is differentiated from feedback about self-regulation because the latter provides information on how individuals can monitor, manage and guide their use of selected strategies. When feedback is provided at the FR level, it allows for self-assessment and develops the learner's ability to seek instrumental help (hints and

cues instead of correct answers). Finally, self-level feedback focuses on the characteristics of the feedback recipient instead of the task.

**Table 1.**

*Levels of Feedback by Hattie and Timperley (2007)*

<b>Levels of Feedback</b>	<b>Description and Examples</b>
Feedback about a task or product (FT)	States whether the work is correct or incorrect. This level of feedback may include directions to acquire more, different, or correct information (e.g., “You need to include more about the Treaty of Versailles.”)
Feedback about the process used to create a product or complete a task (FP)	More directly aimed at the processing of information or learning processes requiring understanding or completing the task. For example, a teacher or peer may say to a learner, “This page may make more sense if you use the strategies we talked about earlier.”
Feedback about self-regulation (FR)	Includes information that increases students’ self-evaluation skills or confidence to engage further in a task. (e.g., “You already know the key features of the opening of an argument. Check to see whether you have incorporated them in your first paragraph.”)
Feedback about the self as a person (FS)	Is personal in the sense that it is directed to the “self,” and is too often unrelated to performance on the task (e.g., “You are a great student” and “That’s an intelligent response, well done.”)

*Note.* Adapted from “The Power of Feedback,” by J. Hattie and H. Timperley, 2007. In *Review of Educational Research*, 77, 1, pp. 90–97. Copyright 2008, American Educational Research Association.

In summarizing the effectiveness of these levels of feedback, Hattie and Timperley (2007) purport,

FS is the least effective, FR and FP are powerful in terms of deep processing and mastery of tasks, and FT is powerful when the task information subsequently is useful for improving strategy processing or enhancing self-regulation (which it too rarely does). (pp. 90–91)

FS is the least effective because it is not task-oriented or formative. Other researchers have also reported that FS (including praise) is the most frequent feedback given in the classroom (Hattie, 2011; Valente et al., 2009). However, in Brooks, et al. (2019) study, FS was found in less than 1% of the verbal feedback provided by the teachers. FT dominated. There are contradictions in the existing literature, and these have yet to be studied in the Jamaican context. Therefore, I needed to find out to what extent, if at all, what obtains internationally is true of the local context.

### ***THE COMPLEXITY OF FEEDBACK***

Similarly, after reviewing the existing literature on feedback complexity, Shute (2008) compiled a list of 12 different types of feedback (see Table 2). The list is arranged from least to most complex, with ‘no feedback’ being the least complex. This list also identifies verification as the second least complex type of feedback. Verification informs “the learners about the correctness of their responses (e.g., right–wrong, or overall percentage correct)” (Shute, 2008, p. 160). Using Shute’s (2008) term, verification is the most common type of feedback given by teachers as an overall letter or numerical grade (85%, B+, 7/10, a tick or an X) is most often given (Black &

William, 1998; Dessie & Sewagegn, 2019). Verification is summative feedback, and it is given with the greatest frequency. However, even elaborated feedback may have a deleterious effect on students learning if too many details are provided at once which would require students to spend time to go through (McBrayer et al., 2023). Despite the variability in the findings on the effect of different feedback characteristics, researchers have agreed that feedback improves performance—and when it does, it is formative feedback.

**Table 2.**

*Different Types of Feedback Arranged by Complexity*

Feedback Type	Description
No feedback	Refers to conditions where the learner is presented with a question and is required to respond, but there is no indication as to the correctness of the learner's response.
Verification	Also called "knowledge of results" or "knowledge of outcome." It informs the learners about the correctness of their responses (e.g., right-wrong, or overall percentage correct).
Correct	Also known as "knowledge of correct response." Informs the learner of the correct answer to a specific problem, with no additional information.
Try again	Also known as "repeat-until-correct" feedback. It informs the learner about an incorrect response and allows the learner one or more attempts to answer it.
Error flagging	Also known as "location of mistakes." Error flagging highlights errors in a solution, without giving the correct answer.
Elaborated	General term relating to the provision of an explanation about why a specific response was correct or not, and may allow the learner to review part of the instruction. It may or may not present the correct answer (see below for six types of elaborated feedback).
Attribute isolation	Elaborated feedback that presents information addressing central attributes of the target, concept, or skill being studied.
Topic contingent	Elaborated feedback providing the learner with information relating to the target topic currently being studied. May entail simply re-teaching material.
Response contingent	Elaborated feedback that focuses on the learner's specific response.
Hints/cues/ prompts	Elaborated feedback guiding the learner in the right direction, e.g., a strategic hint on what to do next or a worked example or demonstration. Avoids explicitly presenting the correct answer.
Bugs/misconceptions	Elaborated feedback requiring error analysis and diagnosis. It provides information about the learner's specific errors or misconceptions (e.g., what is wrong and why).
Informative Tutoring	The most elaborate feedback (from Narciss & Huth, 2004). This presents verification feedback, error flagging and strategic hints on how to proceed. The correct answer is not usually provided.

*Note.* Taken from "Focus on Formative Feedback," by V. Shute, 2008. In *Review of Educational Research*, 78(1), p. 160. Copyright 2000, the American Educational Research Association.

Furthermore, while acknowledging the variability of effective feedback characteristics, Shute (2008) presented preliminary guidelines, from the literature reviewed, on how to use feedback to improve learning in different tasks, for different types of learners and through different media. These guidelines accounted for the different student characteristics (low-performing or high-performing), content (verification or elaborate), and modes of delivery (written, oral or computer-delivered). These two models were used to classify the purpose of the feedback given by the participants in this study.

Given the prevalence of summative feedback and characteristics of descriptive feedback that can thwart learning, it may be argued that formative feedback is lacking in the classroom. Since this issue has not been well-researched in Jamaica, I sought to determine whether these findings were confirmed here. It was also necessary to look at the feedback practices of the participants, as feedback is germane to formative assessment.

## METHODOLOGY

Data was collected using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. It began with a survey of 1088 secondary school teachers from 45 secondary schools representing the five types of secondary schools across Jamaica: upgraded high schools (587 or 54%), coeducational traditional high schools (213 or 19.6%), traditional high schools for boys (60 or 5.5%), traditional high schools for girls (100 or 9.2%) and technical high schools (128 or 15.5%). The schools were ranked as above-average, average and below-average based on students' achievement on the standardized secondary English Language examination, The Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC). The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) administers exit examinations at the secondary level in 16 countries across the Caribbean, including Jamaica. Student performance in CSEC English A and Mathematics usually indicates a school and a country's educational effectiveness. CSEC passes also determine candidates' suitability for entry-level jobs and tertiary education. In Jamaica, students from traditional high schools usually outperform their counterparts in upgraded and technical high schools, although individual schools are exceptions (Williams-McBean, 2021). This indicates that academic achievement and school type are interconnected. There are also disparities in the infrastructural and alumni support, again with traditional high schools at the upper end and technical high schools at the lower end. Based on the contextual differences, school type is an essential variable in Jamaica. Therefore, differences based on school type were considered.

The quantitative sample also consisted of 325 male and 726 female teachers with years of experience ranging from less than five years to over 20 years. These teachers taught a variety of subjects, which were categorized into nine different groups: English 18% (n = 191), Social Sciences, which included subjects such as Sociology, Religious Education, Social Studies 17% (n = 177), Practical Arts including Woodwork, Physical Education, Food and Nutrition 17% (n = 175), Mathematics 13% (n = 132), Business 11% (n = 119) Sciences, for example, Biology, Chemistry, Physics 11% (n = 115), Modern Languages including Spanish and French 4% (n = 43), Performing Arts 3% (n = 34) and Mixed – a combination of subjects in more than one of the listed groups 6% (n = 60). The sample of teachers was proportionately selected through stratified random sampling to reflect the disproportionality of teachers in Jamaica's different types of secondary schools more accurately.

In the quantitative phase, the researcher presented the respondents with one question requiring them to select the type of feedback they most frequently gave their students from the five

types of feedback presented: Grades (e.g., 70%, 9/10, B+), Ticks and X's, Oral feedback, Written feedback on strengths and weaknesses without grades, Grades with written feedback. The respondents were also allowed to select more than one type of feedback. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS on the frequency with which each of the listed types of feedback was selected. Pearson Chi-Square analyses were also conducted to ascertain if there were statistically significant differences in the proportion of teachers who selected a particular type of feedback based on gender, school type and rank, years of experience, age and subject.

In the subsequent qualitative phase, I used a multiple-case instrumental case study design (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). I selected 32 teachers of English from six schools through stratified purposive sampling (Patton, 1990). The schools were stratified according to type (traditional, upgraded, and technical) and rank (above-average performing and below-average performing). I selected five or six teachers from each school based on the inclusion criteria: they were teachers of English who had participated in the preceding quantitative phase and were willing to participate in the qualitative phase voluntarily. One teacher asked to be included. The teachers of English were selected because they represented the largest group from the quantitative phase and the subsequent Formative Assessment Intervention would be implemented in English. Therefore, the qualitative findings are specifically limited to teachers of English. Each teacher represented a case that was embedded in the context of the schools, and they were deliberately selected to unearth different perspectives on the issue of teachers' feedback practices. Hence, they were "instrumental cases" (Creswell, 2014, p. 493).

I collected data through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations and document analysis. During the interviews, the teachers were asked to describe the type of feedback they usually give students in the language classroom and outline what happens after they have marked students' assignments and tests. In the observations, I observed the process and type of feedback provided by teachers in classroom discussions and test debriefing exercises. I also analysed the feedback provided in students' notebooks and on test papers the teachers returned to students. I first analysed the qualitative data through deductive and inductive coding (Saldaña, 2016), then I used pattern matching to categorise the codes based on similarities, differences and hierarchies. Finally, I answered the research questions through pattern matching (Yin, 2014), individual case analyses, and cross-case analyses within the context (type of school) and across cases and contexts. The validity of the results was established through triangulation of methods and independent coding (Thomas, 2006) by a lecturer and veteran qualitative researcher. All the names of participants and schools used in this article are pseudonyms.

## RESULTS

### TYPES OF FEEDBACK MOST FREQUENTLY GIVEN BY TEACHERS

The quantitative analysis revealed that the most frequent type of feedback reportedly given was grades with written feedback, which was selected by 56% (n = 607) of the respondents. Grades (e.g., 70%, 9/10, B+) were second with 555 or 51%, followed by Oral Feedback with 526 or 48%. Ticks and Xs 35% (n = 384) and Written feedback on strengths and weaknesses 29% (n = 319) were given with the least frequency. Further analyses were done to find out if the teachers' demographic variables (gender, school type, years of experience and age) and subject made a significant difference in their reported frequency of use of the different feedback types using crosstabulations in SPSS.

## GRADES WITH WRITTEN FEEDBACK AND TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

In examining differences based on respondent variables (gender, school type, years of experience and age) and the most frequently selected type of feedback (grades with written feedback), Pearson Chi-Square test for independence showed no statistical significance based on years of service for the 1030 respondents (Chi-Square = 6.778,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .15$ ; Cramer's  $V = .08$ ). Similarly, for age ( $N = 1060$ ), there was no statistically significant difference for young or middle-aged teachers (Chi-Square = .563,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .45$ ;  $\Phi = .02$ ). However, female teachers were more likely to give grades with written feedback than males. Of the 1050 valid cases, 75% of the female and 25% of the male teachers selected grades with written feedback as the type they most frequently gave to their students. The difference was statistically significant (Chi-Square = 22.500,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\Phi = .15$ ). According to Healey (2015), if the value of Phi or Cramer's  $V$  Chi-Square measures is between 0.00 and 0.10, the association or difference in proportion is weak, between 0.11 and 0.30 is moderate and greater than 0.30 is strong. Based on that classification, the gender difference is moderately significant.

When difference based on the type of school the teachers taught in was examined, the results of the Chi-square tests showed no significant difference in the proportion of teachers from the above-average performing schools (traditional, upgraded and technical) who selected grades with written feedback as the type of feedback they most frequently gave to their students (Chi-Square = 5.795,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .215$ ). However, there were moderately significant differences for the average-performing (Chi-Square = 17.757,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .001$ ; Cramer's  $V = .22$ ) and below-average-performing schools (Chi-Square = 18.138,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .001$ ; Cramer's  $V = .22$ ). Among the average-performing schools, the Upgraded High Schools and the Traditional High Schools for Girls accounted for most of the difference. Fifty-eight per cent of the average performing upgraded high school teachers did not select that they gave written feedback with grades most frequently. The reverse is true for the teachers in Traditional High Schools for Girls.

## WRITTEN FEEDBACK WITHOUT GRADES AND TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

There was no statistically significant difference based on age (Chi-Square = 1.332,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .25$ ;  $\Phi = .04$ ). However, statistically significant differences were noted for gender, years of service and school type. Female (75%) teachers were also more likely to give written feedback without grades than males (25%). The difference was weak (Chi-Square = 10.576,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .03$ ; Cramer's  $V = .10$ ). Teachers with more than 11 years of experience also more frequently gave their students this type of feedback (Chi-Square = 2.970,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .56$ ; Cramer's  $V = .10$ ). For school type, there was no statistically significant difference for the teachers in the average-performing schools (Chi-Square = 2.275,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .69$ ; Cramer's  $V = .08$ ). However, there was a moderately significant difference in the proportion of teachers in the above-average performing schools (Chi-Square = 13.931,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .01$ ; Cramer's  $V = .21$ ) and a strong difference for the below-average performing schools (Chi-Square = 14.028,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Cramer's  $V = .33$ ). The teachers of the above-average upgraded, coeducational traditional and technical high schools (cumulatively 88.8%) selected that they gave written feedback on strengths and weaknesses more frequently than their counterparts at the below average rank (cumulatively 67.1%). The reverse is true for the teachers in below-average single-sex traditional high schools. A moderate difference was also noted based on school rank (Chi-Square = 12.345,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .002$ ; Cramer's  $V = .11$ ).



As the ranking of the schools increased, the proportion of teachers reporting giving their students written feedback without grades also increased.

### **GRADES ONLY AND TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS**

In contrast, there was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of teachers who selected grades only as the feedback they most frequently gave their students based on all the demographic variables except school type. For gender (Chi-Square = 1.061,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .30$ ; Phi = -.03), age (Chi-Square = .935,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .33$ ; Phi = .03) and years of service (Chi-Square = 25.972,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .20$ ; Cramer's  $V = .08$ ). However, for school type layered with school rank (by performance), Chi-Square = 14.001,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .01$ ; Cramer's  $V = .14$ . Moderately significant differences were evident for all the school ranks: above average performing (Chi-Square = 18.765,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Cramer's  $V = .24$ ), average performing (Chi-Square = 14.668,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .01$ ; Cramer's  $V = .20$ ), and below-average performing schools (Chi-Square = 15.618,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .01$ ; Cramer's  $V = .021$ ). The teachers in the average and below-average performing schools selected that they gave grades only more frequently than those in the above-average performing schools. Additionally, a larger proportion of teachers in traditional high schools, especially those for boys only, selected grades only as the most frequent type of feedback they gave to their students.

### **TICKS AND Xs AND TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS**

For ticks and Xs, there was also no significant difference based on gender (Chi-Square = 2.082,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .15$ ), years of service (Chi-Square = 2.817,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .59$ ), or age (Chi-Square = 1.777,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .18$ ). However, there was a significant difference based on school rank (Chi-Square = 11.019,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .004$ ; Cramer's  $V = .10$ ) and school type Chi-Square = 17.889,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .13$ ). More teachers in average performing schools reported giving this type of feedback. The same proportion of teachers (31%) from the above- and below-average performing schools reported giving Ticks and Xs most frequently. This proportion was primarily among the upgraded and coeducational traditional high schools.

Overall, age did not make a statistically significant difference in the frequency with which any of the types of feedback was used, and school type was significant for all feedback types. Years of service were only significant for written feedback without grades, while gender made a difference for written feedback with and without grades.

### **DIFFERENCES BASED ON THE SUBJECTS THE TEACHERS TAUGHT**

Pearson Chi-Square test for independence also showed a moderately significant difference in the proportion of teachers who indicated that the most frequent type of feedback they gave to their students was grades with written feedback based on the subject taught (Chi-Square = 29.603,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Cramer's  $V = .17$ ). Moderately significant differences were also noted for written feedback on strengths and weaknesses without grades (Chi-Square = 24.591,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = .002$ ; Cramer's  $V = .15$ ). For both types of feedback, the teachers of English accounted for most of the difference (see Table 4). On the other hand, there was no significant difference in the proportion of teachers who indicated that they gave grades only (Chi-Square = 7.293,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = .51$ ; Cramer's  $V = .08$ ) or Ticks and X's only (Chi-Square = 13.973,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = .08$ ; Cramer's  $V = .08$ ).

**Table 3.**

*Crosstabulation of Teachers' Selection of Most Frequent Type of Feedback Given based on Subject (Percentages)*

Subject	Written+Grades		Oral		Written Only	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
English	13.4	22.0	15.5	21.3	15.1	25.9
Mathematics	13.7	11.7	13.8	11.2	13.2	11.0
Social Studies	13.9	19.2	17.5	16.2	16.9	16.8
Sciences	10.6	11.4	11.2	10.8	12.0	8.7
Business	13.2	10.0	9.9	13.0	12.1	9.7
Practical Arts	20.7	13.7	19.2	14.2	17.3	15.5
Performing Arts	4.0	2.7	3.5	3.0	3.5	2.6
Modern Languages	3.5	4.6	3.0	5.3	3.4	5.8
Mixed	7.0	4.7	6.5	4.9	6.5	3.9
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100

### **Cognitive Level of Feedback Given by Teachers of English**

In the qualitative phase, the types of feedback were coded by level of cognitive complexity (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008); by mode (Brookhart, 2008; Shute, 2008); and by audience (Brookhart, 2008). In looking at feedback by the level of cognitive complexity, the most frequent level of feedback given in all the schools was feedback about a task or product (FT). There were 490 instances in 26 cases, in comparison to 107 instances in 22 cases for FS (Feedback about the self as a person), 20 instances in 10 cases for FP (Feedback about the process used to create a product or complete a task), and two instances in two cases for FR (Feedback about self-regulation). These two instances were at Sunnydale High School, which would also have the same predominance of FT and FS as the other schools (see Table 5). Although feedback at the FT level was the most frequent type of feedback given in all the schools, it was more prevalent among the above-average schools, with the exception of the technical high school, where FT was given with almost the same frequency for the above-average (109 times in 5 cases) and the below-average performing technical high school (102 times in five cases).

Furthermore, although FP was observed 13 times in Harrison High School, the use of this level of feedback was more representative of a particular teacher, Ms. Hunter, who accounted for nine 13 instances. Examples included:

Alright, let me bring something to your attention. Some people don't know how to treat questions in a summary. You can't write the questions, but if you get a main point that is coming out in questions, how you can state it is, "Questions are raised about so and so and so." Don't write any questions asked in the summary. You have a few people who did that. Identify the main idea and state that it was raised in a question. (Observations of Ms. Hunter's Test Debriefing Session)

**Table 5.**  
*Level of Feedback Given by Participants in Different Types of Schools*

<b>School Type</b>	<b>FT</b>		<b>FS</b>		<b>FP</b>		<b>FR</b>	
	Counts	Cases	Counts	Cases	Counts	Cases	Counts	Cases
Sunnydale High (Above Average Traditional High)	58	4	32	3	2	2	2	2
James Stewart High (Average Traditional High for Boys)	13	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Harrison High (Below Average Traditional High School)	146	3	14	4	13	3	-	-
Roaring River High (Above Average Upgraded High)	55	5	21	5	1	1	-	-
Willow High (Below Average Upgraded High)	8	3	3	2	-	-	-	-
Hill Top High (Above Average Technical High)	108	5	20	5	1	1	-	-
Northside High (Below Average Technical High)	102	5	17	3	3	3	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

Since FT could be powerful if it provided information that improved students' processing strategies or self-regulation, I further scrutinized its content. This was done by retrieving the sections coded as FT that overlapped with the different levels of complexity of feedback (no feedback, verification, correct, try again, error flagging, elaborated, topic contingent, attribute isolation, hints/cues/prompts, and informative tutoring) (Shute, 2008). Verification, correct, try again and no feedback are not formative feedback (Kohn, 1999; Shute, 2008). Although "Error Flagging" identifies the errors, it does not recommend how the student may proceed to eliminate them. These types of feedback dominated in this study (see Table 6). Since FT provides feedback and no feedback denotes the absence of feedback, that level is not represented in the table.

**Table 6.***Co-occurrence of Feedback on Task with Complexity of Feedback*

Complexity of Feedback	Feedback of Task (FT)	
	Counts	Cases
Verification	311	24
Correct	27	8
Try again	10	7
Error flagging	58	22
Elaborated	46	19
Attribute Isolation	1	1
Topic Contingent	1	1
Response Contingent	-	-
Hints/Cues/prompts	4	3
Bugs/Misconceptions	-	-
Informative Tutoring	1	1

*Note.* - = none was reported or observed; the complexity of feedback is arranged from least to most complex based on Shute's (2008) classification.

Table 6 shows that of the 465 retrieved instances of co-occurrence, the most frequent was verification (311 instances in 24 cases), error flagging (58 in 22 cases), elaborated (46 in 19 cases) and correct (27 in 8 cases). Elaborated feedback is formative feedback. Examples of elaborated feedback included when Mrs. Turner extended her response by sharing an example of expository writing using compare and contrast to present the similarities and differences between laptops and tablets. She also explained that the answer to the question, "What is the author's purpose?" must always begin with a verb (Observation of Mrs. Turner).

Another example was when Ms. Hunter brought back the students' six weekly test papers, she commented that the students were saying that there was more than one close answer in the multiple choice section on synonyms and antonyms. To that she responded:

You look at the context and see which one best fits in the context. So, there's no way you should be saying to the teacher that three of them are similar or three of them are opposites. You must apply what you have learnt. (Observation of Ms. Hunter)

Finally, in describing her feedback process Ms. Gill explained:

After I mark the test papers, I normally take them back to the class and what I normally do, like if I'm sitting around a table, I would give the rest of the class work to do, and I invite them one by one to sit beside me, and I go through the test papers with them and highlight their strong points, their weak points, things that I want to improve next time around and all of that. (Interview with Ms. Gill)

These instances highlight that the content of the elaborated feedback includes information on students' strengths and weaknesses as well as strategies they can use to improve. This is formative feedback.

There was a marginal difference between the above-average and below-average performing schools, with 38 instances in 14 cases and 35 instances in 9 cases, respectively. Again, the instances among the below-average schools are greatly increased due to those contributed by Ms. Hunter from Harrison High School (6), as none was observed at Willow High School.

### **MODE OF DELIVERY AND AUDIENCE OF FEEDBACK**

Oral feedback was the only mode of delivery included in the quantitative phase, and 562 (52%) of the 1088 respondents selected it as the most frequent type of feedback they gave to their students. There were moderate statistically significant differences in the proportion of the teachers who selected that they most frequently gave oral feedback based on subject (Chi-Square = 17.529,  $df = 8, p = .03$ ; Cramer's  $V = .13$ ) and school type (Chi-Square = 55.926,  $df = 4, p < .001$ ; Cramer's  $V = .23$ ). The teachers of English reported that they gave oral feedback more often than all other subjects. Additionally, a greater proportion of teachers in technical high schools, traditional high schools for boys only and for girls only selected oral feedback as the type of feedback they most frequently gave their students. The reverse is true for the teachers in the upgraded high schools. On the other hand, there was no statistically significant difference based on gender (Chi-Square = 2.1003,  $df = 1, p = .15$ ;  $\Phi = .05$ ), years of experience (Chi-Square = 2.968,  $df = 4, p = .56$ ; Cramer's  $V = .05$ ), age (Chi-Square = .957,  $df = 1, p = .33$ ;  $\Phi = .03$ ), or the performance level of the students in the school (School Rank) (Chi-Square = 2.064,  $df = 2, p = .36$ ; Cramer's  $V = .04$ )

In the qualitative phase, the teachers of English most frequently delivered feedback orally, with 587 instances in 31 cases. The one case that was not observed giving oral feedback was a participant who withdrew from the research after being interviewed because she relocated. In her interview, she only reported using written feedback. Written feedback was reportedly and observably given 64 times in 24 cases. Additionally, feedback was delivered through a computer once, and the content of the feedback was a grade on the students' multiple choice test. In examining the level and complexity of oral feedback given, it was noted that while it was dominated by FT, FS, verification, and correct, there were few instances where oral feedback was elaborated.

Regarding the audience, feedback was reportedly and observably given most frequently to the whole class (584 instances in 24 cases), with 51 instances in 25 cases where individual feedback was given. Reasons for these practices include time constraints and class size. Ms. Hall explains the challenge of giving individual feedback:

You know how it is with forty-odd students, you cannot see everybody in one sitting and then teach. I want it to be like a workshop, but how do I do that now within the teaching time? It's very challenging, but I try, even if it's even half now or half next class. (Interview with Ms. Hall)

In this case, the number of students made the class time insufficient for the teacher to give individual feedback. On other occasions, the teachers invited students to individual consultations outside of the class period, but the students often did not show up. Another reason was that the feedback applied to many students in the class, so the teacher decided to give the whole class feedback. As Ms. Stone explained her observed practice:

In the last test, my reading class was doing homophones, and so many of them didn't know the difference between K-E-R-N-E-L and C-O-L-O-N-E-L. So, I have to go back to them and highlight it. I guess that's what I do. I highlight what a lot of people made mistakes on. (Observation of Ms. Stone)

This excerpt highlights that whole class feedback was given because many students made the same mistake. In fact, the observed error frequency was the primary reason participants reported that they gave whole class feedback.

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

Feedback can serve formative or summative purposes. Formative feedback focuses on the task and provides specific, descriptive information that can improve students' learning process, self-regulation and accomplishment of the learning goals (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Obro & Gift, 2022; Shute, 2008; Wiliam, 2010; Wisniewski et al., 2020). However, this descriptive feedback loses its effectiveness when it is accompanied by grades (Brookhart, 2008; Shute, 2008). In contrast, summative feedback, the most dominant and least effective type of feedback worldwide, prioritises the grading function of assessment (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016). It verifies what was correct or incorrect and quantifies the overall extent of learning by providing a summary score or grade without providing information on how learners may improve. In this study, the results indicate that formative feedback is limited in the Jamaican classroom, especially in the practice of the selected teachers of English. The teachers reported giving effective formative feedback (written feedback without grades) less frequently than summative feedback (grades only) and ineffective formative feedback (grades with written feedback). Teachers across Jamaica reportedly gave grades with written feedback most frequently. This was statistically significantly more so for teachers of English, female teachers and teachers teaching in average-performing schools for girls only. This report contradicts the findings of previous studies that indicated that teachers gave grades most frequently (see, for example, Black & Wiliam, 1998; Dessie & Sewagegn, 2019). However, the prevalence of summative feedback was corroborated for the teachers of English in the qualitative phase, who most frequently gave feedback at the FT (696 instances in 31 cases) and FS (162 instances in 24 cases) levels, primarily to verify the correctness of students' responses (508 instances in 28 cases).

Previous research also reported that FS was the least effective type of feedback, while FT can be effective if it allows for improvement in strategy processing or self-regulation – which is rarely the case (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). The rarity of FT facilitating improvement was confirmed in this study as the FT feedback was primarily for verification. In sum, the type of feedback most frequently provided by teachers in both phases of this research indicates a dominance of summative feedback. The prevalence of verification in the teachers' observed practice also confirms the findings of previous research that teachers predominantly give grades as feedback, despite what was reported by teachers in the quantitative phase of this study. However, since only teachers of English were included in the qualitative phase, this confirmation is specific to the select teachers of English.

## **THE MODE AND AUDIENCE OF FEEDBACK**

The quantitative phase showed that 52% of the 1088 respondents selected that they most frequently gave oral feedback, with the teachers of English reported that they gave oral feedback more often than all other subjects. The dominance of oral feedback among teachers of English was confirmed in the qualitative phase. There are divergent results on the effectiveness of feedback by mode of delivery. While Brookhart (2008) purported that oral feedback is effective, other researchers advised that it should be avoided, as it is less likely to be taken seriously by students (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Shute, 2008). Additionally, Wisniewski et al. (2020) in their meta-analysis found the channel to be a non-significant moderator. In this study, the fact that there was no significant relationship between oral feedback and the academic performance of the students in the schools (school rank) may support the view that the mode of delivery does not significantly affect feedback effectiveness. However, the content of the oral feedback is important. An examination of the level and complexity of oral feedback given showed that it was dominated by FT, FS, verification, and correct, with a few instances of elaborated oral feedback. Again, these levels of cognitive complexity are ineffective in improving learning.

The qualitative results also showed that the most frequent audience for teacher feedback was the whole class (799 instances in 31 cases). Hattie & and Timperley (2007) found that students in the Western world prefer individual feedback. Individual feedback is also regarded as effective because it conveys to the student that the teacher cares about his/her progress and directs the feedback specifically to him/her (Brookhart, 2008; Hattie, 2011). However, group feedback saves time (Brookhart, 2008). In addition to saving time, which is related to the large class sizes, the teachers of English explained that they gave the whole group feedback because most of the students had made the same error. Still, providing feedback to the whole group may also limit its effectiveness.

## **FORMATIVE FEEDBACK AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

The results indicate a relationship between teachers' provision of formative feedback and the academic achievement of their students. While the teachers in the average and below-averaging performing schools most frequently gave grades, the teachers in the above-average performing schools more frequently selected grades with written feedback and written feedback on students' strengths and weaknesses without grades. Written feedback without grades was selected with the least frequency in the below-average performing schools. Research has shown that formative feedback, feedback on students' strengths and weaknesses without grades, can improve student academic achievement (Shute, 2008; Wisniewski et al., 2020). Additionally, although providing grades with descriptive feedback is less effective, it is more effective than providing grades only. The most effective type of feedback was significantly related to the top-performing schools and the least effective type of feedback to the lowest-performing schools. The association between the provision of formative feedback and students' academic achievement was corroborated in the qualitative phase when the instances in which elaborated formative feedback were examined based on context (school types and rank). The teachers in the above-average performing schools gave elaborated feedback more frequently than those in the below-average performing schools, except for one teacher, Ms. Hunter from Harrison High School. In Willow High School, the other below-average performing school in the qualitative phase, there was no instance of elaborated feedback being provided. The teachers from Willow High School primarily provided feedback at the

verification level. While causal relationships were not examined in the quantitative or qualitative phases of this study, moderate statistically significant relationships add some corroboration to the findings of previous studies that formative feedback improves student achievement. This causal relationship should be examined in the Jamaican context in future studies.

### CONCLUSION

Given the findings of this study, it was concluded that the provision of formative feedback by teachers in Jamaican secondary schools is limited. While the teachers primarily provide descriptive feedback, it is likely to be ignored because grades accompany it. Additionally, the proliferation of FS and FT feedback predominantly at the verification level supports that conclusion. The dominance of oral feedback that is also predominantly at the FS and FT (verification) levels and predominantly given to the whole class are other indicators that formative feedback is limited, specifically in the teaching of English. Additionally, the finding that descriptive feedback is given with the least frequency (whether in writing or orally) also suggests that teachers are making limited use of formative assessment in Jamaican secondary classrooms. Descriptive feedback is germane to formative assessment (William 2013; Williams-McBean, 2021). It is the type of feedback that can move the learner along, and it was the least reported and observed type of feedback. Therefore, the content and process of feedback indicate that there is a need for improvement in teachers' feedback practices to realise the possible gains from the use of formative assessment in teaching and learning.

### REFERENCES

- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 5(1), 7–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050102>
- Brookhart, S. M. (2008). *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Brooks, C., Carroll, A., Gillies, R. M., & Hattie, J. (2019). A matrix of feedback for learning. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(4). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v44n4.2>
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Dessie, A. A., & Sewagegn, A. A. (2019). Moving beyond a sign of judgment: Primary school teachers' perception and practice of feedback. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(2), 51-66. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2019.1224a>
- Daquiaoag-Andres, A. (2023). Establishing quality instrument for the summative assessment of pre-service elementary teachers. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, 14(3), 9-16. <https://doi.org/10.47750/jett.2023.14.03.002>
- Ferris, D. R. (2014). Responding to student writing: Teachers' philosophies and practices. *Assessing Writing*, 19, 6-23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2013.09.004>
- Fonseca, J., Carvalho, C., Conboy, J., Valente, M. O., Gama, A. P., Salema, M. H., & Fiúza, E. (2015). Changing teachers' feedback practices: A workshop challenge. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(8). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n8.4>
- Hattie, J., and Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Education Research* 77, 81–112. <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>



- Healey, J. F. (2015). *Statistics: A tool for social research* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). Stamford: Cengage Learning. Chapter 12 (pp. 308–341).
- Ijiwade, O., & Alonzo, D. (2023). Teacher perceptions of the use of a computer-adaptive test for formative purposes: Typologies of practices. *International Journal of Instruction*, 16(2), 887-908. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2023.16247a>
- Irwin, B. (2017). Written corrective feedback: Student preferences and teacher feedback practices. *IAFOR Journal of Language Learning*, 3(2), 35-58. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ijll.3.2.02>
- Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 254-284.
- Lipnevich, A. A. & Panadero, E. (2021). A review of feedback models and theories: Descriptions, Definitions, and Conclusions. *Frontiers in Education* 6:720195. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.720195>
- Lui, A., & Andrade, H.L. (2022). The next black box of formative assessment: A model of the internal mechanisms of feedback processing. *Frontiers in Education* 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2022.751548>
- McBrayer, J. S., Pannell, S., Uriegas, B., Fallon, K., & Sullivan, P. (2023). Computer-based formative assessment practices of core academics within a one-to-one computing environment. *International Journal of Instruction*, 16(2), 871-886. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2023.16246a>
- Obro, S., & Gift, E. (2022). Lecture method recoil: Effect of formative assessment and simulation activities on the learning outcomes of social studies students. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, 13(2), 174 –182. <https://doi.org/10.47750/jett.2022.13.02.016>
- Panadero, E., & Lipnevich, A. A. (2022). A review of feedback models and typologies: Towards an integrative model of feedback elements. *Educational Research Review*, 35, 100416. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2021.100416>
- Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Sage.
- Ramaprasad, A. (1983). On the definition of feedback. *Behavioural Science*, 28, 4–13.
- Saefurrohman & Balinas, E. (2016). English Teachers Classroom Assessment Practices. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 5(1), 82 – 92. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1094623.pdf>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Selvaraj, A.M., Azman, H., & Wahi, W. (2021). Teachers’ Feedback Practice and Students’ Academic Achievement: A Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 20, 308-322. DOI:10.26803/IJLTER.20.1.17
- Shute, V. J. (2008). Focus on Formative Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 78, 153-189. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543073137>
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748>
- Valente, M.O., Carvalho, C., & Conboy, J. (2009, September). *Student voices on how engagement is influenced by teacher’s communication of evaluation results*. Paper presented at the European Conference on Educational Research, Vienna.

- Wiliam, D. (2010). "An integrative summary of the research literature and implications for a new theory of formative assessment," in *Handbook of Formative Assessment*. Editors H. L. Andrade, and G. J. Cizek (New York: Routledge), 18–40.
- Wiliam, D. (2013). Assessment: The bridge between teaching and learning. *Voices from the Middle* 21(2) 15 – 20.
- Wiliam, D. (2018). Feedback: At the hard of -but definitely not all of- formative assessment. In A. A. Lipnevich, & J. K. Smith (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of instructional feedback* (pp. 3–28). Cambridge University Press.
- Wiliam, D., & Thompson, M. (2007). Integrating assessment with instruction: What will it take to make it work? In C. A. Dwyer (Ed.). *The future of assessment: Shaping teaching and learning* (pp. 53–82). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315086545>
- Williams-McBean, C. (2021). Contextual considerations: Revision of the Wiliam and Thompson (2007) formative assessment framework in the Jamaican context. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(9), 2943-2969. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4800>
- Winstone, N.E., Nash, R.A., Parker, M., & Rowntree, J. (2017). Supporting learners' agentic engagement with feedback: A systematic review and a taxonomy of recipience processes. *Educational Psychologist*, 52 (1) pp. 17-37.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2016.1207538>
- Wisniewski, B., Zierer, K., & Hattie, J. (2020). The power of feedback revisited: A metaanalysis of educational feedback research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10(1), 1–14.  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.03087>
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.