

Challenge

Ms. McTeejay, a middle school language arts teacher, has been working on literary analysis with her 8th grade students. Because her students have analyzed texts throughout the school year, she knows that they are capable of determining the central idea or theme of a text, but she wants them to present the results of their analysis in a format other than a traditional essay.

So, after her students have finished reading two literary texts, she asks them to choose one of the texts to analyze and determine the central idea or theme. Then, she wants them to think about how the author has developed that central idea or theme over the course of the text.

For this specific assignment, Ms. McTeejay asks her students to work in collaborative groups to create a one-page poster-like account that includes an analysis of the central idea and how the author developed it over the course of the text. Students should also include several pieces of textual evidence supporting the analysis, with accompanying explanations. To round out the assignment, she asks students to include a brief summary of the literary work and visual representations of the central idea or theme, also with accompanying explanations. Wanting to ensure her students' successful completion of this assignment, Ms. McTeejay provides a detailed rubric for the analysis.

While students are working, she monitors their progress and notes that, although there are insightful comments and strong connections, there are some areas that could be improved. She occasionally stops to encourage the students by saying, "good job," "great work," or "nice illustration." Before students submit their assignments to be graded, Ms. McTeejay gives each group an opportunity to self-assess and evaluate their work, based on the requirements outlined on the rubric. She also gives them the opportunity to make any additions or corrections before submitting the assignment for grading.

After reviewing the students' completed assignments, Ms. McTeejay is surprised by the quality of work submitted by her gifted students, even after they have had a chance to self-assess and make changes. She wants to make sure her students understand what they did well and what they still need to improve upon, and she wonders how she can provide the most effective feedback to get them moving in the right direction.

Here's your Challenge:

What should Ms. McTeejay know in order to provide effective feedback to her gifted students?

And

What could Ms. McTeejay do to help her students better understand where they are, where they are going, and what they need to do to get there?