How to Write Targeted Feedback

1. Indicate whether or not the answer for which you are writing feedback is correct. Use the terms “Correct,” “Incorrect,” or “Not quite right.” The latter is used in situations where the answer choice is partially correct or close to the correct answer to let students know that they are on the right track.

2. Provide students with a short (one- to two-sentence) explanation about why the answer they selected is either correct or incorrect.

3. In the correct answer feedback, the explanation should emphasize the concept being evaluated in the question. Given that all selected-response questions are susceptible to guessing, providing an explanation for the correct answer helps reinforce the concept for students who knew the answer as well as for those who may have guessed.

4. In the feedback for the incorrect answer choices, the explanation should state why the answer choice is not correct, focusing on the misconception being addressed. The feedback should not state or indicate the correct answer.
1. Multiple-choice: Which of the following is an example of a vegetable?

A. apple
B. pumpkin
C. potato
D. tomato

Feedback
A. Incorrect. An apple is the fertilized ovary that comes from an apple tree and contains seeds classifying it as a fruit.
B. Incorrect. A pumpkin is the fertilized ovary of a squash plant and contains seeds classifying it as a fruit.
C. Correct. A potato is an edible part of a plant in tuber form and is classified as a vegetable.
D. Incorrect. Many people mistakenly think a tomato is a vegetable. However, because a tomato is the fertilized ovary of a tomato plant and contains seeds it is classified as a fruit.

2. Drop-down: Multiple-choice questions and drop-down questions primarily differ in how _________ (a distractor, feedback, the stem) is presented.

Feedback:
A distractor: Correct. Multiple-choice and drop-down questions primarily differ in how a distractor is presented. Multiple-choice questions display all the distractors as well as the key along with the question, whereas drop-down questions require the student to click on a drop-down menu to see all the possible answer choices.

Feedback: Incorrect. Feedback typically is shown after an answer choice is selected in either question type.

The stem: Not quite right. Although the stem in a multiple-choice question is typically written as a question and the stem in a drop-down is typically written as an incomplete statement, this is not the primary difference in the two question types.