Giving Constructive Feedback on Presentations

1. Positive phrasing – provide a positive framework for the message
► Explicitly identify and positively reinforce what was done well
► Constructive feedback is based on a foundation of trust between sender and receiver. Examine your own motives: be sure your intention is to be helpful, not to show how perceptive and superior you are; be on the other person's side.

2. Concreteness – ground feedback in specific, observable behavior
► Constructive feedback should be specific and clear, not general or vague.
► Prioritize your feedback – focus on the most important areas you have observed
► Be descriptive rather than evaluative. Describe your partner's actions in the classroom and the results you observed; do not judge. "You worked through the example problem very quickly, and many students seemed confused." is an observation; "You did a bad job with the example problem" is vague and judgmental.

3. Action-orientation – give a specific plan of action to follow
► Don't explain what you would have done in a similar situation; frame your feedback in terms of your partner's teaching. ~~I would have done X…~~ Better: "Perhaps next time you could try using quick group activities to check comprehension."
► Highlight costs of behavior to the other. If you can, help the other person see how the behavior in question affects the classroom and the benefits of addressing this. For example "Quick group activities might allow some students to either work through the problem themselves, or at least help them articulate where they are getting stuck; this may make your job much easier…"

4. Focus – provide feedback on behavior that the individual can change
► Offer feedback in a spirit of tentativeness. Offer it as a personal perception, not as "the truth."
► Focus your comments on your colleague's behavior rather than on her/his personality – for example, instead of saying, "You're unfocused", say, "You presented a class outline, but you didn't stick to it and I found it difficult to know where you were up to".
► Check the feedback with your partner to determine whether it seems valid. Ask your partner to rephrase and restate the feedback to see whether it matches what you intended.

When Receiving Constructive Feedback
► Begin the feedback session with your own reflections. When reflecting, you might be tempted to focus on what you feel went badly, but also try to identify a couple of things with which you were pleased.
► Discuss the feedback you get. You can ask things like "You said I lost them. Where exactly did I lose them? How could you tell I'd lost them? Why do you think it might have happened? How might I prevent this?"