

## Enhancements

### Make It Clear What the Student Is Meant to Do With the Comment

Even when you give comments, what, exactly, the student is meant to do with the comment is sometimes not clear. Comments are likely to be more effective if it is clear what the student should do and how she should do it. It is especially helpful if you give the feedback in such a way that students can determine for themselves whether they have responded appropriately. Some examples of how you might refine and improve comments are shown in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4:** Examples of Comments in Science Requiring Definite Responses From Students

| Vague   | Better   | Better still   |
|---|--|--|
| Add some notes on seed dispersal.   | Can you suggest how the plant might disperse its seeds?  | Give one advantage and one disadvantage of seed dispersal.   |
| Work on your graphing skills.   | Think about the accuracy and neatness of your graphs.  | One of the axes of your graph is much better than the other. Which one is it, and why is it better?  |
| You need to be clear about the difference between power, energy, and force. | Check your glossary for the meaning of power, energy, and force, and then redraft this sentence correctly. | In two seconds, a machine lifts six meters from the ground a mass weighing ten kilograms. Describe what is happening using the words energy, force, and power. |

### Practice Giving Comment-Only Feedback

In their book *Practice Perfect*, Lemov, Woolway, and Yezzi (2012) point out that because classrooms are such busy places, changing what one does in the classroom is hard because there is rarely enough time to think decisions through carefully and therefore we react out of habit. One way to provide time to become more reflective about the kind of feedback given to students is for two teachers to arrange to meet for an hour or so and each to bring with them half-a-dozen student notebooks. The teachers spend about five minutes on each student notebook, thinking through, in conversation, what the most helpful thing would be to say to that student right now. Most teachers find that by practicing in relative tranquility the things you will say, they are able to improve the