Pedagogical Toolbox
Educational tips

How to tackle failure

Objective:
Creating a positive learning environment and maintaining the student's motivation.

Explanation:
Homework can often be discouraging for students as it is time consuming, it adds another workload and it might not feel rewarding. It is essential to maintain the student's motivation, in particular for students who are facing learning difficulties.

The aversion for failure is often preventing students and teachers from taking risks, regarding the answers, the solutions to reach to conclusion, the new activities to implement, whereas valuing failure increases learning opportunities.

Teachers play a key role in promoting failure as something positive and productive, which will boost student's self-efficacy and self-belief about their capacities to succeed.

Adaptation:
To ensure a positive approach to failure, few elements can easily be implemented within the teaching habits:
- Providing a frame where the students can fail and are encouraged to take risks. This will force them to develop creative and alternative solutions.
- Addressing the notion of failure as something normal and valued, rather than manipulating motivational concepts that do not address failure directly.
- Using failure-positive messages and personalised praises

- Creating a positive learning environment to reframe failure as another iteration or draft.

Full references:

Creely E, Henriksen D, Crawford R, Henderson, M. Exploring creative risk-taking and productive failure in classroom practice. A case study of the perceived self-efficacy and agency of teachers at one school. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 202, 42: 1-10.

Marks J, Chase CC. Impact of a prototyping intervention on middle school students' iterative practices and reactions to failure. *J Eng Educ*. 2019;108: 547–573.