



accelerus[®] - markbook[®]

Reporting just got easier

Working with Teacher Comment Banks

February 2012

Semaphore Consulting Pty Ltd
SCHOOL SOFTWARE SPECIALISTS

Suite 18, 79 Mahoneys Road Forest Hill, Victoria 3131
tel: 1300 65 62 63
fax: +61 (03) 9877 9961

ABN 79 007 089 661
www.accelerus.com.au
support@accelerus.com.au

Information in this document is subject to change without notice and does not represent a commitment on the part of Semaphore Consulting Pty Ltd. The software described in this document is supplied under a licence agreement. The software may be used or copied only in accordance with the terms of the agreement. No part of these notes may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, without the written permission of Semaphore Consulting Pty Ltd.

Copyright © Semaphore Consulting Pty Ltd 1994 - 2012. All rights reserved.

Accelerus and MarkBook are Registered Trademarks of Semaphore Consulting Pty Ltd

Understanding Comment Banks

- Comment banks store pre-defined comments or phrases frequently used when teachers are writing comments for student reports. By calling upon banks of comments already written, the manual drudgery of comment writing is reduced. The pre-defined comments are able to be used as the basis of more complex and personalised final comments for each student.
- Special control text is inserted into comments so that, when linked to a particular student, the comments are personalised, showing the student's name and/or appropriate pronoun.
- There are two levels of comment banks – school and teacher. The former are set up and managed by Accelerus Administrators or Subject Coordinators, and assigned to appropriate subjects in the Accelerus database. Teacher comment banks are created and controlled by teachers.
- Comment banks are not separate files but form part of a teacher's offline file. When offline class files are exported or collected, comment banks that have been associated with the class also form part of the offline file. Any changes made to the comment bank, eg by the Accelerus administrator, will be updated with other changes when the teacher synchronises their offline file.
- Comment banks in Accelerus have a hierarchical structure. Firstly, you should have broad banks of comments, eg one for English, one for Maths, a general or work habits bank, etc.

Then, within each comment bank there is a structure of categories which have values, which in turn have comments, eg:

| Categories | Values | Comments |
|---------------|-----------|--|
| Writing Folio | High | {He/She/Name} has submitted an excellent folio |
| | | {His/Her/Name's} writing folio showed an ability to express complex ideas in fluent pieces of writing. |
| | | ... |
| | Medium | {His/Her/Name's} writing folio was of a satisfactory level. |
| | | Although {he/she/Name} submitted a good folio, {he/she} needs to put in more effort. |
| | Low | {His/Her/Name's} writing folio was not of the standard expected. |
| Projects | Excellent | Appropriate comments |
| | Good | Appropriate comments |
| | ... | ... |
| | ... | ... |
| ... | ... | ... |

Exploring Comment Banks

Comment banks have an Explorer through which they may be opened and modified.

This Explorer may be accessed from the Welcome Screen by teachers by clicking the Comment bank explorer icon in the bottom right of the screen.

The Comment Bank Explorer will list comment banks available to the teacher currently logged in. For example, a teacher may see the teacher comment banks he or she has created, plus any school comment banks that have been assigned to the subjects taught by the teacher, by the Accelerus administrator.



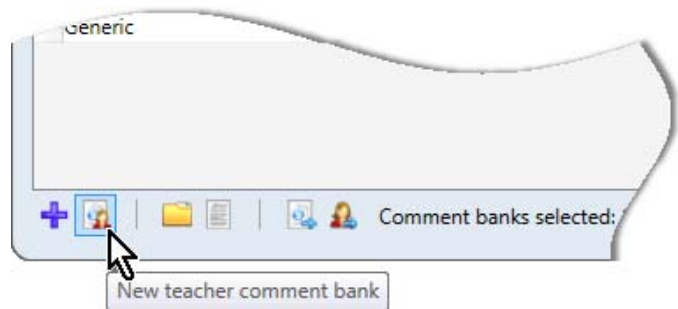
However, teachers may only make changes to the comment banks they own. School comment banks may only be viewed, printed and exported out of Accelerus, once opened in the Comment Bank window.

At the bottom of the Comment Bank Explorer, is a series of icons that allow:

- Comment banks to be opened.
- Printing out a listing of the comments in the comment banks.
- The importation of comment banks, in either CSV or MarkBook .cdb format.

Creating a new comment bank

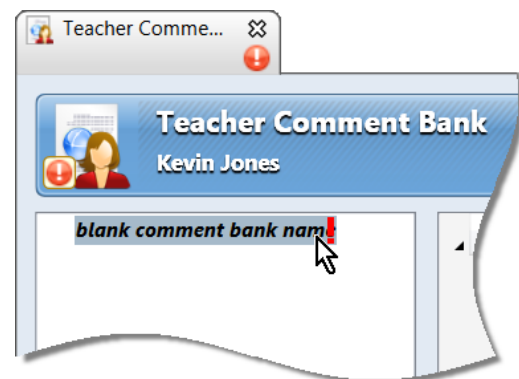
- Run Accelerus, by double-clicking the Accelerus icon on your desktop.
- Login in the same way as you do to work on your classes.
- In the Welcome Screen, click the Comment bank explorer icon.
- When in the Explorer, click the New teacher comment bank icon in the bottom left of the window.



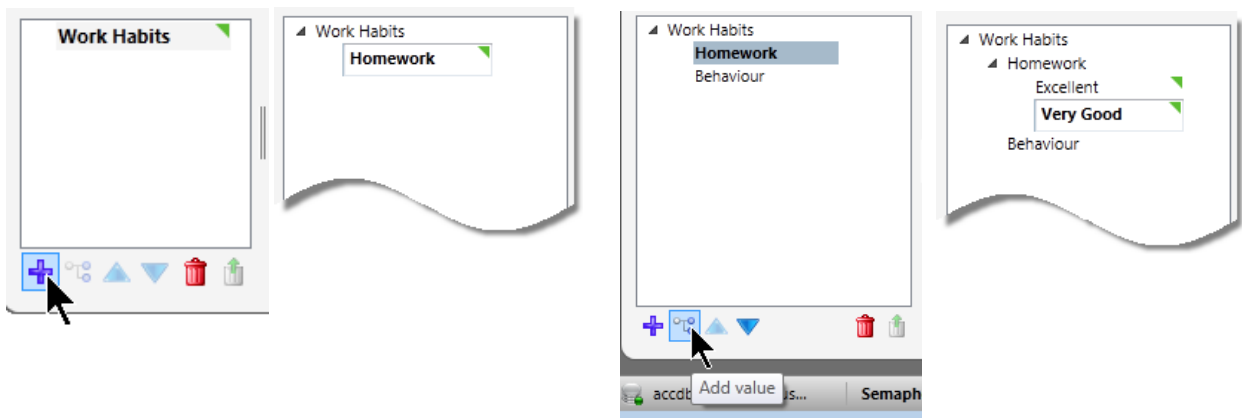
OR

- From the File menu, select New > Comment Bank > Teacher Comment Bank.
- Double-click where *blank comment bank name* is displayed in the top left pane and type in the name of the comment bank.

In the examples shown below, the comment bank has been called Work Habits.

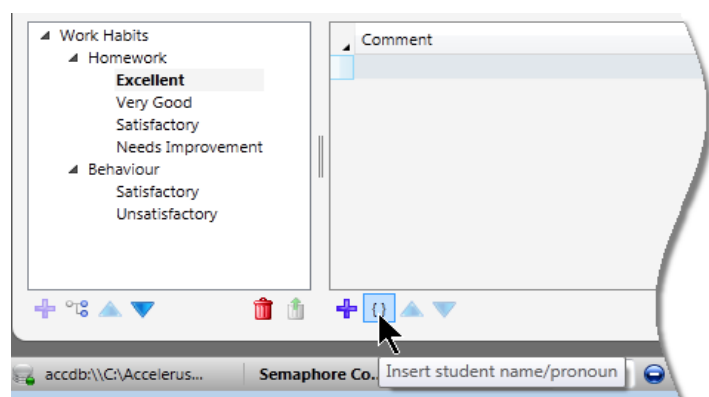


- With the comment bank name highlighted, click the Add category icon below the top left-hand pane.
- In the blank field that appears, enter the category name, eg Homework.
- Add further categories by clicking the Add category icon.
- Click the category to which you want to add values and then click the Add value icon.
- Enter the name of the value in the blank field below the selected category.
- Continue adding values, as required.

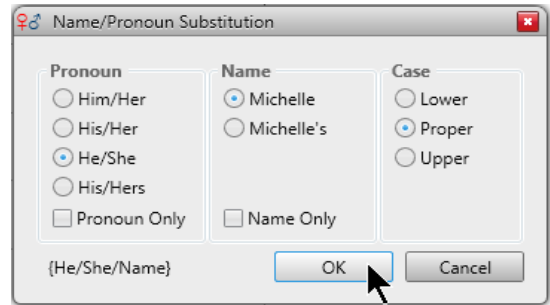


In the examples shown above, the Work Habits bank has a category called Homework which has two values, so far – Excellent and Very Good. There is also a Behaviour category without any values as yet.

- If necessary, move any values into the correct order, by clicking the Move up and Move down icons.
- With the value belonging to a category highlighted, click the New comment icon under the Comment table.
- Type the comment required in the Comment cell.
- In the locations where the student's name or appropriate pronoun should appear, click the Insert student name/pronoun icon.

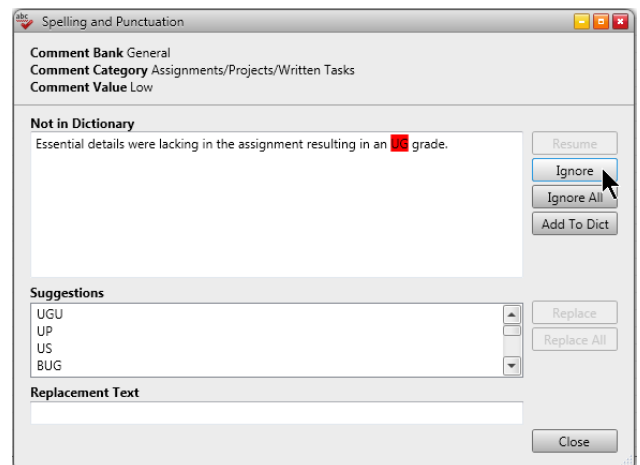
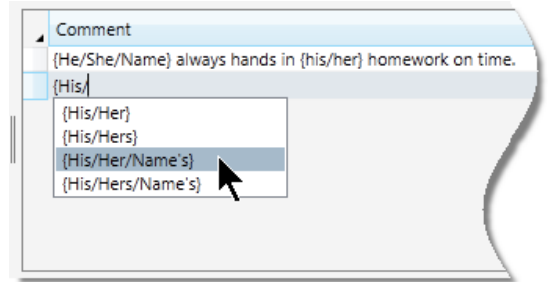


- In the Name/Pronoun Substitution box which appears as shown here:
 - Select the required pronoun and name option buttons required, with an example of the substitution text appearing in the bottom left corner, eg {He/She/Name}.
 - Click the Pronoun Only or Name Only checkboxes, where you want to limit the substitution, eg {he/she} or {Name}.
 - Select the correct case option, eg lower case {he/she} where it is to appear in the middle of a sentence.
 - Click the OK button to insert the selected substitution text in the comment.



OR

- You may manually enter the required substitution text:
 - Type the open brace icon, ie {.
 - This will bring up a dropdown list of available options from which you may choose the correct substitution, eg {His/Her/Name's}.
 - Type as much of the substitution text as you wish and, as you do so, the dropdown list will only reflect the options that match.
 - Continue adding comments, as required.
- Click the Save icon or press Ctrl S to save your comment bank.
- Spell check the comment bank:
 - Click the comment bank name in the left pane.
 - Go to the Edit menu and select Spell Check or press F7 to start the spell check operation.
 - Work through any errors indicated in the Spelling and Punctuation window, choosing the appropriate option such as to ignore errors, add the spelling to the dictionary, select from suggestions or enter replacement text.
- If you require a printed listing of the comment bank:
 - Go to the Comment Bank menu and select Comment Bank Listing.
 - Preview the listing, moving through its pages and performing other preview processes, as required.
 - Click the Print icon in the preview window.



Editing and deleting comments

Opening an existing comment bank

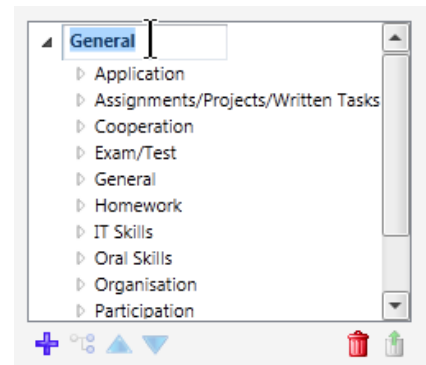
Comment banks created by you will be listed in the Comment Banks section of the Welcome Screen. Click on the comment bank you want to edit, to open it in the Comment bank window.

Editing

Standard editing tools (eg cut, copy, paste) are available in the Comments section. Right-click to display the menu.

To change the name of the comment bank or of any category or value:

- Double-click on the comment bank name, category or value that you want to change.
- Enter the new name.



Deleting

To delete a comment bank, a category or a value:

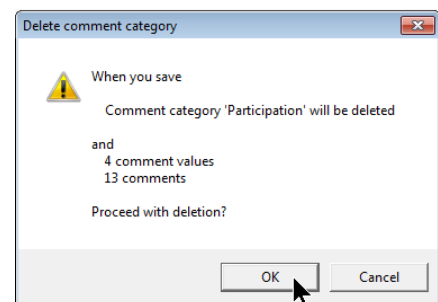
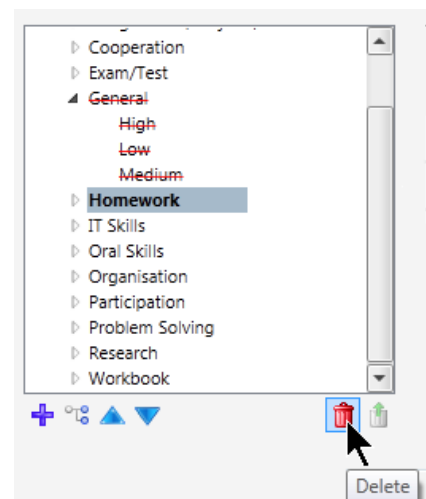
- Highlight the particular category or value to be deleted.
- Click the Delete icon at the bottom of the left pane.

A confirmation message will appear, informing you of the extent of the deletion, ie how many categories, values and comments will be deleted, if you proceed. For example, when deleting a category, you are also deleting its values and all of the comments for the category.

- If you click OK at the confirmation message, red lines will appear through the category, values and comments to be deleted when you save the comment bank.

To delete a comment row:

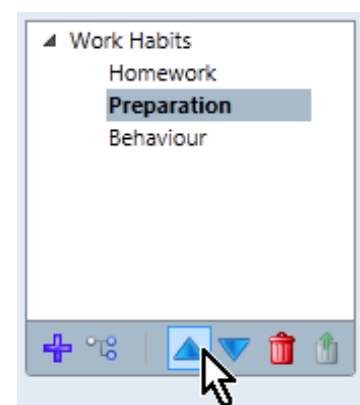
- Select the row you want to delete.
OR
- Hold down the Ctrl key and click individual rows.
OR
- Hold down the Shift key and select the last row in a contiguous group to be deleted.
- Click the Delete icon at the bottom right of the Comments table.



Reordering

You may change the order of any of the categories, any of the values or any of the comments. It's best to have the most useful or commonly-used comments at the top of the list, to make it easier when drawing upon them in Single Student view.

- Click the category, value or comment you wish to move up or down.
- Click the Move up or Move down arrows icons applicable to the appropriate section, until it is positioned in the correct place.



Using comment banks

Comment banks that have been set up by teachers or assigned to teachers' classes by the Accelerus Administrator are stored in the teachers' offline files so that they may be drawn upon when assessing students.

This is done in Single Student View, with any available comment banks being displayed in the comment bank panel.

The school comment banks will appear greyed out so that they may not be changed, but can be drawn upon.

Comment banks owned by the teacher may be modified and drawn upon. As shown here, there are two school comment banks – Generic and Maths – plus Maths 7-9 and Work Habits, both of which are teacher comment banks.

To use the comment banks:

- Click in the particular comment box for which you want to compose comments, eg T1COM – Interim 1 comment above.
- Click on the comment bank that you want to draw comments from, eg Work Habits.
- Click on a category of the comment bank, eg General Performance, Organisational Skills, etc.

All of the comments for that category will be displayed, with their values.

- Click on a performance value for the category, eg Satisfactory, and the comments for that Category and Value will appear in the Comment table.
- Change the name substitution mode by clicking the Name or Pronoun button, if necessary.
- If buttons appear for Given name and Preferred name, click the required option to display the comment with the chosen name format.

The screenshot shows the 'Class Results 07MAMAA Mathematics' interface. At the top, it displays 'Student: Connaughton, Jenny - CON0...'. Below this, there are two comment boxes: 'T1COM Interim 1 comment' and 'COM1 Semester 1 Comment'. The 'T1COM' comment describes Jennifer's organized and methodical approach to homework. The 'COM1' comment notes her competent manner in completing assignments and her initiative to extend her knowledge.

On the left, a navigation tree shows categories like 'Generic', 'Maths', 'Maths 7-9', and 'Work Habits'. The 'Work Habits' category is expanded to show 'General Performance', 'Organisational Skills', 'Co-operation', and 'Homework'. The 'General Performance' category is selected.

In the center, a table lists comments with columns for 'Value' and 'Comment'. The selected row is 'Satisfactory' with the comment 'Keep up the good work, Jennifer.'.

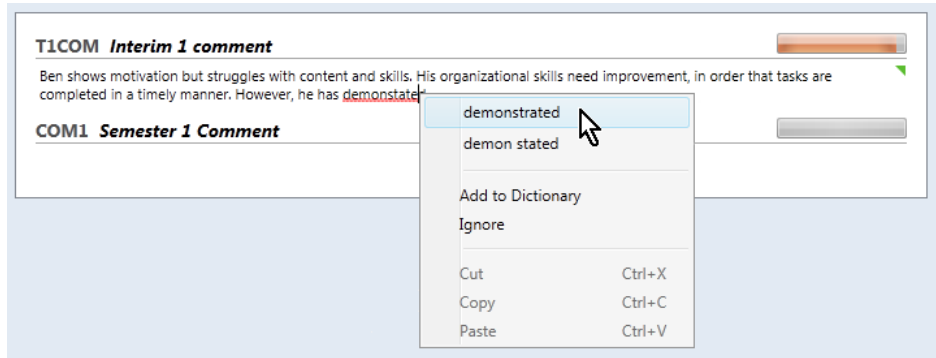
| Value | Comment |
|-------------------|---|
| Satisfactory | Her overall performance is excellent. |
| Satisfactory | She has made outstanding progress and has achieved high results. |
| Satisfactory | Her work shows a strong performance in all areas. |
| Satisfactory | Congratulations Jennifer on your good work. |
| Satisfactory | Keep up the good work, Jennifer. |
| Satisfactory | She shows motivation but struggles with content and skills. |
| Needs Improvement | Her general performance needs improvement. |
| Needs Improvement | She needs to apply herself to the work requirements of the classroom. |
| Needs Improvement | Although she shows interest and enthusiasm, she |

At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Name', 'Pronoun', 'Given name', and 'Preferred name'. The 'Name' button is currently selected.

This close-up shows the 'Work Habits' category expanded to 'General Performance'. The 'Satisfactory' sub-category is selected, and a list of comments is displayed. The first comment is 'Jennifer works at a level which is appropriate for her year level.'

This close-up shows the comment table with the 'Satisfactory' row selected. Below the table, the 'Name' button is highlighted, and a tooltip indicates 'Substitution mode (name)'. Other buttons for 'Pronoun', 'Given name', and 'Preferred name' are also visible.

- Double-click a comment in the table to insert it into the comment box.
- Continue selecting comments in the same way for the current student.
- Do as much editing and changing of the text in the comment box as you wish – right-clicking brings up an edit menu, or use short-cuts.



- Correct spelling errors as you go when squiggly red underlining appears, right-clicking on the misspelt word to bring up alternatives.
 - Click the Next or Previous student arrows to move down or up the student list.
- OR
- Press Alt N or Alt P respectively.
 - Keep entering comments for students in the same way.
 - Click the Save icon or press Ctrl S regularly to ensure the comments you have been entering are saved.



Your school may have activated a setting that does not allow you to type beyond the number of characters specified for a particular comment. In this case, any comment you insert, that would take you beyond the comment's maximum characters, will be truncated.

Alternatively, the school setting may allow you to continue entering comments but the comment box will be shaded red and the comment will need to be edited to fit within the number of characters before you can save the offline file.

Building comment banks from selected text

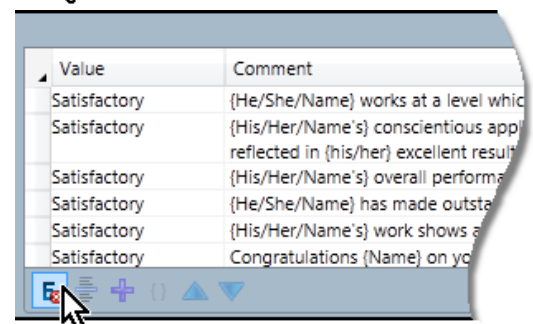
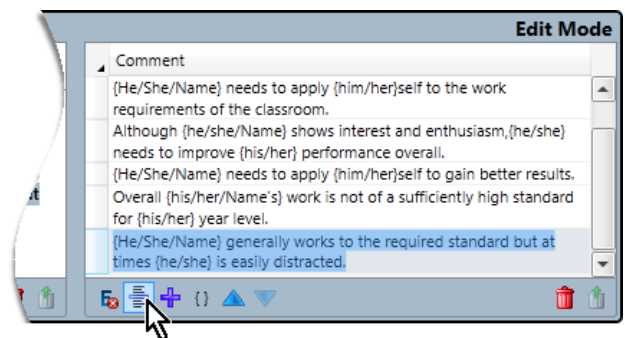
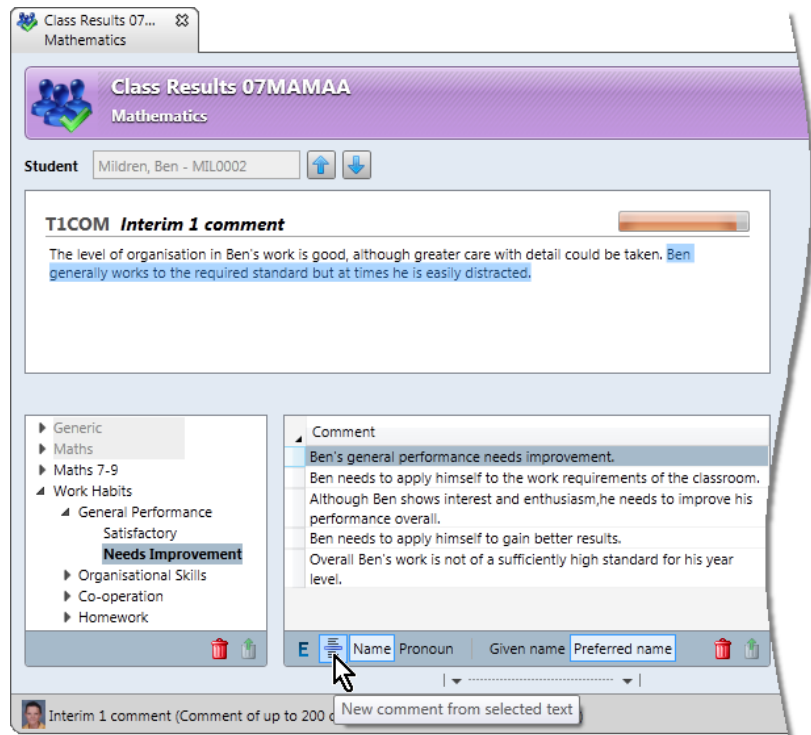
As you are composing a student's comment in Single Student view, you may wish to preserve the comment in an existing comment bank, with substitution text, so that it is available for future use. Having composed a comment for a student in a particular comment item:

- In the comment bank pane, click on the comment bank and the particular category and value to which you want to add the comment.
- Highlight all or the portion of the comment you composed that you want to add to the comment bank.
- Click the New comment from selected text icon at the bottom of the Comment table.

The Comment table moves into comment bank edit mode and the new comment will be added to the table for the selected category and value.

Accelerus attempts to insert appropriate name/pronoun substitution text where the student's name or a pronoun has been used, as shown below right.

- Make any changes to the comment, if required, in the new Comment table row.
- If required, while in comment bank edit mode, add further comments to the bank:
 - Click the required comment bank, category and value.
 - Click the New comment icon.
 - Insert name/pronoun substitution text in the comment, in appropriate places, by clicking the Insert student name/pronoun icon.
- When finished editing the comment bank's comments, click the Edit icon to exit comment bank edit mode.
- Save the changes by clicking the Save icon.



Other handy tools

| What | How |
|--|---|
| Spell check a comment bank | Edit menu > Spell Check; or press F7. |
| Print a listing of all the comments in a comment bank. | Comment Bank menu > Comment Bank Listing |
| Import already created banks of comments in CSV files or MarkBook comment banks. | Welcome Screen > Comment Bank Explorer icon > Import icon, or File > Import > Teacher Comment Bank. |