



Teaching for Reflective Learning

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As anyone working in education can attest, a greater emphasis is placed on criterion-referenced high stakes testing than in the past. In response to this reality, including reflective thinking in a teacher's toolbox of instructional strategies can help students **think about their learning** and ensure that applications are meaningful and relevant in an increasingly demanding world. Using CLI processes prompts for reflective learning can be written into unit outcomes and components. They can be explicitly addressed in the instructional planning resource in the context of methods, activities, resources, and assessments. Proficiency scales also allow students to practice reflective learning as well as tracking their learning.

Proficiency

Measuring the quality and extent of reflective learning is more challenging than measuring simple recall. Therefore, the criteria for implementing reflective learning must be more extensive than

past approaches. When such criteria are met, however, the results have intense and long-lasting meaning.

In their reflection on learning, students will:

- describe their personal strengths and weaknesses in the context of the skills and understandings required,
- identify and question underlying values and beliefs in the context of the skills and understandings required,
- acknowledge and challenge possible assumptions on which expressed values and beliefs are based,
- identify and describe feelings of bias or discrimination, and
- acknowledge fears and inadequacies in attempting to improve.

The reflection required to meet the above challenges is designed to improve self-awareness, the first step to positive change. It defines learning as being something more than the cognitive accumulation of facts and processes, placing it within a student's life in ways that make scholastic growth a part of meeting personal, professional, and vocational goals. It gives students emotional tools to positively weigh what they do, so they can identify approaches that work well and reinforce good practices over time.

Methods that Encourage Student Engagement in Reflective Practice

Educational researchers, such as Robert Marzano, Benjamin Bloom, Thomas Good, and Jere Brophy, referred to reflection as being a means to stimulate higher-order thinking. Many authors who advocate the use of cooperative teaching and learning, as well as constructivist approaches, also consider individual reflective behaviors to be valid behavioral outcomes. Research suggests that extensive student writing and speaking (based on solid inquiry activities) are the best vehicles for allowing student expression that is reflective of engaged thought, beliefs, and emotions. A Subject Area Committee (SAC) can write unit outcomes and components that are specific to this type of writing and speaking. On an Instructional Planning Resource (IPR), or other lesson planning structure, teachers can include such methods as reflective journals and other self-evaluative tools, peer critique, debriefing techniques, and dynamic feedback in group settings. These can show up in the IPR methods, activities, resources, and assessment blocks.

Reflective Learning versus the Negative Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

We all know that students who are otherwise engaged in their surroundings reject subjects they "don't like" or find "too hard." Consequently, they either fail those courses or just get by well enough to keep teachers and parents mollified. For whatever reason, they simply don't learn the subject well enough to make any kind of personal and lasting difference. Without the personal

connection to learning, assessment with formal exams or application assessments, a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy kicks in and they fail. They justify performance with "I knew I'd fail because I've always hated that subject" or "I knew I'd fail because I've never been good in that subject." Sound familiar? However, because reflective learning causes students to acknowledge their fears and inadequacies and to identify their strengths, question beliefs, and challenge assumptions – such negativity can be deflected before it becomes ingrained.

The [CLI Model](#) offers an effective platform for addressing this more substantial and meaningful approach to teaching and student learning. Both a Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) and a SAC can systematically build in processes associated with curriculum content and instructional techniques that make mastery *real* and student performance *valid*.