

Reflections of a Classroom Teacher

Ingredient 5: Keeping Reflection Routine

Sylvia Lillehoj, Howard County MD Public Schools



<http://www.visualphotos.com>

It has been over nine months since I posted *Reflections of a Classroom Teacher*, my first article for the NCLRC Newsletter. My primary focus has been to advocate the importance of reflection for self-evaluation and professional growth. One challenge I have faced is that I am preaching to a choir that does not rehearse regularly. After all, most teachers are familiar with the theoretical basis of reflection, yet they often ignore it in practice. This really annoys me. If teachers are familiar with a pedagogical tool of teacher development, why do they exclude it when lesson planning?

A lack of time certainly has something to do with it, as do multiple teaching responsibilities (e.g., behavior management, grading, lesson planning, and parent communication). But does a busy schedule justify ignoring best practice? When teachers self-reflect on their practice, they can make judgments about things that are positive and areas that need improvement. They can also decide if any of their practices are unproductive or time-consuming which, in turn, can help them make changes to increase their effectiveness and efficiency. Self-reflection, then, is not a waste of time or energy. Rather, it is an opportunity to gain more time and energy.

Therefore, it follows that self-reflection should not be moved to the back burner. It should be included in daily practice in order to guide teacher professional development. The following websites contain classroom-ready resources which teachers can use to easily and efficiently self-reflect:

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/selfassessment/checklist/index.htm>. This site contains an extensive set of checklists and resources covering topics, such as assessment, classroom environment, and reaching all students.

<http://letsgetengaged.wikispaces.com/Teacher+Reflection+on+Student+Engagement>. This is a wikispace that contains tools to guide daily, quarterly, and yearly reflection.

<https://www.teachervision.com/school-forms/printable/59702.html>. This is a well-organized commercial site that contains over 30 easy to follow printables and resources to guide teacher reflection.

Start with small steps by reflecting at the end of each class period and at the end of the day. Jot a note in your plan book about the success (or failure) of a particular element of the plan. Place a sticky note on the activity sheet you place in the file about how this was received. Each day this will become easier and a more natural part of your daily routine. Suddenly you will find yourself enjoying this business we call reflecting.