

TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH REFLECTION.

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Annotation: *To be reflective means to mentally wander through where we have been and to try to make some sense out of it. Most classrooms are oriented more to the present and the future than to the past. Such an orientation means that students (and teachers) find it easier to discard what has happened and to move on without taking stock of the seemingly isolated experiences of the past. Teachers use many strategies to guide students through a period of reflection. We offer several here: discussions, interviews, questioning, and logs and journals.*

Key words: *reflection, concept, cognitive, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile.*

Reflection and learning are closely related. The reflective learning poses great possibilities for a learner to articulate his thinking and hence construct meaning from the concepts and information that he faces. Reflection is a mental process of thinking and learning often used in everyday life. It is more than just a common sense wisdom.

Most of us go through life viewing our experiences as isolated, unrelated events. We also view these happenings simply as the experiences they are, not as opportunities for learning. Psychologists refer to this type of lifeview as an "episodic grasp of reality" and it is not a habit we want to pass along to children. Instead, we want students to get into the habit of linking and constructing meaning from their experiences. Such work requires reflection. Reflection has many facets. For example, reflecting on work enhances its meaning. Reflecting on experiences encourages insight and complex learning. We foster our own growth when we control our learning, so some reflection is best done alone. Reflection is also enhanced, however, when we ponder our learning with others.

Reflection involves linking a current experience to previous learnings. Reflection also involves drawing forth cognitive and emotional information from several sources: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile. To reflect, we must act upon and process the information, synthesizing and evaluating the data. In the end, reflecting also means applying what we've learned to contexts beyond the original situations in which we learned something. Teachers who promote reflective classrooms ensure that students are fully engaged in the process of making meaning. They organize instruction so that students are the producers, not just the consumers, of knowledge.

To best guide children in the habits of reflection, these teachers approach their role as that of "facilitator of meaning making." In the role of facilitator, the teacher acts as an intermediary between the learner and the learning, guiding each student to approach the learning activity in a strategic way. The teacher helps each student monitor individual progress, construct meaning from the content learned and from the process of learning it,

and apply the learnings to other contexts and settings. Learning becomes a continual process of engaging the mind that transforms the mind.

Reflective teachers help students understand that the students will now look back rather than move forward. They will take a break from what they have been doing, step away from their work, and ask themselves, "What have I (or we) learned from doing this activity?" Some teachers use music to signal the change in thinking. Others ask for silent thinking before students write about a lesson, an assignment, or other classroom task. In the reflective classroom, teachers invite students to make meaning from their experiences overtly in written and oral form. They take the time to invite students to reflect on their learnings, to compare intended with actual outcomes, to evaluate their metacognitive strategies, to analyze and draw causal relationships, and to synthesize meanings and apply their learnings to new and novel situations. Students know they will not "fail" or make a "mistake," as those terms are generally defined. Instead, reflective students know they can produce personal insight and learn from all their experiences.

Sometimes, encouraging reflection is as simple as inviting students to think about their thinking. Students realize meaning making is an important goal when reflection becomes the topic of discussion. For example, conduct discussions about students' problem-solving processes. Invite students to share their metacognition, reveal their intentions, detail their strategies for solving a problem, describe their mental maps for monitoring their problem-solving process, and reflect on the strategy to determine its adequacy. During these kinds of rich discussions, students learn how to listen to and explore the implications of each other's metacognitive strategies. The kind of listening required during such discussions also builds the Habits of Mind related to empathy, flexibility, and persistence.

Interviews are another way to lead students to share reflections about their learning and their growth in the Habits of Mind. A teacher can interview a student, or students can interview classmates. Set aside time at the end of a learning sequence—a lesson, a unit, a school day, or a school year—to question each other about what has been learned. Guide students to look for ways they can apply their learnings to future settings. Interviews also provide teachers and students with opportunities to model and practice a variety of habits: listening with understanding and empathy, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, and questioning and posing problems.

Logs and journals are another tool for student reflection. Periodically ask students to reread their journals, comparing what they knew at the beginning of a learning sequence with what they know now. Ask them to select significant learnings, envision how they could apply these learnings to future situations, and commit to an action plan to consciously modify their behaviors.

Students need to encounter reflective role models. Many teachers find such models in novels in which the characters take a reflective stance as they consider their actions. A variety of novels and films use the design element of reflection as the way to tell a story. We need to be able to listen to the surface text of the work, pay attention to the subtext of

the individual (the context of the classroom, the personality of the teacher, the intentions and values that are expressed as the person presents the work), and make certain that my comments and critique are in tune with the person who we hope will be able to make use of them. We will felt that our group was tuned to the work that was presented and that we was able to model that level of listening. As a result, we think that the presenters were able to listen to their own work more deeply. So, the students learn much when they see examples of reflection from other students' journals.

Finally we know about reflective learning. Reflective learning is the essential reference for health and safety practitioners wanting to develop their professional skills and practice. Whether we are a new practitioner looking to expand our knowledge or an experienced professional seeking to build on existing skills.

LITERATURE

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