

FROM: Becoming A Better Teacher, By: Giselle O. Martin-Kniep
ASCD C.2000

Reflection: A Key to Developing Greater Self-Understanding

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Essential Question: How Do We Learn?

We have traditionally told students what *we* see and what *we* value—very often at precisely the point in their learning where they should be discovering what *they* see and what *they* value. In doing so, we have reduced the likelihood that students will use past experiences in writing to shape subsequent experiences. We have eliminated the valuable opportunities for students to learn about themselves and about their writing—and for us to learn about them.

—Roberta Camp (1992)

When students assume responsibility for their own learning, they reflect on their accomplishments, evaluate their work, decide on where changes are needed, define goals, and identify sound strategies for attaining them. If students are to become thoughtful individuals who can assume responsibility for learning, they

must be taught how to analyze and evaluate their work. Teachers must help them define realistic yet challenging goals for their continued learning and show them appropriate strategies to attain those goals. This chapter is intended to help teachers understand the role of reflection and self-assessment in the learning process and to incorporate self-evaluation and monitoring activities into their classrooms.

What Is Reflection and Why Is It Important?

Webster's unabridged dictionary defines *reflect* as "to think seriously; contemplate; ponder." Reflection is a critical component of self-regulation. Self-regulated learners are aware of the strategies they can use to learn and understand when, how, and why these strategies operate. They can moni-

tor their own performance and evaluate their progress against specific criteria. They can recognize improvement and identify strategies for dealing with challenging situations. They know how to choose appropriate goals, can develop and implement reasonable plans, and can make appropriate adjustments if unforeseen circumstances occur.

In short, self-regulated learners are strategic.

Reflection is intrinsic to many of the learner-centered practices described in this book. Reflection can enhance authentic assessment as students determine how to grapple with real problems and challenges. Reflection supports the use of portfolios because it becomes the means through which students can study themselves and their work. It is also tied to rubrics because it enables students to refer to explicit performance criteria to monitor their learning. Finally, reflection is a staple of action research as teachers ponder, study, and evaluate their practices.

As with other learner-centered practices, reflection requires that teachers provide students with time to think about their learning. However, even though reflective activities take time, they also save teachers time. They increase the efficiency of student learning by enabling students to be strategic learners. They decrease teachers' workloads because students assume greater responsibility for collecting and evaluating their work and that of their peers. Reflective activities also provide teachers with critical feedback about the limitations of their curriculum, facilitating its subsequent revision.

Reflection is needed throughout the learning process. Teachers can ask students to reflect on their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions. Students can evaluate the merits and shortcomings of their products, processes, or performances. They can determine the extent to which the learning opportunities teachers provide them with help them

learn. They can also set achievement goals and strategies and evaluate their attainment. All of these are necessary and essential reflective activities.

How Can Teachers Get Students to Invest in and Value Reflection?

To get students to be reflective and value the process of thinking about their learning, teachers need to practice and value reflection themselves. When teachers value their own and their students' reflections, the processes of learning become as important as its products, and the focus of evaluation moves from something that is done at the end of a project or a marking period to something that occurs throughout the school year.

Teachers need to help all students reflect, but some students will need more help than others. For example, many students, particularly young children or students categorized as "at risk," need to know that teacher approval or grades are not the only or best source of evaluation of their work.

Teaching students to be reflective is an ongoing process, not an event. It requires access to models, practice, and time. The following conditions increase the meaningfulness of reflection for students:

- Students need to feel safe about sharing what they think.
- Reflective activities should be comprehensive, purposeful, and meaningful.
- Reflective questions, prompts, and responses should be specific.
- Reflection needs to be modeled and standards-based.
- Reflective activities should be targeted toward an audience.

- Reflective activities should be ongoing and should be practiced.

Students need to feel safe about sharing what they think. This condition is present when teachers make a habit of celebrating mistakes and reminding students that mistakes generate true opportunities for learning. It also occurs when teachers share their own thinking, successes, failures, frustrations, and concerns and remind students that everyone is a learner. The following entries from student journals suggest that students in a class feel safe:

[Reflective prompt from teacher] Explain what you are still confused about or need more understanding with in social studies.

I need more understanding with map skills. I think there are many ways of having a clearer understanding of map skills. The maps in the packet are confusing.

I get confused with longitude and latitude. I didn't learn it from the homework assignments.

I am a little confused on dates and times in history. I feel I need a little more understanding about why and when things happened.

Reflective activities should be comprehensive, purposeful, and meaningful. Reflection is enhanced when it addresses multiple and ongoing aspects of students' work or learning. Teachers can ask students to reflect on what they know about a topic that is about to be introduced, how they are grappling with content being taught, and what they have learned about a topic after a unit is completed.

Regardless of the timing or focus of a reflective activity, its meaningfulness should be self-evident and intrinsically connected to the learning experiences that precede or follow it. For example, stu-

dents may reflect on the aspects of writing they struggle with, so the teacher can use this information to shape writing activities to individual needs. Joanne Picone-Zocchia, a former 6th grade language arts teacher in the West Islip School District in West Islip, New York, asked her students to assess themselves at the beginning of the year. The following is how one of her students responded to the questions "Do you see yourself as a writer? Why or why not?"

I do not see my self as a writer. The only thing I do well is the idea part. No, I don't wish to better. You can't help because I don't want to be a writer. But I would describe my self as a good silent reader. Picturing the story in my head. Long words. Reading out loud.

Given the information provided by the student, Joanne can continue to probe this student's resistance to writing and develop an individual plan that addresses his needs.

Not all students respond equally well to any given reflective activity. To increase the meaningfulness of reflective prompts and strategies for responding to them, teachers could ask students to generate their own reflective questions or to choose those that are relevant to them from among several options. Prompts for reflection will vary from activity to activity. The prompts for a math activity may not necessarily be the same as those for an art or social studies or integrated project.

Reflective questions, prompts, and responses should be specific. The questions "How have you grown as a writer?" and "How have you grown in your ability to write a thesis statement?" are very different in terms of specificity. For students who are very young or who have not had much practice with reflection, it is important that teachers use specific questions rather than general ones. Specificity also

concerns the extent to which students are encouraged to refer to particular sections or parts of their work to support their responses to reflective prompts. The following fill-in-the-blank entry, from another student in Joanne Picone-Zocchia's class, is a good example of specificity. Notice the student's proposed revisions to a piece of writing.

I wish I had the chance to change *My ghost story* which I wrote in *October*. If I could, I would *expand on my vocabulary and sentence structure*. To *expand on my vocabulary* I would *fix this sentence*:

Now Joey was back at home, he just lay in bed all alone.

to

When Joey returned home, he just lay in bed all alone.

To expand on my sentence structure I would turn this:

As Joey lay in his bed frozen

to this:

It was a dark and gloomy night, as Joey lay in his bed, frozen in fear.

I would also like to work on varied sentence beginnings, because I keep saying Joey at the beginning of every sentence. To fix my story I would also give supporting details to support my paragraphs.

Enabling students to be specific in their self-assessments is not easy. It is not uncommon for students to give teachers one-word or one-line responses to the first reflective questions teachers ask them. For example, in response to the question "Why is this your best piece of writing?" students might say, "Because I like it"; "Because I got an A"; or "Because it's long."

Students need to acquire a language that facilitates reflection. This language is both descriptive, requiring students to elaborate on their thinking, and evaluative, requiring them to assess their work.

One of the strategies for helping students be specific in their reflection is to generate with them a list of attributes they can use when assessing their work. Shari Schultz, a 6th grade teacher from the Hilton School District in Hilton, New York, generated two lists with her students. One list, a Success Scale, helped the students assess how successful they were in an activity (see Figure 7.1). The second list, the Engaged Learner Checklist, helped them assess the merits and shortcomings of a project they had participated in (see Figure 7.2).

A related strategy involves asking students to place brief descriptors next to the work that best illustrates that work. For example, a mathematics teacher can ask students to review their notebook pages and to place Post-it notes with phrases such as "effective use of graphs, charts, tables"; "clear explanation of process used in solving problem"; "multistep problem solved in two different ways" on the pages that best illustrate those qualities. After marking their pages, students can refer to the pages that have the most Post-it notes to select and describe their best work.

Reflection needs to be modeled and standards-based. Teachers can model reflection by reflecting with students and sharing their reflections. They can show students models of quality reflection and discuss with them why the models are good. They can show models of poor reflection and discuss how the models might be improved. Finally, they can ask students to interview their parents or other adults to find out when and how they reflect.

It is always easier for students to reflect and self-assess when they have participated in the identification of criteria for good reflection, when the teacher uses those criteria to respond to students, and when students use the criteria when reflecting and evaluating peers. Figure 7.3 (p. 80) is a list of composite criteria generated by students in several 6th grade classes.

FIGURE 7.1
A TEACHER- AND STUDENT-GENERATED SUCCESS SCALE

Success Scale

Directions: Check one for this activity

EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL

- I feel good about this.
- I am proud of this work.
- This is my best work.
- I met my goal(s).
- I put forth my best efforts.
- I'm excited about my work.
- I'm capable of doing my best.

MODERATELY SUCCESSFUL

- I feel okay.
- I could've done better.
- I did close to my best.
- I almost met my goal(s).
- I could've put more time into it.

NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL

- I could've done a lot better.
- I could've worked harder.
- I didn't care about it.
- It wasn't my best.
- I'm disappointed in my work.
- I'm upset with my work.
- I didn't meet my goal(s).
- I didn't put much effort into it.

Source: Shari A. Schultz and 6th grade students in the Hilton School District, Hilton, New York.

Figure 7.4 (pp. 81–83) is a rubric for reflection generated by a group of teachers in Long Island who were participants in a three-year project to design learner-centered curriculum and assessments. They later used the rubric to help their students identify and use the attributes of reflection.

Reflective activities should be targeted toward an audience. Students can self-assess better when their reflections are directed toward a specific audience they perceive to be interested and caring. This audience can include the teacher, the student, other students, parents, and others. The following reflection is by a 6th grader in Margaret Brizzie's class. Margaret is a language arts teacher in the Webutuck School District in Webutuck, New York. This

student clearly describes how he sees himself as a reader, writer, and thinker and shows that he is able to self-assess.

I think I'm a very good reader. I like to read science-fiction books usually. When I read I usually read for about an hour a day and I finish books in about a week. The books are usually about 350 to 400 pages. On good days I read about 50 pages in the day. If I find a word that is hard to pronounce I take a word that sounds like it. If there is a name like Tas, I say it like Taz because I think it is a bad name. I usually read series of books like the DragonLance books. If there is a book report that is the only time I stop reading the series I'm reading. When I'm doing research I usu-

FIGURE 7.2**A TEACHER- AND STUDENT-GENERATED CHECKLIST****ENGAGED LEARNER CHECKLIST**

For this project/activity I . . .

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> had choices | <input type="checkbox"/> got to interact with others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> was involved in competition | <input type="checkbox"/> could be with my friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> was challenged | <input type="checkbox"/> was excited to work on it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> worked outside | <input type="checkbox"/> liked doing it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> was entertained | <input type="checkbox"/> felt I was good at it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> worked in groups | <input type="checkbox"/> was satisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> could use my imagination | <input type="checkbox"/> enjoyed working on it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> could get rewards | <input type="checkbox"/> had fun |
| <input type="checkbox"/> could act | <input type="checkbox"/> had a variety of activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> could work all day | <input type="checkbox"/> could be creative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> was doing something "real life" | <input type="checkbox"/> was interested in what I did |
| <input type="checkbox"/> could do it without the teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> did something not too hard but difficult |
| <input type="checkbox"/> got something out of it at the end
(learning experience) | |

Source: Shari A. Schultz and 6th grade students in the Hilton School District, Hilton, New York.

ally only use encyclopedias, unless I need to use a magazine. I always read the directions to a worksheet. For a game I sometimes read the directions. That is how I think I read.

I think I'm a very good writer. I usually write fiction or science-fiction stories. I write 1 to 5 pages in a story and 200 to 2000 words a story. I can see improvement in my writing since the beginning of the year. My stories are longer, my paragraphs are better, and my wording has gotten better too. My spelling is usually right and I use my punctuation right to. I never let anybody read my stories until the story is done. That is how I write my stories.

I think that I'm an okay thinker. My memory is not that good but if I have to memorize some thing I always try. When I get ideas they usually come when I'm writing my stories. That is how I think I think.

Reflective activities should be ongoing and should be practiced. Teachers need to provide opportunities for students to practice reflection regularly and to share their reflections with one another. The more people reflect the better they get at understanding themselves as learners. Reflection should be accompanied by honest and continuous feedback that students can use to improve their learning.

FIGURE 7.3 STUDENT-GENERATED CRITERIA FOR A GOOD REFLECTION

A good reflection—

1. Is honest.
2. Answers the questions or responds to the statements.
3. Contains examples and details to support opinions and thoughts.
4. Helps the person who wrote it understand himself/herself better.
5. Informs the audience (teacher, classmates, self, etc.). It gives useful information.
6. Shows that the person really thought about the question before writing down a response. You can tell the response is really what the person thinks.
7. Shows personal perspective.
8. Is easily understood by the reader. It is free of spelling mistakes as well as confusing language that would interfere with a reader's ability to understand what was written.
9. Is based on what the person believes or thinks about what is asked.
10. Shows thinking.

What Kinds of Prompts Can Teachers Use to Encourage Students to Reflect?

By using prompts, teachers can ask students to reflect about many aspects of their learning and work. Here are some suggestions for creating various kinds of reflective prompts:

- Write two reflective prompts to accompany a student project—one that focuses on the project itself and one that focuses on the process.
- Write a prompt to accompany a test.
- Write three prompts for a unit of study—one for the beginning of the unit, one for the middle, and one for the end.
- Write two prompts that students can use to select work for their portfolio.
- Create a monthly reflection activity that will be ongoing in the classroom, and write reflective prompts for the first month.

- Write a reflective prompt to use with parents.
- Write a reflective prompt for a homework assignment.
- Write a reflective prompt for group work.
- Write a reflective prompt that will help students assess the teaching of specific content or skills.

See Appendix D for examples of questions and prompts to use for lessons, individual pieces of work, grading and tests, the learning process, the process used to develop specific work, the impact of teaching on the student, and goal setting. You will notice that, in general, prompts and questions that seek to help students think about and assess their learning need to be specific and intrinsically connected to the work or learning that a student is doing or has recently experienced.

FIGURE 7.4
A REFLECTION RUBRIC

Dimension	4	3	2	1
Writing	<p>Communicates effectively to identified audience. Writer's voice is evident throughout with the use of jargon-free and real language. Thoughts are well organized and presented with no ambiguity. The writing is focused throughout the reflective piece. Style of writing is rich. Writer supports analysis of questions, problems, concerns, with theories, comparisons, conclusions, metaphors, analogies, and clearly linked examples to elaborate on ideas and enhance meaning.</p>	<p>Communicates effectively, although a specific audience is unidentified. Writer's voice is evident in different parts of the material. Scattered use of jargon. Thoughts are organized and logically presented. Some portions of the material are more developed and focused than others. Style of writing is apparent. Writer supports selected part of material with questions, problems, concerns, theories, comparisons, conclusions, examples, metaphors, and analogies.</p>	<p>Communication is directed at a general audience and needs elaboration. Writer's voice is clouded through the use of jargon and formulaic language. Thoughts are either too general, random, or are not presented in a manner that can easily be followed. The material presented is scattered with gaps and needs transitions. Style of writing is generic. Writer presents questions and descriptions in general terms with few or unconnected supporting examples, analogies, or comparisons.</p>	<p>Communication is incomplete and unelaborated. Writer's voice cannot be discerned either because the communication lacks focus or development, or because the use of jargon is excessive. Thoughts are presented in very general or incomplete terms. Style of writing is not discernable. There are obvious gaps and needs for additional information in the forms of examples, questions, comparisons, analogies, and specific concerns.</p>
Self-Awareness/Process	<p>Clearly identifies and illustrates strengths, weaknesses, confusions, and areas of inquiry by specifically stating areas and reasons for</p>	<p>Identifies strengths, weaknesses, confusions, and areas of inquiry by stating areas in which they occur, although does not explain rea-</p>	<p>Identifies general strengths, weaknesses, and confusions but does not explain or illustrate these. Conclusions can be inferred</p>	<p>Reflection addresses strengths, weaknesses, or confusions in vague or incomplete terms. Concluding statements are missing.</p>

(continues on next page)

FIGURE 7.4
A REFLECTION RUBRIC (continued)

Dimension	4	3	2	1
Self-Awareness/ Process <i>(continued)</i>	Honestly communicates successes and failures with concrete examples; provides illustrations of learning processes and expectations; effectively defines and clarifies values, thoughts, and feelings regarding self, students, and/or nature of work. Clearly demonstrates a willingness to change and learn, even to the point of operating differently than the perceived norm.	Draws perceptive conclusions from self-evaluations and differentiates issues and questions that have been resolved from those that need further thinking or inquiry.	Communicates successes and failures openly but in general terms. Describes learning processes, expectations, values, thoughts, and feelings regarding self, students, and work conditions. Willingness to change and learn can be inferred although is not explicitly mentioned.	Refers to successes and/or failures in broad and unsubstantiated terms. Learning processes, expectations, thoughts, and feelings regarding work, self, and students are missing or too ambiguous to be understood. Reflection does not include information that suggests a willingness on the part of the writer to learn or change in any way.
Risk-Taking	Honestly communicates successes and failures with concrete examples; provides illustrations of learning processes and expectations; effectively defines and clarifies values, thoughts, and feelings regarding self, students, and/or nature of work. Clearly demonstrates a willingness to change and learn, even to the point of operating differently than the perceived norm.	Communicates successes and failures openly but in general terms. Describes learning processes, expectations, values, thoughts, and feelings regarding self, students, and work conditions. Willingness to change and learn can be inferred although is not explicitly mentioned.	Refers to successes and/or failures in broad and unsubstantiated terms. Learning processes, expectations, thoughts, and feelings regarding work, self, and students are missing or too ambiguous to be understood. Reflection does not include information that suggests a willingness on the part of the writer to learn or change in any way.	References to successes, failures, thoughts, feelings, or processes regarding work, self, or students are missing or too ambiguous to be understood. Reflection does not include information that suggests a willingness on the part of the writer to learn or change in any way.

FIGURE 7.4
A REFLECTION RUBRIC (continued)

Dimension	4	3	2	1
Goal-Directedness	Goals for curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment practice are specific and derived from a thorough analysis of current performance and priorities. Suggestions for self-improvement are clearly linked to a review of the strengths and weaknesses of current work. Proposed goals seem ambitious but attainable.	Goals for curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment practice are specific and are linked to current practice and priorities. Suggestions for self-improvement are generally related to perceived strengths and weaknesses. Proposed goals seem either too ambitious or not ambitious enough.	Goals for curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment practice are general and/or unrelated to analysis of current practice. Suggestions for self-improvement and proposed goals are too general or too tentative, and are divorced from stated strengths and weaknesses.	The relationship between perceived goals and current practice cannot be established either because the analysis is too superficial or has not been completely carried out. Goals are not stated in attainable terms.

Source: Developed by Giselle O. Martin-Kniep, Diane Cunningham, and faculty from the Long Island Performance Assessment Project.

What Does Reflection Look Like?

All students can reflect, although younger students often lack some of the language needed to express their thoughts. The samples that follow are from students at various grade levels. Some of them include the reflective activities and prompts, indicated in italicized type, that led to the students' responses. Teachers can use these samples to model and discuss reflection with their students.

1st Grade

The first four samples included here depict a range in the specificity and degree to which students addressed the teacher's prompt. First grade teachers could use these samples to discuss the importance of elaboration when students reflect.

Look though all your journal pages for October. Choose one page that you think is very special. It should be a page you would like people to remember about your work in 1st grade. Tell why you chose this page in your journal. Tell what was happening on the page. [Teacher records the students' answers over a four-day period.]

Today we have music. It was a special picture because it was the truth. It means really real. I really like music.

I liked it because I used a lot of detail. It was my best picture in October. It was almost Halloween, and I like drawing Halloween pictures before Halloween.

It's my first time going on the big roller-coaster at Adventureland. I keep going on it. It feels good.

All my pictures looked scribbled and that's the one that looked nicer. There's words with the silver and clouds. I was doing the weather. These puddles look like real slippery ones, and I'm slipping on them. I used the green that looked like real grass.

The following portfolio letter shows that 7-year-olds can understand and apply the meaning of elaboration. Erin's use of examples to substantiate her claims is both purposeful and very effective in helping readers know she has assessed her growth:

Portfolio letter

Dear reader,

I know how to read and write better than I did last year. I know how to read more books than I did las year.

I can read compound words like tree-house and swingset. I can read one chapter book. I can cover up half the wor to find out what it is.

I know how to write to have better handwriting than I did last year. I know how to spell more word like share and things.

I would like to know how to spell more words and read more books.

Love Erin

2nd Grade

This student reveals an awareness that waiting can be judged on the basis of its impact on the reader.

I selected this piece because it had my best evaluation and almost nobody had questions. The idea is very exciting and interesting to the reader. It has a great beginning and ending. It has all the fairy tale criteria. My story makes sense. It creates crystal clear pictures for my reader. It has many neat and detailed illustrations. It has almost no proof-reading marks.

How was reading different the second time we taped?

This reflection shows that this student has internalized multiple criteria for oral reading:

I read with feelings.
I read with lowdnis.
I read with out mstamake.
I read with happnis.

3rd Grade

Students' learning goals can reveal much about their perceptions of what is important, as is evident in the following reflection:

My goals for November are:
I will try to stay organized.
I will look at the teacher.
I will write neatly.
I will write complete sentences.

React to your first week in 3rd grade: likes, dislikes, surprises, questions, etc.

Reflections can also reveal how students make sense of the contexts that surround them—for example, in the following statement:

In 3rd grade I have the best teacher. Our class pet is fish. Its fun 3rd grade because we have my teacher.

We are up stairs. I have 27 kids in my class. I would like to learn cursive hand writing. We have little libery in our class.

4th Grade

The internalization of quality criteria is clearer and more sophisticated in the following statement than in the previous example by a 2nd grader. These two examples could be presented together and used with students to clarify or teach the meaning of "elaboration."

What are the characteristics of good writing?

Well, when you use imagery it makes the reader picture it. When you use big words

you impress the person and also good grammar helps the reader to understand. Using similes makes it wonderful writing. Using different words with the same meaning for example, "nice" and "beautiful." Describing lots of things. Don't use many "thens." Use lots of adjectives.

6th Grade

This is a good example of the use of evidence to support the selection of work for a portfolio. It underscores the importance of having student reflections in a portfolio. Without them, it would be difficult for readers to understand the reasons supporting students' reflections of their work.

How have you grown as a writer?

When I look at my Ghost Story and my Jed Story, I can really see my growth as a writer. I've changed in some important ways. I've given the story more detail and description. In the ghost story I had description, but in the Jed story, I gave even more. For example, in the ghost story:

"The grass looked like it hadn't been cut for years."

And in the Jed story:

"The rain hit hard on the roof like marbles hitting a hard wood floor."

Now I don't know about you, but I saw real change. As you can see, my Ghost story and my Jed story are two excellent examples of my growth as a writer.

8th Grade

The following reflection reveals how a student associates her work with herself. She clearly sees her portfolio as a presentation of self and not just a collection of work:

... Anyway, I've put my blood and sweat into this portfolio. It expresses who I am as a

real person. Not just a student. I know how very hard it really is to think of another person with real thoughts just like you have . . . that's what I've tried to do all year. Express myself in writing to a point so that if someone reads my portfolio, they will know who I am.

9th Grade

The following excerpt underscores how reflective prompts and questions can open a window into students' minds. This student's explanation of the criteria she has used to assess her work reveals the value she places on effective use of chronology in writing. Such criteria would never be known by the teacher had he or she not taken the time to ask the question.

Self-Assessment

Style/clarity/format:

An 8 would be the grade I deserve in this category. I purposely tried to avoid a factual, essay like report. I really tried to add in the necessary facts in an honest way, so as not to disturb the flow of the piece. I also thought up the story-line myself, after doing extensive research on Colombia's drug problem. The reasons that I gave myself an 8 rather than a 9 or a 10, is because I still feel like there might be some confusion left over after one reads my story. This is because my story covers many years, and is constantly referring to the past, and present events in this person's life. To me, it is very clear who is speaking. However, people seem to still be confused. Through my drafts, I tried to smooth the edges around these time changes, and give little clues to tell the reader whether its past or present. Unfortunately, I don't think that I was 100% successful in my attempts to make the distinction crystal clear.

10th Grade

The following student's reflection of her unsatisfying piece shows that she has made a connection between her intent and motivation and the quality of her work. It is also an exemplary reflection in its use of evidence within the "work" to support a student's assertion of its value.

The Unsatisfying Piece

I am very unhappy with this piece for one reason in particular: I asked for it. Being the "creative" writer that I was, I asked if our class could do something a little more stimulating than an essay; say a short story or something. The teacher brought out a topic especially for me; an essay called "Guess who is coming to dinner . . ." The premise was that one could invite five characters to a party. One was supposed to write about their conversation, seating arrangement, and stay true to the characters' true personalities. Unfortunately, this was to be done in a stricter format than I imagined. My plans were rather shattered, and so I wrote an essay without imagination, inconsistent with the characters' views, and essentially just to get it done. Needless to say, I was very unsatisfied with it.

I had planned on writing in almost a play style; with the characters speaking freely. . . . The limits of the assignment confined my imagination. I wrote the essay without any imagination, even though I invited very interesting people (Jim, Hester Prynne, Miniver Cheevy, Starbuck, and Georgiana). For the first half of the piece, I didn't use any direct quotes. My characters all *would've* said this or *could've* done that. The paragraphs that did have quotes were no better. The characters were talking about love, marriage, and devotion in a weak and uncreative way. Indeed, most of the time I had Miniver and Hester insulting each other.

My feeble attempt at humor (Miniver puking on the guests) was in poor taste and missed the entire point of the poem . . .

The last example of student reflection shows that students can provide teachers with valuable information about the merits and shortcomings of their lessons and units by communicating what they have learned from them.

12th Grade

The difference between my pre-test and post-test is very simple. I did not know anything about the Vietnam war before this unit. All I knew was that it was one of the wars the Americans fought in. Previous to this unit, I had seen Ms. *Saigon* on Broadway. This musical is about the Vietnam war. The main thing that I got from the show was that there were many men who went over to Vietnam and fell in love with a woman there, and many of them had their children.

After going through this unit, I now know that there is much more to the war than just some babies that were half American and half Vietnamese. There were many men killed. . . . the most of any war. Many men had severe psychological problems after the war. After they left the war, they carried it with them forever.

I'm glad we did this unit, because I really did not know anything before. That is why it is easy for me to compare my two tests.

ideas about student evaluation and has an excellent chapter on creating communities of learners and making assessment a systematic process. The book also shows ways for young children to engage in self-evaluation.

Egan, K. (1986). *Teaching as story telling*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The author offers an alternative to the generally accepted elementary school curriculum that begins with the concrete and builds toward the abstract. After questioning some of the educational principles on which the typical curriculum is based, Kieran Egan suggests instead an elementary school curriculum based on what he calls "The Great Stories of the World Curriculum." He suggests that teachers use his Story Form Model, which begins with questions such as "What is most important about this topic?" "Why should it matter to children?" "What is effectively engaging about this topic?" "What binary opposites best catch the importance of this topic?" and "What content most dramatically embodies the binary opposites, in order to provide access to the topic?"

In opposition to the view that young children do not understand abstract ideas, the author argues that young children have a strong comprehension of ideas such as loyalty and betrayal, honesty and cheating, freedom and tyranny. In fact, he states that these are the very ideas that excite children's intellects and about which children really care. When the classroom teacher employs ideas such as the binary opposites listed above in nonfiction stories related to the curriculum, students will learn because they become actively engaged in the lesson. Egan also discusses how using the Story Form Model for lesson design can help instill in students wonder and awe for the everyday, workaday world. *Teaching as Story Telling* provides a smorgasbord of food for thought.

Paris, S., & Ayres, L. (1994). *Becoming reflective students and teachers with portfolio and authentic assessment*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

This book presents a practical, structured approach to the implementation of portfolios and ongoing authentic assessment in the classroom. The authors address three themes revolving around the idea of reflection. The first is the notion of reflection in and of itself and the healthy, constructive thinking that takes place within

Recommended Resources

Cambourne, B., & Turkell, J. (Eds.). (1994). *Responsive evaluation: Making valid judgments about student literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This book discusses different ways to respond to student learning. It encourages teachers to expand upon their

oneself when contemplating classroom practice, curriculum, assessment, instruction, and meaningful learning. Whether it is the teacher, student, or parent doing the reflecting, the authors stress that it is indeed a powerful process that drives self-directed and enhanced learning for each individual. The second theme emphasizes the importance of ensuring that opportunities for reflection are deliberately planned for as part of daily or weekly

instruction and assessment activities, and that this self-assessment takes place individually *and* within small discussion groups (consisting, for example, in the case of student reflection, of the teacher, student, and parent). The third theme is that self-assessment promotes personal development—that reflecting about one's acquisition of knowledge and skills will foster positive developmental outcomes.