

The Importance of Student Reflection

Do we really need to carve out precious time throughout the day for reflection? When we provide students with opportunities to think about their own thinking, we empower them to take charge of their own learning. Reflection on their own progress increases their executive function and critical thinking skills. Prioritizing reflection as a part of your class structures will help create independent and self-directed learners.

Students need time to stop and reflect on what they are doing and how they are feeling, no matter if they are physically in a classroom, learning from home, or some combination of the two. As student responsibility for learning increases, so does the need for reflection in which they are able to consider how they are taking ownership for academic and personal growth. When students reflect, they have a better understanding of what they have mastered, where they need more help, and possible pathways for continued growth.

A variety of structures and routines can support students in building self-reflection skills. Include a reflection journal as a part of your daily routine or, for primary students, have them color in faces (happy, sad, fine) as to how they thought they worked this morning, how they are feeling, etc. As with any skill, some students may need more support than others. It's important to require regular reflection for this skill to become a habit. Consider when and how you will incorporate daily reflection so it becomes an expected part of a student's learning routine.

Daily Reflective Routines

- **I Used to Think . . . But Now I Think** — Children focus on *how* and *why* their thinking has changed over time. Have them explain their initial thoughts, and then prompt them to think about why their thinking has shifted.
- **3-2-1 Bridge** — Ask students to record 3 thoughts, 2 questions, and 1 connection to engage students in deeper thinking.
- **Self-checks** — Throughout their work, students should be assessing themselves regularly through the use of rubrics, checklists, writing prompts, or sharing their progress verbally.
- **Cause and Effect** — Provide organizers that will encourage students to think about the connections between events.
- **Physical/Virtual Sticky Notes** — These are a great way to make thinking visible. Ask children to write down what went well, what didn't, and/or what they can do differently tomorrow. Children can also use these notes to mark any questions they have during activities.



Video Integration



Be it humorous, embarrassing, or just straight-up silly, recording — and then watching themselves — on video gives children insights into their own learning process. So, break out the laptop, phone, old-school video camera, or video-recording platform such as Flipgrid or Padlet and prompt your children to use one of the *Daily Reflective Routines* listed above.

Gratitude Journals



One way to cultivate an environment of gratitude and positivity is by having students create and keep a gratitude journal (Sulla, 2018). Increasing awareness of gratitude and expressing appreciation are great ways to foster social and emotional learning. Gratitude is an emotion that stems from happiness and appreciation. Studies have shown that feeling gratitude activates the prefrontal cortex, which reduces stress levels, builds

executive function, and benefits students' well-being.