

The Superpower of Reflecting

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What to Consider

When you're feeling overwhelmed by the number of points to consider in your lessons, workshops, and units, it's helpful to set some limits in the beginning. There are five basic elements of instruction that might provoke reflection: planning, the teaching event itself, immediate impressions, longer-term analysis, and the changes made. Here is a list that may provide points for reflection. It is by no means exhaustive, but it may be a starting point. Choose two or three questions to consider.

Lesson Objective—Did you say it in the beginning of the lesson? Did you connect its purpose to other learning and life? Is it too broad? As in, "We will write an effective essay." Think of all the components that go into an effective essay. Is it too narrow? As in, "We will use active verbs in our writing about animals."

Lesson Standard—If someone walked in and asked the majority of your students what they were learning and why, would they be able to answer? Is there a place they could look in the room to find the answer? Is the answer connected to your standards?

Lesson Introduction—Did you get the students' attention? Were you thoughtful about combining their interests and needs with the standard? Within the first 10 minutes of the lesson, was the focus clear?

Lesson Anticipation—Was any pre-assessment used (student work, anecdotal notes, or other data) to plan for instruction? What did you anticipate would go well? What did you anticipate as a challenge? Were you correct?

Lesson Engagement—Did you think about attention span and create shifts about every 10 minutes (or less, depending on the age of your students) to have students talk about, write about, and think about what they are learning? Was there time for individual and cooperative learning?

Lesson Materials—Were students able to access what they needed to be successful? Did some students need different materials?

Lesson Grouping—What did you offer to the whole group? If you did a minilesson, was it a minilesson or a maxilesson? What did you offer to small groups? How did that meet their needs? What did you offer to individuals? Who did you not reach with your instruction today?

Lesson Differentiation—What did you do to meet the needs of your learners? Your visual learners? Your kinesthetic learners? Your students with different learning needs?

Lesson Authenticity—At what points of the lesson were students doing the discipline, such as careful, critical independent reading or thoughtful, generative independent writing?

Lesson Management—If someone had been transcribing your dialogue, did it sound proactive or reactive? Was there natural movement and transition during the lesson?

Lesson Strategies—What strategies did you use to address the content and process needs?

Lesson Pacing—Did students say, "Wait!" at some parts of the lesson? Was their work incomplete? Did you have students saying, "What's next?" Did they have time to fill?

Lesson Closure—In what ways did you have students analyze, evaluate, or reflect on the day's lesson? What did you do in the last five to eight minutes to capitalize on their rise in attention span?

Lesson Assessment—Besides your perspective, what pieces of evidence do you have to support what students now know and can do?