**Reflection – Learn more**

Reflection, in its simplest form can be defined as, “the act of seeing one’s own work” (Sunstein, 2000, p. 8). One presumes when students reflect on their work, as documented in their portfolios, they are

metacognitively analyzing various aspects of their learning. Some of these learning aspects may include reflecting on the processes used:

(a) to complete the work;

(b) to plan the process required;

(c) to evaluate the success or failure of the process and product;

(d) to attain a personal goal; or

(e) to retrace the use of strategies (Graves, 1992; Zimmerman, 1986; Black, 2000; Schunk, 1986; Sunstein, 2000).

**The Development of Reflection in the Portfolio Classroom**

Reflective language is the interaction that takes place through communication, be it verbal, written or through other symbol systems learned and understood in specific social contexts (Black, 1999). One component of this symbol system is the reflective language used in a school context. Tierney et al. (1998) noted the development of reflective language is demonstrated through greater amounts and breadth of comments. In fact, in their study, the researchers noted student reflective communication developed in five main ways:

(a) number of comments increased

(b) comments focused on more specific aspects of writing

(c) comments became more focused on both personal and community expectations

(d) students began to notice growth through comparisons with previous work

(e) students’ abilities to evaluate their total performance.

The changes in reflection ability in the above study took place in the social context of a school.

Since the language we use is socially determined, it would follow that the nature of learning the characteristics of reflective language would be socially dependent.

**Ask yourself**

Why am I asking my students to reflect? When will we do this? How will they learn to become reflective? How will we document reflections?

**Weaving reflection into the rhythm of a school**

Reflection needs to be woven into a natural rhythm. The elements that make up a reflective classroom are:

\* Modeling language used to reflect;

\* Sharing reflections in groups or as a class;

\* Discussing strategies and criteria; and

\* Having time to apply strategies once they have been reflected on.

Some of these practices take less time, some more. Planning for reflection is the key to helping students to develop their competencies.

**Common moments to reflect**

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| --- | --- |
| *The task has ended or you are about to begin a new task ...* | and you want the student to think back on what was accomplished or learned in order to apply this later. |
| *The task is in progress …* | and the student is stuck, or working well and you want her/him to become aware of what is working or not working well in the learning process so that new strategies can be tried or good strategies maintained. |
| *End of term…* | and the student is being asked to reflect by comparing two or more of her/his artifacts and the learning processes that were involved. |
| *End of year…* | and the portfolio will move on to the next year—this requires some downsizing. The student is asked to reflect on more global learnings that have taken place throughout the year. |
| *End of cycle…* | and competency development is evaluated. Evidence of competency growth is required and the student reflects on how s/he developed these competencies over the cycle. |