

GEORGE LUCAS EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

Scaffolding Student Reflections + Sample Questions

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January 3, 2015

We might all agree that reflection is a powerful tool but how can we help students to reflect in the classroom. Of course reflection should be a component that builds onto knowledge they have acquired throughout the lesson. So why is reflection so important?

Benefits of Reflection

- **Significance:** It allows students to see the importance of their own learning process.
- **Process Recognition:** Students can identify what they did well, what they failed at, what they need to change.
- **Solutions/Strategies:** Provides students an opportunities to come up with solutions and strategies to improve on their learning.
- **Motivation:** Reflection provides students with motivation to learn and enjoy the process of learning. This motivation comes from them reflecting on their thoughts, feelings and emotions.
- **Analysis:** The most important benefit of reflection in the classroom is for students to be able to know **why** they needed to learn these concepts, theories, and ideas.
- **LEARNING WON'T BE CONTENT DRIVEN:** It's important for students to know "how" to learn and how to continue to be learners. Memorizing content will not help students become critical thinkers. Critical thinking stems from pausing, reflecting, and knowing "how" and "why" learning should be happening at that moment.

Levels of Scaffolding to Help Students Reflect

When we practice reflection in my classroom I try a process of scaffolding to help students understand the learning process. This provides an opportunity for iteration for myself as well as the students. The scaffolding of students reflection allows students to see the learning process holistically.

Level One: The Student Before Learning

The student comes with his/her prior knowledge, preference, assumptions, bias, feelings about a topic/subject. At this level, we should work closely with students to understand all of these complex feelings. As teachers, this knowledge for us would help us understand the pathway the student uses throughout their learning process. In other words, we will empathize more with them knowing these feelings, thoughts and ideas. For students, it will allow them to speak/write openly about their feelings, thoughts and ideas. This provides a basis for their reflection of their learning.

Level Two: The Student While Learning

The questions here provide an opportunity to scaffold reflections about the teacher's pedagogical style to teach that particular lesson. Students will provide their thoughts and ideas on "how" they're learning, which informs "how" we're teaching. Here is where the teacher becomes once again the learner and tries to navigate, change, iterate teaching techniques and strategies to best help the students.

For the student, this level of reflection allows them become familiar with how they learn, what they're comfortable with, and what they would change in the process of their learning.

Level Three: The Student After Learning

Here is where this level of reflection is able to guide the student to "analyze" what they learned and "why" it was important to learn. Reflecting on the significance of what they learned is vital in helping students see the relevance in our lessons.

Relevance=motivation

Level Four: The Student Going Forward

For this level of reflection, students will synthesize their learning. They will be able to take what they learned and apply it elsewhere. Here is where they take the prior reflection on the relevance of the lesson and try to make sense of it to be applied in different scenarios. While most of these levels help students to think critically, level four students will be applying strong critical thinking skills to their reflections as they will be reflecting on their learning process as a whole.

What To Do With These Reflections?

- Use them to provide feedback for students
- Use them for peer feedback
- Use them to understand and inform teaching strategies and pedagogy in the classroom (student evaluating teacher)
- Blogging
- Digital portfolios
- Class discussions
- Online discussions, community posts, chats as a class

Here is a **sample of questions** (</pdfs/stw/edutopia-stw-replicatingPBL-21stCAcad-reflection-questions.pdf>) based on the 4 levels mentioned above.

This piece was originally submitted to our community forums by a reader. Due to audience interest, we've preserved it. The opinions expressed here are the writer's own.

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