

Some Reflections on Reflection

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Using various processes for reflection, we can guide students to be alive, aware in-the-moment, connected to their own learning. Reflection can teach students to be:

NOTICERS (of their own experience and others' experiences)

“What do you notice? Did anything surprise you or grab your attention? Notice how that feels (looks, what is difficult for you or easy...). What is different about your partner's shape and your own? What is the same? Notice what changed.”

CONNECTORS (to this lesson, to the world . . .)

“Does this remind you of anything we did earlier? Did you see anything on your way to school that was like this? Does anyone in your family speak another language that you don't know; can you teach them *this* language?”

SUPPORTERS (of their classmates and of their own process)

“Watch the other half of the class with these questions in mind: (a) What is their strongest moment as a group and why? (b) Which two dances would you like to see done at the same time? (c) What jumped out at you, grabbed your attention? (d) How did that second attempt improve the work? (e) Did you see any 'mistakes' that you think actually improve the dance?”

CRITICAL OBSERVERS (of self and others)

“What questions do you have for the dancers/choreographers? Did you learn something by watching this group that could help you when you perform your study? What could the dancers do even more to bring out the softness they were talking about? What would you like to change in your study?”

STRATEGISTS (in technique, choreography, audience skills, etc.)

“Did anybody have any problem areas? What made that difficult? What would help you work on that: just doing it again on your own or breaking it down and reviewing with the whole group? Was there a way of watching the dance this time that made it easier for you to concentrate? Did anybody have an image or a way of thinking about this [shape, rhythm, timing, moment, etc.] that helped make it stronger?”

COLLEAGUES (to you, to their other teachers, to each other)

“Who feels like you've learned the phrase? Who is still struggling? OK, pair off and you've got five minutes: those who know it, work with your partner to see if you can clarify at least one part of the phrase. If you have more time, move on to another part of the phrase. Get in your small group and study the composition assignment; silently ask yourself if you have any questions about the sequence. Make sure everyone understands the assignment before working independently.”

Making Time

It can be very hard to “fit in” reflection when there is so much dancing to be done. A few strategies (and examples of focusing questions) for setting limits that can ease the way for reflection as a tool rather than a burden:

TURN & TALK

A paired sharing that allows everyone to contribute without having to hear every member of the class as a group.

WRITTEN REFLECTION

Take 2 minutes to make some notes (or a simple drawing . . .) on what you just saw. It could be a single word or image.

NON-VERBAL REFLECTION

Take a moment to remember something you saw that interested you. Briefly “dance” your reflection.

NON-SPOKEN REFLECTION

Imagine yourself improvising on this theme again. Ask yourself a few questions: What interested and surprised me when I saw the other group’s improvisation? What did I do with the spatial design last time? Would I like to try something different?

FOUR RESPONDERS

We’ll have time to hear from 4 (3, 5, whatever) of the observers today: Carlos, Angelica, William, Maira. Who was first . . .?

FOCUSED TOPIC/FOCUSED TIME

Take 2 minutes to talk with your partner about what you discovered and what you’d like to work on.