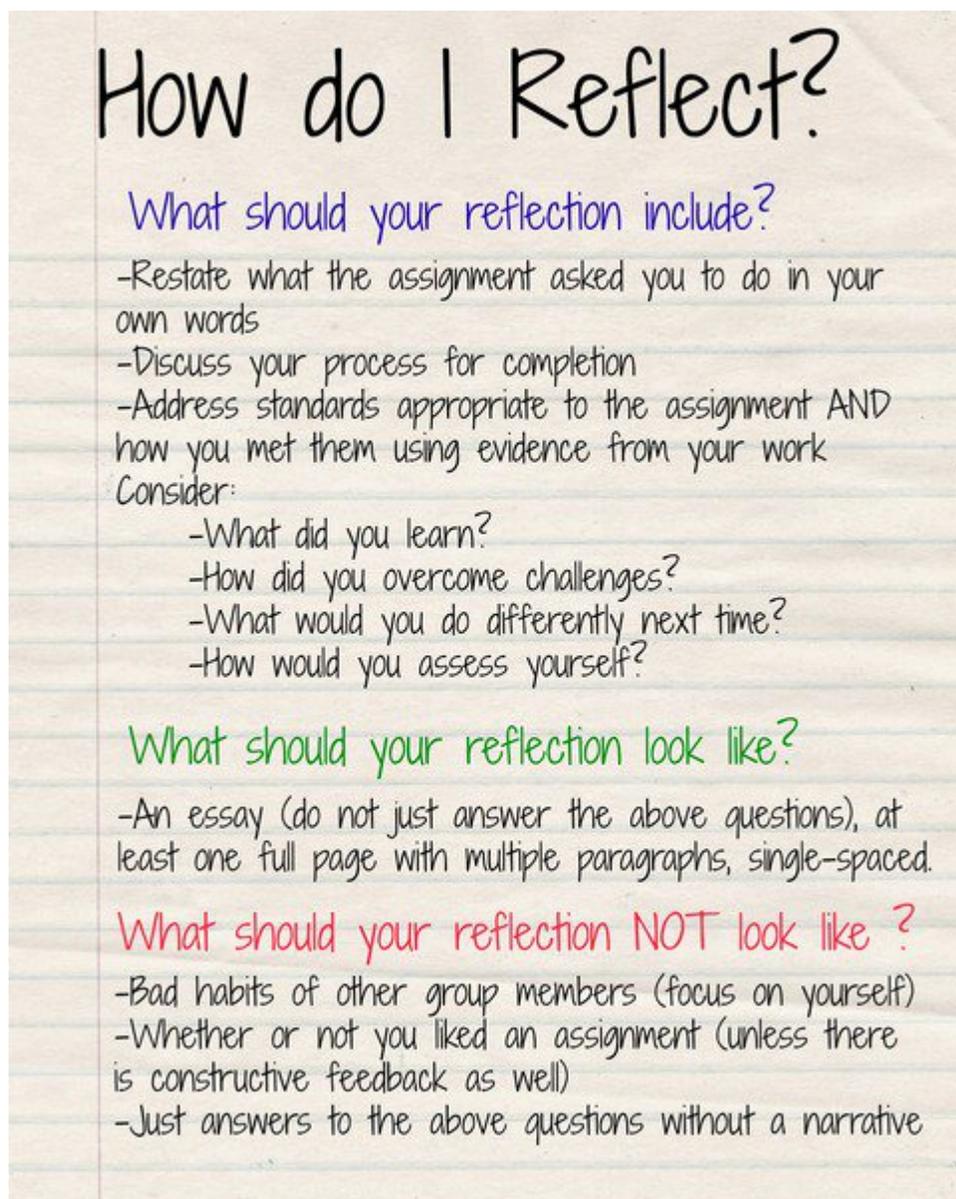


Scaffold Reflection for Deeper Metacognition and Better Feedback

By [Starr Sackstein](#) on [March 21, 2019 5:24 AM](#)



It wasn't until after I developed a system in my classroom for **effective reflection** and feedback that I realized the impact it truly had on learning.

That probably sounds backward, but it's true.

Although I always saw the value in reflecting personally, even if I didn't call it reflection, making it an essential part of the learning in my classroom didn't happen for a long time.

As a teacher, I reflected in a number of ways, but it wasn't until I completed my **National Board certification**, where I had to record my lessons, watch them, and analyze them that I realized how much I could learn about

myself as an educator and person when I just took the time to slow down, consider my work, and make adjustments.

In the classroom, this process started with **reflections following assignments**. They weren't specific yet, they were just asking students to share what they learned and how they knew they learned it.

Much of the time, they told me whether or not they enjoyed the learning, which wasn't necessarily what I was shooting for, but it certainly provided interesting feedback.

The more I thought about how to be **intentional with reflection** and the more I reflected on the reflecting students were sharing, I was able to codify a practice that we implemented across classrooms in my old school starting with our 6th graders and ending with our seniors.

By scaffolding the process with a series of questions that really helped students consider their own learning, they could start thinking about more than what they liked or didn't like and more about what they knew and could do. They began to articulate learning in a clear and methodical way. And the more we did it, the better I could give them feedback and address the system of how we reflect.

Ultimately, students presented an essay about their learning that took me through their process: What were they asked to do? The reason we spent time on this was that if I could adjust my lens to what they thought, then I could really evaluate what they did. Too often teachers expect students to do tasks that aren't really well defined, and it isn't until we see student work that we realize that we missed the mark. By using the student's understanding, we are able to assess what they meant to do instead of what we meant them to do.

The next few paragraphs are about the process of doing the learning. How did the students approach and complete the assignment? What steps did they take? This can often be completed as they go so they don't leave anything out. Additionally, this is an opportunity for students to talk about goals they set and feedback they have received. Speaking to how they used the feedback in their work and whether or not it was helpful. Getting students to label steps and strategies helps them articulate ways for asking for help and pinpointing what they know and can do.

After taking me through the steps, now I want to know about the learning. Students have to explain their **learning against the standards** and show evidence from their work to support what they say. It's not enough to say they are meeting the standard about transitions; they will need to cite a transition from their work that shows they have met or exceeded this standard.

After exploring what they were able to accomplish, students discuss the challenges they faced, how they overcame them or not, and then what they would do differently next time. This helps the teacher provide better feedback and ensures different strategies if necessary in the future.

The very last part is the **self-assessment**: What does the student believe he/she earned in their grade aligned with whatever rubric and/or success criteria that has been decided upon? The student then provides a brief summary of why, and the reflection is complete.

If the teacher reads these reflections prior to reviewing work, the lens through which he/she can then provide feedback on the work is clearly spelled out. Each student gets a very specific read that is aligned to what they were working on, areas of strength to validate, and/or areas of challenge to provide more strategies.

At first this will feel cumbersome, and students will likely complain, but eventually, they will see the point and appreciate the opportunity to share their learning in this way.