

workshop
04

FOCUS ON LEARNING

STUDENTS REFLECTING
ON THEIR LEARNING

Note to facilitators

What is the aim of this booklet?

This is part of a set of four booklets aimed at developing assessment practice for teachers in Ireland. Although it is primarily for teachers involved in junior cycle developments, the material and approaches can be used across all sectors. The set of booklets and associated materials are intended to be used in a flexible way to allow teachers to explore a range of approaches that will enable them to develop a coherent approach to assessment.

If you are planning to facilitate a workshop with staff please consult the *Facilitator's Guide* which can be downloaded at www.juniorcycle.ie/assessment.

How is the booklet to be used?

Schools may choose to use and adapt the material in any way to suit their own context. It is recommended that you start with the **slide presentation**. You may then find it helpful to follow the steps outlined below or you can develop your own workshop plan. These resources are aimed at facilitating both whole staff discussion and subject-based discussion. Where possible, we would encourage using the material on a school-wide basis as research evidence indicates that changes in assessment practice are more likely to become embedded if they are introduced on a systematic basis across a whole school.

Step 1

The slide presentation can be used to introduce key ideas about student reflection to a whole staff group. The final slide in the presentation contains some prompts for staff discussion based on the main messages of the presentation.

Step 2

Following this introductory presentation it is recommended that staff might watch and discuss:



Professor Paul Black's ideas on how you can involve students in reflecting on their learning
(6 mins 46 sec)

Prompt questions for staff discussion:

- What do you see as the positives in using group work to help students to reflect on their work and on their learning?
- What do you think of the strategies that Paul Black suggests to involve students more in their learning?

Step 3

Following on from these discussions you are now ready to explore the workshop materials in this booklet. These activities can be undertaken in any order that suits the school context. It is not necessary or intended for the activities to be approached in the sequence presented in the booklet.

Step 4

Print off the discussion cards and posters. These can be used to stimulate further discussion and thinking or they can be displayed around the school to reinforce the key messages and to help staff to further develop their practice in this area.

Encourage staff to engage with the material included in the recommended reading section.

Page Legend



Worksheets

The following symbol is used throughout the booklet to show activities and worksheets that can be photocopied for use in a workshop.

FOCUS ON LEARNING

Students Reflecting on Their Learning | Workshop 04

Why is reflection an important part of learning?

Whilst most people engage in reflection on a daily basis, much of this occurs in quiet moments by ourselves. Most students are not used to reflecting on their learning in a structured manner. They will need some help to develop skills in reflective thinking and writing. Whilst this skill may be new to them at first, they will become more familiar with it as they progress through junior cycle.

Through reflection 'in' and 'on' learning students can

- become more aware of the knowledge and skills that they have developed
- identify strengths and areas for development
- develop an action plan for future learning
- gain greater understanding of themselves and how they learn
- take more responsibility for their learning

What is reflective learning?

Watch the video below for a short introduction to some of the key ideas related to student reflection:



What is Reflective Learning (3 mins)

Thanks to Vancouver Community College, Baking Department for permission to use this video.



Will this support the development of key skills?

Being able to reflect on one's learning and learning how to become a better learner are key elements of the junior cycle key skills. When students learn to reflect on their learning through dialogue, writing or using a computer, they are developing many of these skills.

Take a look at the key skills for junior cycle and discuss how they support student reflection. Work either individually or with a partner and consider how well you have developed your classroom practice in developing students' reflection skills.

[Download the key skills framework](#) for more detail.



Activity 1

Teaching students to reflect... How are we doing?

Work either individually or with a partner and then discuss how well you have developed your classroom practice in developing students reflection skills.

Traffic light your responses to the questions below using this code:

Always

Sometimes

Never



I allow time for students to reflect on their progress at the end of a lesson/lessons.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I encourage students to think about not only <i>what</i> they have learned but <i>how</i> they learned it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I encourage students to plan the next steps in their learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I provide questions and tools to help students reflect on their learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use language associated with reflection in class, such as, 'let's pause to reflect on what you've just learned'.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I provide opportunities for students to self-assess as part of the reflective process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I allow time for students to reflect on feedback that they receive from me and their peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Activity 2

Part 1: Why is reflection important?

'We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.' - John Dewey

Write down a couple of reasons why you think students would benefit from reflecting on their learning more in your class.

Discuss your points with a partner or small group.

Part 2: Reflection in my subject

Donald Schön was an influential thinker in developing the theory and practice of reflective learning. He suggested that the reflective learner reflected both when they were doing the learning (in the action) and after the learning (on the action).

Reflection in action

At any given moment when students are faced with a challenge in their learning, they can learn to think on their feet to resolve that challenge including using feedback from their teacher and/or their peers.

Reflection on action

Students can learn to reflect on their learning experiences and/or assessment tasks after they have occurred.

Discuss with your partner:

- What would be good about your students being able to reflect 'in' and 'on' action in your subject? Which might be more important in your subject?
- How might you support students to do both?

Activity 3

Useful prompts to support student reflection

In your groups, look at these prompts that might be used to help students to reflect on their learning.

- The most important thing I learned was...
- The way I learned was...
- What I found difficult was...
- What I enjoyed most was...
- What I need more help with is...
- What still puzzles me is...
- What surprised me was...
- What I have learned that is new is...
- What helped me when something got tricky was...
- What really made me think was...
- I might have learned better if...

Discuss

Which of these prompts would you find useful for your students? Are there others you would want to add? How about developing prompts related to specific activities, such as the example below?

Here are some prompts for helping students reflect on their writing skills.

- I chose this piece of writing because...
- What makes this piece of writing good is my use of...
- What I want to work on to make my writing better for a reader is...

More examples of reflection prompts

What did you find easy about learning to...?

What do you need more help with?

What can you do now that you couldn't do before?

What really made you think?

What are you most pleased with?

What was the most important thing you learned?

Further ideas

Learning log

A learning log is a planned, purposeful, follow-up written response to their learning experience. These reflections can be kept online or in a special journal. They can enable a dialogue between the student and teacher on the learning journey. In some cases reflections might be shared in a small group or with a partner.

The purple pen for reflection

If you don't want students to separate their reflections from their day-to-day learning, then you can ask them to use a blue/black pen when they are completing their work and a purple pen to write their reflections on their work. This will make it easier for them and for you to see their reflections in their copybooks.

Reflection and 'self-talk'

Given our culture, students have difficulty realising that they need to engage in 'self-talk'. To help students develop the internal voice of reflection, they can be asked to do the following:

- Write a letter/text to themselves detailing what they learned from an experience.
- Send themselves a letter of advice, reminding themselves what they can do to improve their learning/work next time they do something.

Sharing their reflections

The opportunity to share one's reflections is helpful because it helps students develop both the language and practice of reflection. Here are suggestions for helping students develop the capacity for sharing their reflections:

- Sit in a circle. Ask each person to share one reflection about how they learned within the class or small group today.
- Invite students to reflect on their areas of difficulty or concerns and then share problem-solving strategies.
- Invite students to think about a recent mistake or error they made and how they have learned from it. Many of us grow up thinking of mistakes as bad. To maximise our learning it is essential to ask: 'How can we get the most from every mistake we make?'



Questions to consider in a subject department meeting

A school may decide to focus on assessment as its third area for SSE. In particular, it could decide to focus on formative assessment. Reflection is an important part of formative assessment. The following questions would be useful prompts to help gather evidence at subject department level about current practice in relation to formative assessment. The results of the deliberations on such questions could feed into whole staff discussion and ultimately help the school identify its strengths and areas for development in relation to formative assessment, which should then inform the school improvement plan.

What do I/we understand by the term 'student reflection on learning'?

How can I/we develop students' reflective practices in my/our classroom/subject?

How do we share examples of good practice in this area?

How can we use the students' reflections to inform our subject planning?

Planning our next steps

This workshop has hopefully given you some practical ideas on how you can help students to reflect on their learning.

Individually, select two strategies that you would like to take away from this session to improve your practice in helping students reflect about their learning.

Discuss your choices with a colleague and consider how they might be used in both of your subjects.

When introducing opportunities for reflection in your classes start with one class at a time. Many teachers find that it is useful to discuss their experience with other teachers and keep a log of any difficulties that they encounter. It will also be important to share with your students why you are encouraging them to reflect on their learning and how it will benefit their learning. Some teachers have also found it helpful to discuss the changes with parents.



Activity

Using the planning sheet attached, set out how you intend to support students in developing skills of reflection in your classroom over the next 3 months.



Planning our next steps: Planning sheet

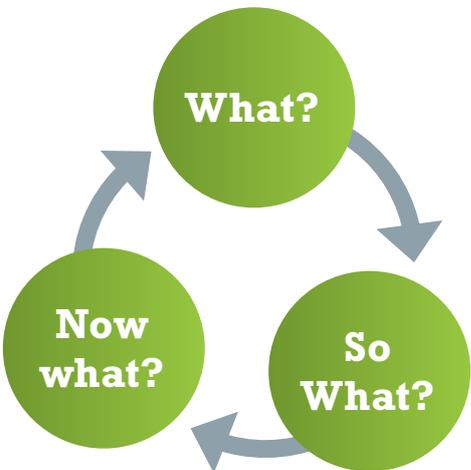
Timescale/class	Main area for development	Observations/reflections

Discussion cards

The discussion cards can be cut out and used to stimulate small group discussion as part of a whole-staff meeting or subject-planning meeting.

Discussion card 1

What? So what? Now what?



Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper (2001) propose using three simple questions when reflecting on learning: 'What? So what? Now what?'.

What?: What have I learned?

So what?: What does this tell me about my strengths and about my gaps in understanding?

Now what?: What can I do to improve my understanding? What are my next steps? What are my targets and goals for moving forward?

Discuss how you might use or adapt this approach in your classroom.

Discussion card 2

Self-assessment of both task and process

When reflecting on their learning it can be useful to ask students to think about *what* they learned and *how* they learned it.

Some questions relating to both are set out below.

The task (what)	The process (how)
The most important thing I learned is...	I enjoyed/didn't enjoy learning in this way because...
The most interesting part was...	What I found difficult was...
A question I have is...	What helped me to learn was...
A skill I used was...	I could have learned better if...

Discuss how you might use or adapt this approach in your classroom.

Discussion card 3

Entrance slip

Before the class begins, students write about the previous day's lesson, a concept that they are having difficulty with, or an idea or question that comes to mind about their learning.

are learning. A few volunteers can share their reflections.

Exit slip

At the end of class, students can be asked to write any questions, problems, concerns, or personal connections related to the day's lesson. The exit slip can provide the teacher with some insights to help in planning the next day's lesson.

Mid-lesson reflection

During the class, the teacher stops and asks the students to take a few minutes to jot down a reflection on how they are learning, or to note a question that they have or an area of confusion, or any other thought or observation about what they

Discuss how you might use or adapt these ideas in your classroom.

Discussion card 4

Double entry log

Students draw a 'T' chart as set out below. At the top of the 'T', students write the topic of the day. In the left column, students jot down key words, facts and ideas about what they are hearing, reading or discussing in class. In the right column, students write reflections about the information as a way of personally connecting with what they learning.

Today's topic:

Key words, facts and ideas	My comments, questions and thoughts

A variation on this is the problem/solution log

Students draw a 'T' chart and this time on the left column, they record problems, areas of difficulty and/or questions that they have about their learning. In the right column, they record the solution or answer once they have found it.

Today's topic:

Problems and questions	Solutions and answers

Discuss how you might use or adapt these ideas in your classroom.

Discussion card 5

KWL

This is good to use when introducing new material. Students turn the page sideways so that the page is landscape. They create three columns and label each column as shown in the sample.

Know	Wonder	Learned

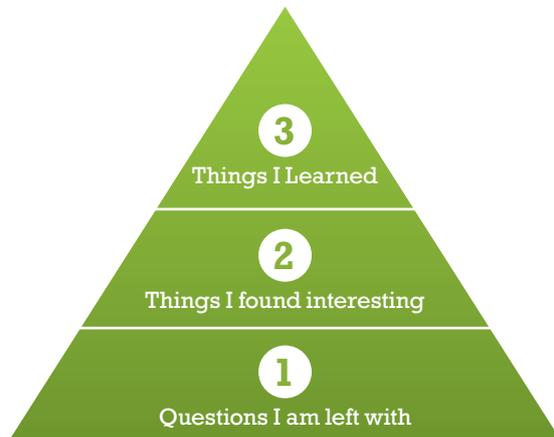
Before learning a new topic or concept, students jot down what they already know. Then they jot down things they wonder about or want to know. After learning the topic, students jot down things they learned. This can be done as a shared or an individual activity.

Discuss how you might use or adapt this idea in your classroom.

Discussion card 6

Look at these two approaches and discuss how you might use or adapt them in your classroom.

3-2-1 technique



Self-reflection questions

Date	What went well?	Even better if...?

Glossary

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements in curriculum specifications to describe the understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning.

Learning Intentions

A learning intention for a lesson or series of lessons is a statement, created by the teacher, that describes clearly what the teacher wants the students to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of learning and teaching activities.

Success Criteria

Success criteria are linked to learning intentions. They are developed by the teacher and/or the student and describe what success *looks like*. They help the teacher and student to make judgements about the quality of student learning.

Ongoing Assessment

As part of their classroom work, students engage in assessment activities that can be either formative or summative in nature. Teachers assess as part of their daily practice by observing and listening as students carry out tasks, by looking at what they write and make, and by considering how they respond to, frame and ask questions. Teachers use this assessment information to help students plan the next steps in their learning. Periodically this assessment will be in more structured, formalised settings where teachers will need to obtain a snapshot of the students' progress in order to make decisions on future planning and to report on progress. This may involve the students in doing projects, investigations, case studies and/or tests and may occur at defined points in the school calendar.

Formative Assessment

Assessment is formative when either formal or informal procedures are used to gather evidence of learning during the learning process, and used to adapt teaching to meet student needs. The process permits teachers and students to collect information about student progress, and to suggest adjustments to the teacher's approach to instruction and the student's approach to learning. Assessment for learning covers all of the aspects of formative assessment but has a particular focus on the student having an active role in his/her learning.

Summative Assessment

Assessment is summative when it is used to evaluate student learning at the end of the instructional process or of a period of learning. The purpose is to summarise the students' achievements and to determine whether and to what degree the students have demonstrated understanding of that learning by comparing it against agreed success criteria or features of quality.

Features of Quality

Features of quality are the statements in the subject specifications that are used in making judgements about the quality of student work for the purpose of awarding achievement grades for certification. As success criteria are closely linked to learning intentions and based on the day-to-day processes in the classroom, student learning will gradually come to reflect the requirements set out in the features of quality which are used for certification purposes.

Further reading

Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment (Black, P., and William D. 1998).

The getting of wisdom: what critically reflective teaching is and why it's important, in *Becoming a critically reflective teacher* (Brookfield, S.2009) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. *The reflective practitioner* (Basic Books. King's College, London. Schön D. 1995).

Useful websites

[Assessment Toolkit](#)

Key skills toolkits

[The Junior Cycle Key Skills Toolkits](#)

[Managing Myself](#)

[Managing Information and Thinking](#)

[Working with Others](#)

[Staying Well](#)

[Being Creative](#)

[Communicating](#)

Credit: The NCCA wishes to acknowledge and express gratitude to the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, (CCEA) Northern Ireland (www.rewardinglearning.org.uk) and Education Scotland (www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk) for use of materials in these booklets.



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