

# Students' Reflections on Online Reflective Writing & Other Strategies for 21<sup>st</sup> – Century Liberal Learning

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Lindsay Johnson, Diana Lynde, Gery Yaneva,  
Dr. John Zubizarreta

Columbia College Honors Program  
[jzubizarreta@columbiasc.edu](mailto:jzubizarreta@columbiasc.edu)

# What is Reflection?

According to J. Moon, *Learning Journals* (1999), p. 23

- Considering the process of our own learning: **metacognition**.
- **Critical** review and inquiry.
- Engaging in personal or **self development**.
- Making **decisions** or resolving **uncertainties**.
- **Empowering** or emancipating ourselves as learners.

# Characteristics of Reflective Learners

- Self-aware and self-critical.
- Honest about themselves.
- Open to criticism and feedback.
- Objective in weighing up evidence.
- Open/prepared to try different approaches to learning.
- Curious.
- Motivated to improve.
- More able to learn independently.

# Guidelines for Reflection Activities

(Bringle & Hatcher, "Reflection in Service Learning," *Educational Horizon*, Summer 1999: 179-85)

Reflection activities should . . .

- Link experience to learning.
- Be guided.
- Occur regularly.
- Involve feedback.
- Clarify values.

# Reflection in Significant Learning

Perry (1970), Piaget (1971), Kolb (1984), Belenky (1986),  
Zull (2002), Fink (2003)

Surface Knowledge (“neuronal networks”)



Reflection  
Experience

Changing Cognitive Structure

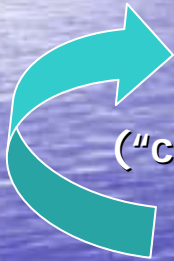
(“conceptualization/experimentation,” “plasticity,” “synaptic connections”)

(Active Learning, Experiential Learning, Problem-Based Learning,  
Collaborative/Cooperative/Team-Based Learning, Critical Thinking, Mentoring  
Educative Assessment, Self-Assessment)



Reflection  
Experience

Deep or Significant Learning



# Upon Further Reflection, a Few Random Thoughts

By SAMUEL G. FREEDMAN

*New York Times* 30 August 2006

- "trendiest trend in all of education"
- "the consecration of emotion and feeling"
- "process over content . . . confessional, therapeutic strain of American culture"
- "loosey goosey" substitute for "critique, evaluation, analysis [with actual] criteria"
- "fashionable folderol"

Available

<http://www.educ.msu.edu/news/newsbriefs/06/randonthoughts.htm>

# Fortune Cookie, "Dum Dum"<sup>®</sup>, or "Tootsie Roll"<sup>®</sup> Surprise

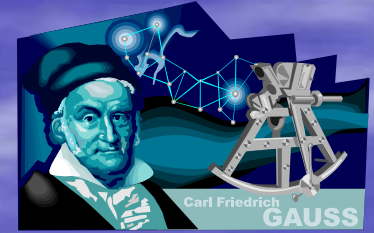


- Quad groups.
- Open fortune cookie, lollipop, or candy.
- Reflect on "surprise" and share writing with group.

# Getting to Know . . .



Shakespeare



Two of the following statements are true;  
one is not true. **Which one?**

1.

2.

3.

# Classroom Critical Incident

## Questionnaire (Brookfield, 1995, p. 115)

- At what moment in the class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
- At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
- What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming and helpful?
- What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?
- What about the class this week *surprised* you the most?

[Students turn in one copy, face down, at end of week as they leave class. They keep one copy to include in their learning portfolios, where they summarize and analyze record of responses and posit future learning goals.]

# Meta-Purpose of Exercises

What did you discover about

- Reflective writing?
- Collaboration?
- Learning?

Students say . . .

Online reflective writing is cool!

## Practical benefits:

- Extends learning time (and space)
- Covers content
- Encourages connections, creativity
- Provides practice of formal skills
- Showcases value of research

# Bonus benefits:

- Fosters learning community
- Creates safe, dynamic, & formative learning environment
- Facilitates collaborative learning
- Develops reflection skills & habits of mind =

*Reflective learners!*

# Tips for Encouraging Reflective Writing & Learning

- Learning portfolio (Zubizarreta, 2004; 2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).
- Group work, Simulations, Games (Millis, 1998, 2002, 2003).
- Journal, learning log, blog, wiki.
- "RLM," Critical Response (Zubizarreta, 2003).
- SGID "Small Group Instructional Diagnosis" (Black, 1998), midterm assessments.
- "Critical Incident Questionnaire" (Brookfield, 1995).
- Online threaded discussions, listservs, discussion circles.
- One-minute papers, CATS (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

❖ *What would you add?*

# Resources on Reflection in Learning

- Angelo, T. & P. Cross. *Classroom Assessment Techniques*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.
- Belenky, et al. *Women's Ways of Knowing*. New York: Basic Books, 1986.
- Black, B. "Using the SGID Method for a Variety of Purposes." *To Improve the Academy*. Ed. M. Kaplan. Vol. 17. POD Network in Higher Edu. New Forums Press, 1998. 245-62.
- Brookfield, S. D. *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.
- Fink, L. Dee. *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- King, P. & K. Kitchener. *Developing Reflective Judgment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.
- Kolb, D. A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1984.

# More Resources . . .

- Millis, B. J. "Using Cooperative Games for Faculty Development." *To Improve the Academy*. Ed. Wehlburg & Chadwick-Blossey. Vol 21. POD Network in Higher Edu. Bolton: Anker, 2003. 93-103.
- Millis, B. J. & P. Cottell. *Cooperative Learning for Higher Education Faculty*. Phoenix: Oryx, 1998.
- Millis, B. J. & J. Hertel. *Using Simulations to Promote Learning in Higher Education*. Sterling: Stylus, 2002.
- Piaget, Jean. *Biology and Knowledge*. Edinburgh UP, 1971.
- Schön, D. *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals Think in Action*. NY: Basic Books, 1983.
- Zubizarreta, J. "Improving Honors T & L with Collaborative 'Critical Response': Formative Midterm Assessment." *National Honors Report* 14.2 (Summer 2003): 20-23.
- ---. *Learning Portfolio: Reflective Practice for Improving Student Learning*. Bolton: Anker, 2004; Jossey-Bass, 2009.
- Zull, J. E. *The Art of Changing the Brain*. Sterling: Stylus, 2002.