

Strategy: Reflection on Teaching

Formal reflection means you're learning and evolving alongside former students and benefits future ones.

Origin

The McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning. (2011). *Looking back to move forward*. Retrieved from <http://www.princeton.edu/mcgraw/library/sat-tipsheets/move-forward/>.

Utell, J. (2010, July 20). *Using failure to reflect on our teaching*. The Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/blogPost/Using-Failure-to-Reflect-on/25435/>.

Collier, A. (2010, December 12). Summative self-assessment. Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Texas A & M. Retrieved from <http://learningobsessed.edublogs.org/2010/12/12/summative-self-assessment/>.

Application

Looking Back to Move Forward

Reflect on the semester in the following ways. Additionally, read student evaluations in the context of information gathering to promote your reflection on these prompts.

- Look back over your syllabus. When did the course progress more quickly than you expected? Where did the students have problems that caused you to slow down? Make notes for adjusting the pace while the semester is fresh in your mind.
- Ask students about course content. Which concepts, units, activities, examples, did they find engaging? What should be added and deleted?
- Think back on your best class sessions of the semester. What did the sessions have in common? How did you stimulate student engagement with course materials? How might you prepare to maximize these results in the future?
- Refine objectives for the next time you teach the course. What did students learn this year? What evidence do you have for this assessment? Is it what you expected or hoped? How are your expectations connected to student learning now and in the future?
- Consider moments of tension and/or conflict in the semester. Could these have been avoided? How? How might you have responded differently?

Using Failure to Reflect on our Teaching

Use a short, written reflection to identify specific challenges so that you stop thinking of your work as a failure and, rather, find opportunities for concrete solutions.

- What were all of the ways you failed this semester?
- Were these failures related to:
 - Pacing the work of individual class meetings?
 - Spacing out the work of the syllabus (readings, assignments)?
 - Incompleteness?

- Incoherence?
- Outside demands on your time?
- Over/underpreparing?
- Textbooks or other course materials?
- Expectations (yours or the students)?
- Technology?
- Group dynamics?
- Remind yourself that you have fixed failure before. Ask yourself:
 - What was a failure you learned from that changed the way you teach?
 - What were some moments where you felt like a class was unsatisfactory, incomplete, or a failure? How did you fix it?

Summative Self-Assessment

Four strategies for end-of-the semester self-assessment

1. Self-questionnaire:

- What has been your greatest success in your course this year? Have you been successful in meeting your teaching goals? What specific examples can you provide?
- What has been the biggest challenge in your course this year? How have you adapted your teaching practice to meet and overcome the challenge? Do you feel you were successful? Why?
- What has provided you with the greatest joy in your teaching this year? How have you found your teaching enjoyable?
- Where do you go from here? What teaching challenges will you tackle next year?

2. Learning outcomes reflection:

- List each learning outcome for the course and then list what activities worked and what activities did not work in helping students achieve those outcomes.
- Also reflect on the learning outcomes as an instructor. What did you learn this semester? What new information or new materials helped you to learn and may help your students in future courses?

3. Semester map:

- Create a visual map of the semester by drawing a creative diagram or using a computer-generated flow chart or concept map. Connect course reflections to one another visually. Consider parts of the map: strengths, challenges, rethink, etc. and use visuals to connect these to one another.

4. Peer interview:

- Have a trusted peer ask you questions about the semester and respond critically to those questions.

Reflection

- How does this compare to what you are already doing in your course?
- Which strategy may work best for you and why?