

## #5 Self-Reflection in Teaching Practice: What Works?

“A reflective approach to teaching is one in which teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching”. (Richards & Lockhart, 1994)

### #1 Educators Benefit from Reflective Practices

- Research and educational professional literature support the idea that reflection can play an important role in helping teachers improve their inclusive practices.
- Expert teachers are able to adjust their thinking to accommodate the level of reflection a situation calls for in order for more successful outcomes to occur.
- Teachers who have the ability to reflect on their teaching practice know not only what to do to better meet the needs of their students, but also why it needs to be done.
- Research substantiates the role of reflection in teachers’ professional growth.

### # 2 Three Levels of Reflection

- **“Looking Back”**- reflection on something after it has happened and considering what went well and what needs to be done differently next time. “Did I provide enough concrete examples using manipulatives to help my students understand the concept”?
- **“Looking At”**- is being aware of what is going on while in the moment and making adjustments as needed. “Hmmm, I think my student does not have the verbal ability to respond/participate in this learning activity. I need to grab an augmentative device and provide another opportunity for him to participate.”
- **“Looking ahead”**- requires thinking about how to use an idea, practice, or planning in the future. “How can I use the recording option in our presentation software to make the lesson on fractions clearer?”

### # 3 Beginning the Process of Reflection (Tice, 2004)

You may begin a process of reflection in response to a particular problem that has arisen with one of your classes, or simply as a way of finding out more about teaching. You may decide to focus on a particular class of students, or to look at a feature of your teaching.

<b>Effective Reflection Methods</b>	
<b>Teacher Diary</b>	This is the easiest way to begin a process of reflection since it is purely personal. You will describe your own reactions and feelings and those you observed on the part of the students. You are likely to begin to pose questions about what you have observed. Diary writing does require a certain amount of discipline. You will need to take the time to write in and reflect in your diary on regular basis.
<b>Peer Observation</b>	Invite a colleague to come into your class to collect information about your lesson. This may be a simple observation. This process will yield information on your specific strengths and weaknesses. Example: You may ask your colleague to focus on which students contribute most in the lesson, what different patterns of interaction occur or how you deal with errors.
<b>Recording Lessons</b>	<p>Video or audio recordings of lessons provide very useful information for reflection. You may do things in class, you are not aware of or there may be things happening in the class that as the teacher you do not normally see.</p> <p>Audio recordings can be useful for considering aspects of teacher talk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much do you talk?</li> <li>• What about?</li> <li>• Are instruction and explanations clear?</li> <li>• How much time do you allocate to student talk?</li> <li>• How much time do you allocate for student participation?</li> <li>• How do you respond to student participation?</li> </ul> <p>Video recordings can be useful in showing you aspects of your own behavior.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do you stand?</li> <li>• How do you use teaching materials/technology?</li> <li>• Who do you speak to?</li> <li>• How do you come across to the students?</li> </ul>
<b>Student Feedback</b>	Ask your students to reflect on how they view the classroom. Their opinions and perceptions can add a different and valuable perspective. This can be done with simple questionnaires or learning diaries. Using student data can be a reflection tool to demonstrate student learning.

## # 4 Reflection Requires Specific Thinking Modes

The use of four different modes of thinking enhance teachers reflective practice

### **Think**

This type of thinking relies on sources that are proven efficient and effective practices. You may notice patterns occurring in your teaching through observation when using these sources.

Example: Using the Core Curriculum when writing IEP goals.

#### **Technological (or Formulaic)**

### **Talk**

This type of thinking requires focus only on information embedded in a specific context at a specific time. As a teacher you will develop more effective teaching strategies when you talk about what you have discovered during the observation to a supportive colleague or friend. Example: After consulting with a colleague, the teacher develops a strategy to intervene with a student's off-task behavior using direct eye contact and statement to focus on their work.

#### **Situational Thinking**

### **Read**

This type of thinking is a deliberate process to gain understanding of a situation and generate solutions. You may discover that through your observation, additional information is needed in certain content area. Resources would include websites, professional journals, magazines, books, etc. This type of thinking requires the teacher to have the ability to suspend judgment as though they are seeing their teaching for the first time. Example: A teacher would video a teaching session and after reviewing the video the teacher realizes that she had not been defining key vocabulary words in the steps of a process.

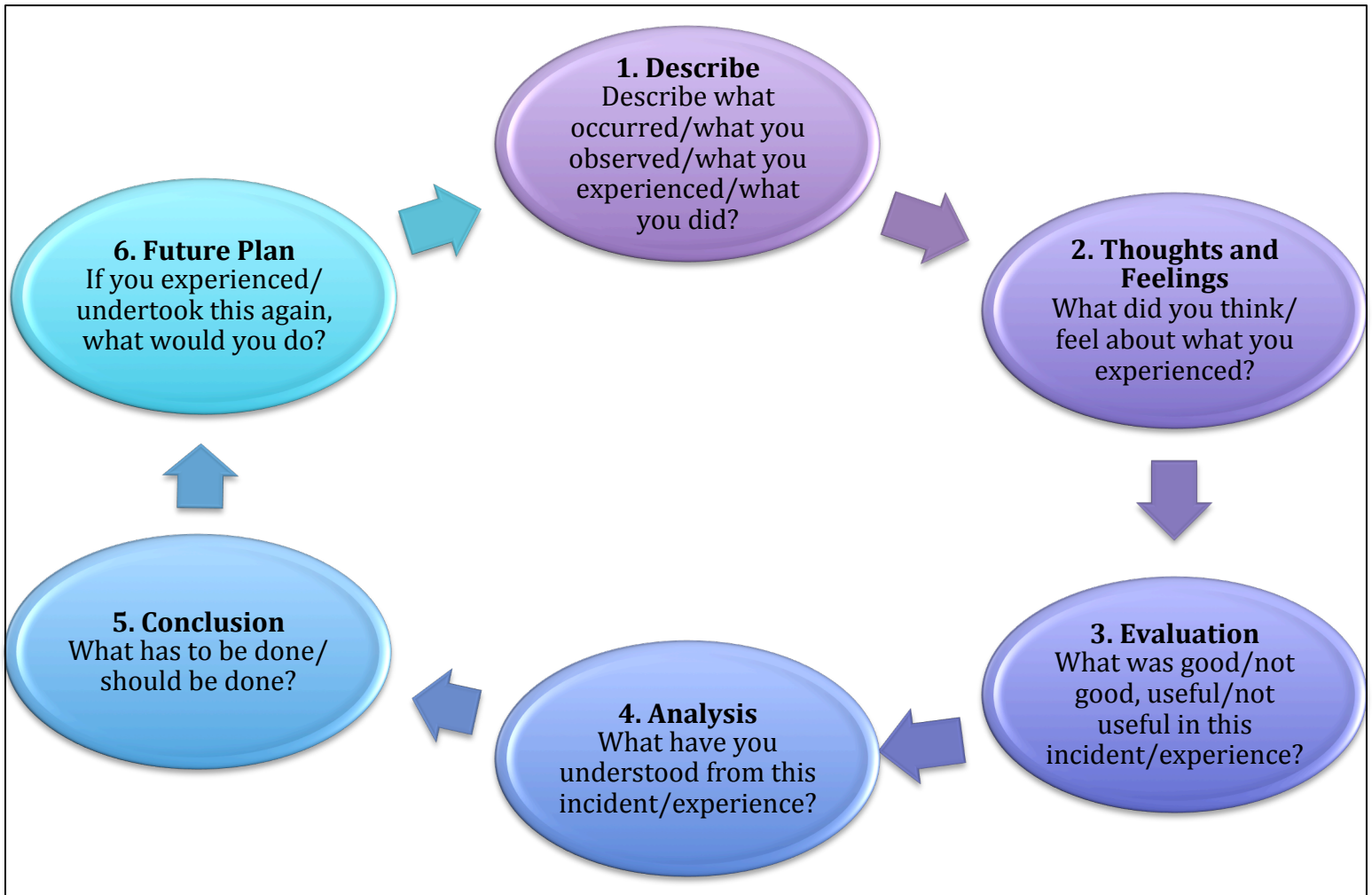
#### **Dialectical Thinking**

### **Ask**

This type of thinking requires more information than the immediate context provides. Asking questions and seeking answers/solutions through collaboration with peers, administrators, specialists, parents, and in-service trainers promotes successful problem solving. Example: After reviewing reading data for a group a student's you collaborate with a colleague to determine new strategies to use during teaching sessions.

#### **Deliberate Thinking**

**Reflective teaching is a cyclical process, because once you start to implement changes, then the reflective cycle begins again.**



***“Classrooms, unlike the rooms in which ballerinas practice, have no mirrors.”***

Eisner, 1998, p.160

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