



Is Your School a “Habits of Mind” School?

Creating Avenues for Student Reflection

I now have had 63 years of teaching experience. I started as an untrained teacher, the year before I went to Teachers College. In retirement, I continue serving through indirect teaching roles such as writing like this and senior leader appraisal. In all these years of teaching, leading innovative and creative senior leaders and tutoring in a College of Education post graduate course for teachers already in the work force, the standout issue I saw was easily identified as the importance of process. Habits of Mind is just that: it's all about process.

Both Karen Tui Boyes and I were early adaptors of Art Costa's Habits of Mind several decades ago. I wrote my first pieces in the Costa and Kallick book, *Integrating and Sustaining Habits of Mind* nearly two decades ago. Later, I worked a major chapter in the much larger book, *Habits of Mind Across the Curriculum*.

In 2007, Karen and I were involved in composing Appendix C to the book, *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind*, as we were both involved in a select group of international educators gathered together during the 2007 Habits of Mind International Expos.

There are 16 Habits, too many to give proper justice to in this article. Thus, this will be about only one of them: Thinking about thinking (metacognition), or my preference, reflection.

“Without reflection, we go blindly on our way.”

- Margaret J. Wheatley

John Dewey, the grandfather of American educational thought and theory held a firm belief in the importance of actively involving students in their own learning. It is the student, not the subject matter, which determines the quality and quantity of learning, simply stating, “We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience.”

If we believe this, students must be interactive with their own learning to really understand and learn to their maximum ability.

In his 1997 book, *The Hungry Spirit*, futurist Charles Handy devotes a chapter to education where he expresses, “I would have more faith in a National Curriculum if it were more concerned with process than with content.”

Hattie, the major authority figure in present day western education, has stated that, “Learning and teaching occurs when teachers see learning through the eyes of students and help them become their own teachers.”

Reflection, when done without the pressure of being assessed, does this. Honest reflection allows those reading it, such as respectful teachers, to get inside the mind of the writer. Harper Lee backs Hattie with, “You never really understand a person

until you consider things from his point of view — until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

Costa and Kallick advocate metacognitive reflection for students to become more strategic about their own learning. “We must continually remind ourselves (and our students) that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is having students learn to become self-evaluative.”

Develop a Strategy

“If you don't know where you are going you could end up someplace else.”

-Anonymous

While there are multiple avenues of strategy for reflections, a rubric provides this framework as concise and exact as a student's level of expertise. Allowing the students to develop their own rubric provides student voice and ownership of the reflection. It also requires care on the part of the teacher not to intrude in any way as an authority figure, imposing his or her own vocabulary. To do this will destroy student ownership. The teacher needs to be conscious of this danger, especially in the first instance where teacher control and direction may be needed, as the students will need to be taught the process. Whether this is done as a class, group, or as an individual lesson will be up to the professional judgement of the teacher.

There is an example of not intruding on the student voice in the rubric used for this article. Note under Apprentice, "Clothes in the wardrobe." This was an apparent anomaly to me, but not to the student who believed that she had to be better disciplined overall and therefore keeping her room tidy was a necessary adjunct. To her, this served as a part of the disciplined behaviour she was intent on implementing.

It will take time, lots of time. The example beneath, done with the one individual, took some fifty plus minutes. Be prepared for it to be double that. How precise and accurate it is will largely determine the precision and accuracy of the reflection.

It will not matter if the first rubric is perfect or not, if it is the student action that has created it and the rubric is at least aspirational. At the beginning stage, it will be a work in progress where the action of doing it provides an ever increasing depth of more and more personal practical knowledge leading to incremental improvement.

The five-part Dreyfus model is an ideal pattern to follow and is used in the example provided here. The stages start with novice at the beginner stage and progress through Apprentice, Practitioner, Advanced Learner and finally Expert at the top.

The bottom or novice level is where the students are now, and is the first part of the rubric to complete. Take care that this area is the start line: what they need to move from, and up through the stages to the final expert level. A misconception is that the things they cannot do are listed. Note in the rubric beneath that there is a subtle but important distinction between this and stating where they are at. There is no blame or assessment attributed.

Having completed where they are at, the next step is a leap to the top, to the expert area: where they want to be. At this stage, an affirmation is more important than detail. The third stage is to fill in the intermediate goals for each of the stages, indicating what the student needs to do to move up the hierarchy and into the more advanced stage.

In all this, note that throughout this process, the KISS process is in vogue: Keep It Short and Simple.

To the right of the stages for the rubric are two columns labelled What to Say and What to Do. They provide not only reference points for the reflection but also emphasis on how student actions and processes are an important part of the reflective process. Having two columns with complimentary but different criteria gives a second opinion, thus strengthening conclusions drawn.

As an adjunct to the rubric, Covey's quadrants were introduced for students to develop a conceptual idea that effort alone is insufficient. It is the results of that effort which is important.

This link gives a practical introduction to what all this means, and why some effort is counter productive.

<https://sidsavara.com/coveys-time-management-matrix-illustrated>.

Time needs to be set aside to write up each week's reflection. The last period on Friday seems to be a suitable time, so time table it in. What gets time tabled gets done! Until the next issue, juts get your students writing. Read the writing with interest but do not mark or assess just yet.

It is the student, not the subject matter, which determines the quality and quantity of learning.



RUBRIC – TIME MANAGEMENT		
STAGE	WHAT TO SAY	WHAT TO DO
<p>Expert</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Completed a “perfect” assignment ➤ Manage time by planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Brainstorm ✦ list what I need to do ✦ time line ✦ clothes in the wardrobe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I am organised ✓ I know when to do things ✓ I know what is important ✓ I am focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting things immediately • Planning • Doing more than one draft
<p>Advanced Learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Planning ➤ Multiple Drafts ➤ Perfect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I've got a plan and I'm working to it ✓ I've got my first draft done ✓ I have enough time to revise and do more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan done (focused and motivated) • Revising and redrafting
<p>Practitioner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Start planning immediately on paper ➤ Two drafts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I've got a plan! ✓ Visual confirmation that I am focused. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ I've got a first draft ✦ I've got a second draft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan on paper as well as in brain • Drafts are evidence of progress
<p>Apprentice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Start planning earlier but still in brain (wardrobe) ➤ One draft completed ➤ Clothes in the wardrobe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I must get a plan done! ✓ More focused but still in brain and won't see it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about it but just starting to write things down
<p>Novice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not important to do it now ➤ There is plenty of time ➤ Not focused on how to get to the finished product ➤ Other things being done (Covey 3 and 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I'll do it tomorrow ✓ I have got XYZ to do instead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a lot <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time wasting • changing not focusing • Thinking about it in brain, no visual evidence 📺



Alan Cooper is an educational consultant based in New Zealand. As a principal, he was known for his leadership role in thinking skills, including Habits of Mind, learning styles and multiple intelligences, information technology, and the development of the school as a learning community.

Alan can be contacted at:
82napawine@gmail.com.