**Embedded Reflection**

Definitions: Reflection connects evidence to expectations of intellectual growth. *Embedded* reflection prompts students to anticipate or appraise their intellectual growth at appropriate points before, during, and/or after activities.

The series of exercises below demonstrates “embedding reflection” into the opening days of a First-Year Composition course:

**A Writer’s Profile**

Please take 5 minutes to compose a “writer’s profile” that will give me an idea of your experience as a writer. You may want to list writing you’ve done outside an academic context as well as work you’ve done in school. For instance, you might let me know if you blog, write letters, design web pages, keep a diary, participate in chat rooms, or compose poetry and short fiction, or write reports for your job as well as if you have kept records for a club or organization, written for a school yearbook or newspaper, put together manuals. Also list the more typical course activities such as note-keeping, speech writing, book reports, lab reports, history projects, business documents, essay exams, research assignments, persuasive papers, and the like. Indicate which tasks you do best or enjoy most.

**A Literacy Narrative**

Turn the “Writer’s Profile” you did in class into an introduction to a 3-page essay that will explain to me and to your classmates how you’ve developed so far as a writer. Select the writing tasks that had the most impact on your growth. Reflect on the nature of this growth. Your narrative may show how your growth as a writer enhanced your growth in other literacy skills, e.g., reading, public speaking, critical listening, uses of interactive technology. How did each writing task that you select have an impact on your intended readers? What did you learn from doing the tasks? How did each task contribute to, or detract from, your understanding of your effectiveness as a writer? Consider how these experiences help you understand what goals you now want to focus on, in order to become a competent writer in college. Discuss what you hope to gain by the time you finish this First-Year Composition course (you may want to single out or add to the appropriate objectives stated in the syllabus).

Possible follow-up Reflective Activities—Which one might you choose, and why?

- **Read** over your own literacy narrative and then read two other classmates’ drafts. Write a page or so of reflection, noting how your draft compares and/or contrasts with the drafts you read. Rank your draft according to the rubric below, and in your reflection, explain what you feel is strongest, and what might need further work. Next class, turn in a packet that includes your original draft, your reflection, and your final revision.

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<th>Strong</th>
<th>Okay</th>
<th>Weak</th>
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Your introduction adequately sums up a number of writing tasks you’ve done

Your identify tasks that had a significant impact on you and explain

You indicate what goals you now have as a college writer

You discuss what you hope to gain from ENGL 103

You edit for spelling, grammar, and mechanics.

- **Before you turn in your draft, please reread the prompt very carefully and write a note to me, explaining what kind of grade your high school English teacher might have given it. Reflect on what that teacher would have valued and/or critiqued in your draft, and why. Based on the requirements you observe in the prompt, what do you think you could generalize at this point about the requirements of college level writing and how you match up to those requirements?**

- **Here’s a quick review of the process you went through to develop your literacy narrative: (1) You wrote a draft, collecting commentary and suggestions from two other classmates and your instructor; (2) You revised, based on the feedback you got; (3) You received a grade and the final revision and some more, brief comments from your instructor. Reflect on what you gained from this process and what seemed most useful**
about it. How would you evaluate this experience, in comparison to what you said about your growth as a
writer in your literacy narrative.

What can students (and we) learn from embedded reflection?

Sample #1: Reflect on what rhetorical techniques you feel you used especially well in your recent analysis
of a popular commentator.

Student response: “In the essay I wrote on Bill O’Reilly, “Spinning ‘No Spin,’” I used observation to establish his
character. I wrote, “He is in your face. He is loud. He will ask uncomfortable questions. He gets people off their
seats […]. You may not like him, but his opinions move people to action.” Through the use of this conjectural
claim about him, I am able to suggest my observation to the reader as a credible one. But a component of making
a conjectural claim like this is missing. You must get the reader to trust your perceptions through the way you
present your ethos as you write.

“In the same essay, I try to make an appeal to the reader on a basis of my ethos. First, I admit that Bill
O’Reilly is confrontational and that my respect for him concerns his fearlessness instead of respect for all of his
ideas. By doing so, I attempt to portray myself as just any common guy that enjoys political and social discussion.
Then I end the essay by telling the reader that I am much less bold and much more conscious of others around
me and how they feel—that I am not completely set in my beliefs, suggesting that I am honestly seeking out
what’s right. All of those appeals help establish my character, and in the end, make my other persuasive
techniques stronger.”

Sample #2: Reflect on what course activities you found especially useful during this semester and
explain.

Student Response: “This semester, I learned the importance of revising my papers according to other people’s
comments. This semester is the first time I have ever considered comments that were not from the teacher when
revising my paper. Through the Webboard, I learned to ease my anxiety of my peers reading my papers and
commenting on them. I never liked people reading my papers because I take criticism badly when it is not stated
well. However, in our class the comments were constructive and more like suggestions and not criticism. For
example, when I wrote my mother’s biography, I not only used the teacher’s comments, but also M__’s and A__’s
comments to revise my paper. During this semester, I gained a better sense of accepting comments and revising
according to those suggestions.”

More types of embedded reflection:

- Concept map showing connections and relationships among ideas in a draft
- Review and commentary on what’s been learned from the research process undertaken for a project
- Midterm self-evaluation of performance, referring to specific projects and artifacts as a predictor of how well
  the student is meeting the course objectives
- Evaluation of the quality of a group’s effort to do a collaborative project, in comparison with the student’s own
  contribution to that project
- Progress reports on a project
- Recommendation whether to keep a course text or adapt another one, based on what groups of students feel
  they’ve gained from the text
- Discussion of the “course lexicon” and how well the student thinks s/he can apply that lexicon
- Review of an earlier project as a baseline for what kinds of learning have occurred since the completion of
  that project
- Forecast or prognostication of what a student anticipates s/he will learn from a project, activity, or text
- Critique of purposes texts have served for the course (e.g., models, instruction, sources)
- Other—

Bibliography: go to  http://comppile.tamucc.edu/search.php ; type “reflection” in “Keywords”