

Reflective Writing

Students will analyze and communicate reflectively about literacy goals.

Program of Studies

In Reflective Writing, students will

- evaluate personal progress toward meeting goals in literacy skills
- develop the connection between literacy skills (reading and writing) and understanding of content knowledge
- describe their own literacy skills, strategies, processes or areas of growth
- analyze own decisions about literacy goals
- evaluate own strengths and areas for growth
- support claims about self

Core Content for Assessment 4.1

Reflection: An Overview

Webster's New World Dictionary defines reflection as “serious thought” or “contemplation.” The process of reflection involves careful thought and serious consideration of past events. True reflection requires analysis and higher level thinking. Teachers should ask students to think reflectively about their learning often and in many situations. The more students are expected to reflect upon their learning, the more distinctions they make, and the more successfully they will internalize what they have learned. Using writing as a method of reflection allows this to happen.

To write well reflectively, students must carefully consider an event or events from the past—an accomplishment, a learning experience, a meaningful lesson, etc.—and then they must show the significance of that event through their writing; they must give serious thought or contemplation to the subject of their writing.

What is the purpose of reflective writing for the Writing Assessment Portfolio?

The process of reflection is a powerful tool in a student's education. Reflection requires thinking, serious contemplation and analysis about something (in the case of the Writing Portfolio—about their growth in writing and literacy development).

Reflective writing should be practiced consistently in all content areas and grade levels. Reflection can happen in writing to learn, writing to demonstrate learning, and writing for publication. Reflection involves critical thinking, and thus, must be practiced regularly.

Reflective Writing is meant to be a self-assessment. Self-assessment should become a natural part of any writer's process. **This kind of thinking and writing should occur not only during final portfolio development but also at regular intervals during the year. Students need regular practice in reflective writing to become better at analyzing their growth in literacy.** A student needs this type of reflective writing in his/her folder in order to produce the most comprehensive, thoughtful portrait of himself/herself as a writer and learner.

While reflection might be found in any category of writing, for the Writing Portfolio Assessment, one piece must be reflective to serve the transactive purpose of informing the reader. It might be based on experience, but **the student is using the narration of that experience to meet the purpose of analyzing writing growth through literacy.**

For the Writing Portfolio Assessment, the reflective piece must have as its central focus growth in writing through the lens of literacy. However, the piece may be written for a variety of audiences in a variety of forms.

Given that purpose, students may focus the piece many ways.

Examples

- ❑ A student writer might analyze his growth as a writer by focusing on a particular learning experience that improved his literacy. For example, he might analyze the inquiry process he went through to write the analytical lab report he included in his portfolio. The piece would be very individual and unique to the student.
- ❑ A student might, instead, talk about how she developed in writing through reading. Perhaps as a child she read every Nancy Drew mystery available. She noticed that as she grew older, the reading experiences influenced her writing as she liked to write stories that were mysterious. This sparked her interest in writing (and thus reinforced the interest in reading), and, as she grew, her writing growth is evident in the mystery story she included in her portfolio.
- ❑ As a third example—same purpose, to analyze growth as a writer through literacy—a student might recognize the importance a particular teacher played in his growth. He writes a personal essay showing how this happened—how the learning experiences he had while in that teacher’s class helped make him the writer he is today. Or, he might write a letter to that teacher, discussing particular learning experiences that really made an impression on him.

In any of these examples, the purpose is the same. The focus is different and provides a way for the writer to achieve his/her purpose.

To accomplish the purpose of reflecting on literacy growth, a student may describe himself/herself as a reader, writer and learner and examine the significance of the related experiences. **The reflective piece should be as individual as the students.** Teachers should **not** use a checklist of “things to include” in a reflective piece as this practice decreases ownership and authenticity in students’ writing.

Characteristics of the Reflective Piece in the Writing Assessment Portfolio

- ❑ This piece may come from a language arts class, but it might also be developed in a content area class.
- ❑ In the reflective piece for the portfolio, a student might refer to a piece as an example to support his reflection, but there is no need to refer to all pieces.
- ❑ Students may achieve this purpose by making connections between literacy skills and their understanding of content knowledge.
- ❑ To accomplish this purpose, students may choose an audience who would be the most interested in that student's learning experiences, perhaps a teacher (past or present), a parent or grandparent (who may have had an impact on that child's literacy development), a scholarship committee member who is making a judgment, a general reader who may identify with him/her in that literacy development.
- ❑ The student may also choose the form in which he wants to write. A letter could certainly be appropriate, but a personal essay may work equally well. In every circumstance, students should consider the purpose and audience when choosing the most appropriate and authentic form.
- ❑ Students may still choose to write letters to the reviewer as they have for many years in Kentucky; however, they may also make other logical choices given their purpose in writing.
- ❑ If students' reflective pieces are as individual as other pieces (e.g., the personal piece) they may write, the students are probably on target if they are reflecting on writing and literacy growth. If all of the reflective entries seem to sound alike, students are not doing the proper kind of thinking and analysis the reflective piece calls for.

Teachers wishing to help students improve their reflection on literacy may consider the following characteristics that help students build toward strong reflection.



Weaker

Stronger

Weaker reflective writing:	Stronger reflective writing:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> may simply list writing and reading experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> demonstrates specific literacy experiences that show impact/growth in writing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> may show little reflection, analysis or insight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> demonstrates significance of literacy experiences through insightful analysis of learning events.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> may demonstrate little awareness of writing for a selected audience. Often, the only connection to the audience is included at the top of a letter—Dear _____, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> targets a specific audience and shows careful consideration of audience’s needs to clearly communicate the purpose of the piece.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> demonstrates little idea development; writing may simply list pieces in the portfolio. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> demonstrates careful idea development and makes connections to literacy growth experiences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> may demonstrate listings that are organized randomly (e.g., I learned this. . . I learned this. . .) with few or no connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> demonstrates clear organization with insightful connections through analysis and reflection.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> may narrate an experience for no other purpose than to narrate an experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> demonstrates narration of experience for the transactive purpose of analyzing growth in literacy to show impact on writing and learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> may be developed in a simple or illogical form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> demonstrates careful choice of form given purpose and audience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> may be “cookie cutter.” Writing may seem “generic.” All pieces in a class may sound similar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> is individual to the student and his/her learning experiences.