TEPL Professional Growth Plan: Sample Self-Reflections

The following are provided not as “model” reflections but as models of reflection. They are offered in order to help you think, as an author, about ways to approach reflection, and as a coach or evaluator, about how to approach conferencing in a helpful mindset. We encourage you to read through them all, particularly those that are outside of your area since multiple perspectives help enrich your reflection.
Reflection on the student performance writing data from my third grade classes over the past two years and discussions with my evaluator and district writing coordinator indicate that a high percentage of students (greater than 90%) are meeting goal performance levels for narrative writing as measured by the district K-5 writing rubric, but very few students in my class are reaching the most advanced levels despite consistent implementation of curriculum and instruction. I have implemented the grade-level units of writing study and mini-lessons specific to writing techniques and approaches (downshifting, TADDF, etc.). Feedback from my evaluator, discussions with the writing resource teacher in my building, and my own self-reflection on my lessons indicate that I have progressed in my use of focus questions and clarity of lesson objectives with students. However, I am often so focused on instruction with the whole group (and teacher-directed conversation seems to dominate, as evident in scripts from my classroom lessons) that I only provide general, motivational feedback to individual students.

I am wondering how I can elevate my own language about writer’s craft and provide specific, descriptive feedback during conferring conferences in a way that allows my students to reflect on their writing with more focus and take more ownership of their needs in writing. I think I will also need to undertake a close analysis of the writing rubric against student work to determine the focus of my feedback to students to foster their growth into the advanced levels on the rubric and to be better able to model descriptive feedback and specific language about writing to students. As I grow in my professional learning in this area, impact should be evident not only in the quality and writing rubric scores of student writing pieces but also in students’ self-reflection of their work with greater specificity and detail (following the descriptive feedback that I model in my conferencing with them about their pieces).
Reflection on student performance data from my seventh grade Language Arts classes over the past two years and discussions with my evaluator and instructional leader indicate that in the realm of written response to text (i.e. essays, reflection papers, etc.) as measured by the school writing rubric, a high percentage of students (greater than 90%) are meeting goal performance levels, but very few students in my classes are reaching the most advanced levels despite consistent implementation of curriculum and instruction.

Though I have been using rubrics with my classes to ensure their awareness of the expectations for their written pieces, I am wondering if there is a structure that I might use to better communicate specific feedback to them to improve their writing and to foster their own reflection on their work. I think I will also need to undertake a close analysis of the writing rubric against student work to determine the focus of my specific feedback to students to foster their growth into the advanced levels on the rubric. As I grow in my professional learning in this area, impact should be evident not only on the quality and writing rubric scores of student writing pieces but also on students’ self-assessment of their work with greater specificity and detail (following the descriptive feedback that I model in my conferencing with them about their pieces).
Reflection on student performance data from my English classes over the past two years and discussions with my evaluator and department chair / instructional leader indicate that in the realm of written response to text (ie. essays, reflection papers, etc.) as measured by the school 6-point writing rubric, a high percentage of students (greater than 90%) are meeting goal performance levels, but very few students in my classes are reaching the most advanced levels (5 or 6) despite consistent implementation of curriculum and instruction.

Though I have been using rubrics with my classes to ensure their awareness of the expectations for their written pieces, I am wondering if there is a structure that I might use to better communicate specific feedback to them to improve their writing and to foster their own reflection on their work. I think I will also need to undertake a close analysis of the writing rubric against student work to determine the focus of my specific feedback to students to foster their growth into the advanced levels on the rubric. As I grow in my professional learning in this area, impact should be evident not only on the quality and writing rubric scores of student writing pieces but also on students’ self-assessment of their work with greater specificity and detail as measured by the school reflection rubric (following the descriptive feedback that I model in my conferencing with them about their pieces).
TEPL Professional Growth Plan: Sample Self-Reflections

Visual and Performing Arts (Elementary) – Self-Reflection

I see my students once a week for their visual art instruction which is a one hour class. Even though I carefully plan time for each of the lesson’s components, I still find that the time I have with my students slips away almost every class period, leaving little room during or at the end of the class to provide detailed feedback to each individual student; I have little time to comment on each student’s work or their process when they are working on their projects.

I try to monitor student understanding during my instructional delivery and I post the lesson’s steps on the SmartBoard to ensure that they are followed so I don’t have to spend too much time reviewing them. In addition, during class, I try to make sure to have very brief mini-conferences with the students; however, I find it difficult to provide rich, detailed feedback to every single student (as well as to document and record it). I always try to write a few comments on the students’ work when it’s finished, however, I feel by that time it’s really too late.

I know that I am doing a great job because the students’ work is at grade level; their acquired skills are right on target and their creative voice is really coming out in their work. I just want to find a way to move my students even further despite the time constraints, keeping in mind that I only see them once a week (and sometimes less than that as we have some grades on a rotating schedule !) In addition, I would like to put more responsibility upon the students for providing feedback to each other as well as completing self-assessments to see if they understand each lesson’s concepts.

I have a few ideas that I think would help such as utilizing an iPad or netbook and creating a spreadsheet that has a class roster with a place to document feedback as well as the lesson’s/project’s objectives. I could then walk around the class and notate when I provide feedback along with where the students were in their process. I have thought about creating a bulleted, open ended checklist that students complete at various points during their work. In addition, I have considered having a gallery walk at the end of the class where I give students feedback on their work; however, I am concerned that the whole group format could embarrass individuals who are sensitive about their work. I wondering what other vehicles or approaches might grow my practice in this area and enhance my interactions with my students each time they are in my class.
TEPL Professional Growth Plan: Sample Self-Reflections

Visual and Performing Arts (Secondary) – Self-Reflection

As a relatively new art teacher, while I feel confident in managing student daily work and routines on projects in a studio-based class, I am having some trouble getting all students to complete projects in a timely manner. While I want to encourage my students to balance the need to work toward finishing and submitting projects with their desire to work through them carefully, inevitably my students are completing work on different schedules. This is either slowing down transitions between projects or limiting some students’ access to peer critiques at the end of each project in our desire to move forward with the curriculum.

To encourage project completion, on several occasions throughout the year, I impose a due date. Students are informed of the due date well ahead of time, and I always announce when there will be a whole-class peer critique of the product, but there are often several students who are not ready for the critique because they have not finished the project.

I have tried requiring critique participation from students who have not yet completed their own work, but I have found that students without finished work on display for critique do not have the foundation (acquired skills) to have an effective critique or are either not as interested or more likely to offer negative comments to their peers. And it feels unfair to those students to require unfinished work be put up for the same kind of critique. I have often excused them from the critique and allowed them to continue working independently.

There are several aspects of the issue that might be worth focusing on for my professional growth plan, but I am not sure which combination makes the most sense to pursue:
1. Investigate critique techniques (and/or other techniques) for work in progress and their effectiveness.
2. Implement more formal scaffolding for long-term projects to allow me to respond earlier to project pacing issues.
3. Investigate the effectiveness of small group critiques that might be staggered as students are ready.
4. Investigate the use of technology, such as a googledoc. to have an on-going online critique that is a living document.

Inspired by:
http://www.goshen.edu/art/ed/critique1.html
Physical Education – Self-Reflection

In physical education, I teach a wide variety of units to a wide variety of skill levels. I have students that are frequently introduced to brand new skills while others may be proficient because of outside practice. I often feel that attention and feedback is either emphasized toward lower skilled students during skill portions of units while attention toward higher skilled students is emphasized more during strategy, game based, and implementation portions of units. I notice that students become disengaged and disconnected to the learning when they find skills are too easy and/or too difficult. More athletic students do not receive meaningful challenges during skill based activities and lower skilled students can feel overwhelmed when entering a large group game. Although I scaffold my units to start small and evolve to larger group activities, there is still a disconnect at the beginning and end. Time is also a huge obstacle when providing feedback and extensions and refinements to all students in a 30 min block of time.

Last year, I focused my professional learning on student growth on the Pacer test and found in my data that goal-setting contributed to student improvement on the Pacer. I would like to expand on that this year. I am thinking that if I can provide a way for students to set short term goals to improve their own skills and see where their next step is for engagement, possibly on a continuum, in each situation in my PE class, students will stay engaged and not become overwhelmed or bored. I would like to research goal setting strategies used in sports to allow students to comprehend their own skills and set short term goals to improve in each section of the unit. These goals can emphasize the growth in their own skill development from the control to proficient levels and to better understand their own role in large group games without feeling immersed in a perceived chaotic environment. These short term goal strategies could also help with the Connecticut State Fitness Testing by allowing them to see and understand their own ability and improve in a responsible and engaging way. Using these strategies, students will be better prepared to tackle lifelong fitness obstacles that will be seen in their time after elementary school.
TEPL Professional Growth Plan: Sample Self-Reflections

Special Education – Self-Reflection

I have noted over time that fourth grade students in special education tend to have great difficulty in holding content-based discussions with one another. There are several reasons for this including learned helplessness and language difficulties. As a result, these students can perform well in the classroom at the guided practice stage of gradual release, but they struggle when asked to work at the independent level. I am realizing just how critical the collaborative stage must be in the gradual release model. I wonder if they had more time for collaborative work, if this would help them to respond better independently.

My hypothesis is that this is also what is contributing to such poor performance on the CMTs for these students; despite the range of students I have worked with over the past several years, performance remains in the basic or below basic realm in reading. DRP scores have shown improvement but performance on the reading comprehension strands remains well-below goal for more than 50% of my students across years.

I feel I have not before focused on how to build my students content-based discussions with one another or their collaborative work. My instruction is very teacher-directed and my repertoire of approaches is limited in that way. Moving forward, I would like to focus on my teaching of accountable talk with my students in the hopes that students can take greater responsibility for their own learning in discussions as well as improve their skills across content areas.
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World Language – Self-Reflection

In the last two years of teaching Spanish 1, although I utilize a variety of activities to practice and assess student oral proficiency (interviews, role play, question-answer), I find that most students in the beginning levels of the Spanish are not able/willing to take risks to go beyond a basic response, a prepared skit or a scripted presentation.

I know that authentic application of language is critical to students’ development of a world language, but I’m finding that’s just not enough. I also know that speaking and writing are productive skills in learning a language, but I sense I am not using these skills the right way. According to the ACTFL guidelines, in order to move my students from the Novice level to the Intermediate level, my students must produce language that is not controlled, memorized and/or formulaic. Their responses must be more spontaneous and authentic. I want to develop students who can maintain conversations and connect ideas with the language.

In the past, I’ve tried varying the task (based on theme, grammatical structure or cultural topic), the format (presentation, skit) and the grouping (individual, pairs, teacher-selected groups and student-selected groups). I’ve given detailed instructions on what to include and to what extent, as well as sample models of high and low quality. But these strategies have resulted in only minor improvements.

I wonder what techniques and strategies have proven to be effective K-12. I am curious what instructional and assessment strategies my colleagues have found successful across the grade levels. I am especially interested to know how they monitor success as well. I would like to investigate and implement some of these techniques that will result in improved oral proficiency for all students.
TEPL Professional Growth Plan: Sample Self-Reflections

Science (Secondary) – Self-Reflection

Last year, the Science department selected a new text book for its 9th grade science course. While the new text is more challenging it includes a wide range of support materials. For example, the lab materials, data-sets and a regularly updated current issues website have all helped to add exciting components to the course, but some of my students are struggling with the readings, both the supplemental readings and from the textbook itself. And the text’s supplemental materials for reading comprehension, note-taking and vocabulary are far less interesting to students. Even with the use of some of the supporting materials, struggling readers in my freshman science classes have had difficulty on even the most basic vocabulary portions of assessments. While in some cases the problem is deeper than reading comprehension the struggle with vocabulary on the assessments in particular points me toward reading comprehension. Most of them also seem to be reluctant readers. This has also been evident to me in reviewing their eighth grade CMT data, which indicates these students are indeed below goal in multiple reading strands.

I know that this is an important focus because Common Core Standards have also placed emphasis on students’ ability to read and comprehend informational texts. This is critical to students learning in a content area such as science.

Because the vast majority of my students are working through the readings and note-taking efficiently, I have been working with the struggling students mostly outside of class, but I would like to integrate more interesting support materials for these students more tightly and formally into the normal flow of the class.

Near the end of last year, I met briefly with the school’s reading specialist, and I did try a few strategies suggested by her in helping those students prepare for the final exam, but it was late in the game, and their scores were still very low overall on the final exam which requires students to move far beyond vocabulary comprehension.

From a couple of conversations, I know that at least one other 9th grade science teacher is equally disappointed with the text book’s reading comprehension support materials, and she also tried some of the reading specialist’s suggestions with a couple of her struggling students near the end of last year.
RTI has called on resource teachers in the district to support student learning in ways that have redefined our roles over the past three years. Specifically in Tier I, my role as a resource teacher has shifted from one of reading teacher to instructional coach, and the intent is that coaching should develop teacher capacity to meet the needs of the range of readers in their classroom. But that is a role that is still new to me and one that I still need to develop a skill set for. I am comfortable diagnosing student needs and providing direct interventions with students. But how do I coach other teachers in this in their own classroom?

I know from the past year’s UST data, that we have a cohort of students (9) entering grade 2 this year that slipped just below benchmark at the end of grade 1 in their oral reading fluency. There has been a similar pattern of data over the past several years. As students move into grade 2 with DIRs, I am wondering how I can best leverage my role as a resource teacher to support the classroom teachers as they implement these DIRs? Beyond support, what does it really mean to build instructional capacity at a grade level? How might a gradual release approach be applied to coaching? And how do I ensure that the work I am doing with the teachers is resulting in students moving towards benchmark? I am thinking this is going to take analysis of my own interventions with students and current best practices in supporting struggling readers to tease out approaches or structures that I might be able to share with classroom teachers for use in their strategy and guided reading groups. Then, if I can develop my coaching skills with these teachers, the impact would be both on their reading instruction in the classroom and in turn on the growth of second grade readers in their classroom.
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School Counselor (Secondary) – Self-Reflection

Historically, we have an excellent graduation rate at NCHS and strong statistics for college admissions based on GPA and standardized test scores. As a counselor at NCHS, I not only review these data points annually, but I also examine past years’ exit survey data from graduating seniors asking them to reflect on their high school experience. I seek to gather as much qualitative data as possible from returning college freshman as they reflect on how their experience has prepared them. While this data suggests that we have in place a strong and robust program for students in preparation for college, I wonder how we can continue to look more closely at data to determine if students are indeed pursuing post-high school plans that are most relevant and meaningful to them. I wonder how the learning styles inventory and Naviance tools might support this and be better utilized as data.

NCHS students currently use the learning styles inventory, the personality inventory and the college search tools provided through Naviance to explore their personal strengths, their blind spots and their study methods. Each tool offers opportunities for students to gain a better understanding of their selves and to utilize the information to set goals and link it to college and career aspirations. In the past, students have been introduced to these programs in class and computer lab settings. Counselors direct students to the programs and provide time to conduct the inventories and review the results. There is not an opportunity, however, for students and counselors to have follow-up discussions that would help students to reflect on the findings, link the results to their goals and explore how it might direct post high school research. This year, I would like to focus on ways to provide the continuity and links needed between the various program results, so that students can make more meaningful choices in the post high school planning process. This would also align with the development of Student Success Plans as outlined by the state.
TEPL Professional Growth Plan: Sample Self-Reflections

ICT / Technology Integrator – Self-Reflection

As an ICT staff member, one challenge that I encounter is that we collaborate on student projects but do not necessarily see the end results. Reflection on student qualitative and quantitative assessment data from 9th grade health/ICT My Personal Wellness (MPW) Unit over the past three years and discussions with my evaluator, health teachers, and ICT team members indicate that in the area of “sustained research using technology” (CCSS) as measured by the school 5-point research rubric, a very high percentage of students are meeting goal performance levels (3), with 80% of the freshmen at the most advanced level (4 or 5). Although I have been consistently using rubrics (research and MPW) and online tutorials with students to ensure their awareness of the expectations for research, 20% are still at the basic level. I am wondering if there is a structure that I might use to better communicate specific feedback to them to improve their research and to foster their own reflection on the inquiry process. I believe I need to do an in-depth analysis of the research rubric against student work to determine the focus of my specific feedback to students to foster their growth into the advanced levels on the research rubric. As I implement research-based instructional strategies and conferring (conferencing) skills in this area, impact should be evident not only on the quality and research rubric scores of student, but also on students’ self-assessment of the process with greater specificity and detail as measured by the school reflection and communication rubrics.
For the past several years, the Curriculum Leadership Council has collaborated to develop a shared definition of performance tasks and assessment and several coordinators have shared examples that have been implemented in their curriculum area. In mathematics, we have been focused on developing benchmark assessments aligned to State Frameworks and CMT blueprints to provide universal screening for RTI. Spring math benchmark data at grade 3 and grade 4 in particular over the past three years has shown improvement in the percentage of students meeting 80% or above on the assessment. But teachers have anecdotally shared that they do not always find that these same students are developing as deeply in their mathematical reasoning and problem solving. Because of the strong performance on the concepts and skills-based benchmark assessment, these students are eligible to take a set of rigorous excursion tasks for advanced math placement. More than half of these students have exhibited much difficulty in solving novel tasks on these excursion tasks.

With Common Core in Mathematics Practice Standards and the coming of SMARTER BALANCED Assessment, we need to find tools in mathematics that will allow us to assess deep understanding, reasoning, critical thinking, and problem solving. This is an area of assessment that I need to examine more closely from several dimensions to be able to ensure that our instruction is developing this level of mathematical growth in students and that students are prepared for the next generation of assessment.

- What do performance assessments look like in elementary mathematics?
- Beyond the development of these assessments, what is the learning for teachers to ensure understanding of performance assessments and more importantly to ensure instruction is preparing students for this level of mathematical thinking?
- How do we embed performance tasks and assessment into curriculum unit plans?
- What does the student work from a performance assessment tell us about student learning and how do we use that data to inform instruction in the elementary math classroom?

If I can examine some of these performance assessment questions, the impact can be in the realm of curriculum/assessment development, teacher professional development, and student performance in mathematics.
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Speech / Language – Self-Reflection

Many students identified with special needs learn to become dependent on adults to help them. I see this in my speech and language-impaired students who rely on guided instruction and scaffolding to produce work. They have a difficult time working at the independent level. While I have been working with the Gradual Release of Responsibility model, they have been slow to move toward independence. It is important for them to be less dependent on teachers for success and more independent learners.

I have noticed this specifically in the context of my students’ application of narrative language in their retelling of stories. While they can perform well in isolated exercises that focus on elements of retelling or with teacher prompting, they continue to struggle when presented with the task of retelling independently. This has been evident in the scores I have recorded for students using the narrative language rubric, and for these same students, DRA data from the classroom indicates that while decoding and fluency are at an independent level, comprehension is instructional due to weak retelling / summarizing performance.

So, I want to develop my student’s ability to apply their retelling skills to a passage of text independently. To be more independent, however, the students need to develop the ability to self-monitor and self-assess their work and learning. I have not focused before on developing that metacognition in students in my sessions with them. I am wondering what that might entail and how best to approach that work. Where do I begin?
**Social Worker – Self-Reflection**

Reflection on student performance data from my counseling caseload over the past two months and discussions with my evaluator and colleagues indicate that the majority of my students (80%) are meeting grade level academic and social expectations, but very few of these students are able to articulate how their individual strengths can enable them to maximize their participation in the planning and direction of their learning experience.

Though I have used several means (e.g., worksheets, therapeutic activities, etc.) in order to help students improve their self-awareness skills, I am wondering if there is a structure that I might use to better assist students in strengthening their understanding of themselves. I think I need to develop a delivery of service that consistently reinforces students’ individual assets across all environmental settings (e.g., home, school, community). There is a component to this that is also about developing students’ metacognition and also their ability to self-reflect accurately about their individual strengths. As I grow in reinforcing their assets, I want them to be more aware of their strengths and eventually self-advocate for themselves and be able to make personal, social, and life decisions that steer themselves in ways that use their individual assets.

As I grow my professional learning in this area, impact should be evident in grades, social interactions, ability to contribute to the community, and home life. I am also thinking that teacher survey data and rating scales – particularly those that gather student self-reflection – might be interesting to research in support of my learning and the student impact and might be valuable vehicles for gathering data related to this work.
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Occupational Therapist – Self-Reflection

Over the past two years I have co-led a Hand Writing Without Tears class with a Special Education Teacher in the preschool setting. The class consists of students with IEP’s and students without IEP’s. Not all of the students with IEP’s receive direct occupational therapy services. The Special Education Teacher and I develop a lesson plan for the group with differentiated instruction for the students who benefit from it. Being a part of this class has provided a wonderful opportunity for collaboration between staff. It has enabled me to provide direct training and updates to teaching assistants in the classroom on a daily basis as the students grow.

We moved to this model because our screening data demonstrated a significant number of students in the program whose grapho-motor development was in the “at-risk” level. We have seen tremendous results in the pre- and post-data both for individual case studies and for the class as a whole as measured by our standard screening instruments in OT. I also have qualitative data that illustrates the growth of the staff in this work; this includes surveys and reflections completed by the preschool special education teachers and teaching assistants and my own observations of their practice in supporting student writing in the classroom.

I have often wondered if this approach could work at the kindergarten level. To pursue any of this in kindergarten, I think I need to look closely at the structure of the collaboration with preschool teachers that made the implementation so successful. It was not only about the time I spent with students in the classroom working on the activities of the program but also about the modeling of the strategies and activities for the teachers so they could continue to use the same language and experiences even when I was not there. How can I replicate that again with the kindergarten teachers?