



Student Reflections Continuum

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How can a continuum of reflective writing assessment and developmentally appropriate reflective writing tasks enhance student learning and metacognition?

Helping learners understand and discuss their own learning is at the heart of an inquiry-based curriculum. Reflective writing is a common method used to encourage learners to think deeply about learning goals and their progress. However, reflective writing is as much a writing skill as it is a vehicle for expressing meta-learning. By providing a developmentally appropriate language for discussing quality reflective writing, and providing authentic opportunities to practice reflective writing, teachers can better support the development of these skills, which is central to self-directed learning.

In response to changes in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme's Community Action Service (CAS) element in 2015, an inter-school team of ACS International Schools High School CAS Coordinators developed a rubric to assess student reflective writing. The rubric was shared with students, and then used to provide student feedback and assess learning associated with CAS involvement.

Research into the introduction of the rubric to the CAS students (grade 11 and 12) found that the quality of the reflections were more thoughtful and considered, with students noting that the

process of reflecting made them more aware of their learning and its value and possible applications. This suggested that if students were taught how to reflect from a young age and practiced reflective writing throughout their school career, this activity would become more natural and they would be quite good at it by the time they reached high school. This project was designed to build on the experience of setting and assessing student reflective tasks for high school students and to develop a grade appropriate continuum for student reflective writing tasks and assessments, for students in grades 1 – 12, in order to build the knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions we want all our students to develop.

To begin this project, an inter-school team was formed, with representatives from the Lower, Middle and High School divisions across the ACS International Schools campuses. The team developed a suite of rubrics applicable to the various age groups – Grades 1 to 5; Grades 6 to 8; Grades 9 and 10, and continued with the Grade 11 and 12 rubric designed previously for use with CAS.

The rubrics are all structured to assess the:

Descriptive (The “what”):

- What was/were my goal(s) for this activity?
- What steps did I take? What happened throughout the process?
- How did I manage my time?
- What organisational skills did I use?

Evaluative (The “so what”):

- What did I learn from this activity?
- How had it changed the way I think about the topic/activity?
- Why is this new information important/relevant to me and/or others?
- Did I meet my goal? Why or why not?
- Did my goal change? How or why?
- Did my findings correlate with the goal the way I thought they would?

Interpretive (The “now what”):

- If I were to do this again, would I make any changes?
- How would changes affect the outcomes?
- What new learning have I obtained?
- What new skills have I obtained?
- Was it my approach that helped me acquire new learning?
- Where and how can I use my new learning in other subject areas and/or real-world situations?

Communicative (The “How will I express it?”)

- How did I decide how to communicate my reflection?
- What do I feel is the best way to communicate my

reflection?

- What options are available to me?
- How will I organise my information and thoughts?
- Did I use a form of communication that was appropriate for my audience?
- Do I need to use a reference system?

The rubrics offered a scaled continuum describing performance levels including: pre-emergent; emergent; meets expectations; and exceeds expectations.

Participating teachers were provided with a user guide, ‘Assessing Student Reflections,’ containing details of the data collection process, rubrics and grade-appropriate graphic organizers for helping students organize reflective writing.

Participating students were provided with instructions of how to use the rubric when producing their reflection.

Each participating teacher assessed four reflections by each student in the study group, two before the rubric was introduced to the student, and two after the rubric was introduced.

The results were as follows:

- For Lower School – Grades 1 to 5, the students showed improvement in reflective writing after the rubric was introduced. Those students who scored high before the rubric was introduced showed a greater improvement than those

students who did not score as well, although both groups performed better overall.

- For Middle School – Grades 6 to 8, the students showed improvement after the rubric was introduced. As with the Lower School experience, those students who scored high before the rubric was introduced showed a greater improvement than those students who did not score as well, although both groups performed better overall.

- For High School – Grades 9 to 12, Grade 11 students showed improvement after the rubric was introduced. Students in Grade 12, who were first introduced to the rubric in Grade 11 continue to produce high quality written reflections.

Reflections are integral components in students learning experiences and are now incorporated in different parts of the IB curriculum, including the Theory of Knowledge (TOK), Extended Essay, and CAS, where students are required to write substantial reflections on their experiences as evidence of progress and learning.

Reflection is a valuable tool for both teachers and students, as a means of tracking both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Further refinement of the rubric is expected as it is used more widely.

Resources:

Service Learning and Critical Thinking – A Literature Review

<http://cim.acs-schools.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Service-Learning-and-Critical-Thinking.pdf>

Reflecting on Practical Action in Upper Elementary School (Grade 1-5)

<http://cim.acs-schools.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Reflecting-on-Practical-Action-G1-5.pdf>

Reflecting on Practical Action in Middle School (Grade 6-8)

<http://cim.acs-schools.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Reflecting-on-Practical-Action-G6-8.pdf>

Reflecting on Practical Action in High School (Grade 9-10)

<http://cim.acs-schools.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Reflecting-on-Practical-Action-G9-10.pdf>

Reflecting on Practical Action in High School (Grade 11-12)

<http://cim.acs-schools.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Reflecting-on-Practical-Action-G11-12.pdf>

Assessing Student Reflections - A Teachers Guide

<http://cim.acs-schools.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/5-Reflection-on-Practical-Action-Teacher-Booklet.pdf>

For more information about this project, visit:

<http://cim.acs-schools.com/index.php/student-reflection-continuum/>