

Self-Assessment Strategies for Teachers

Ongoing self-assessment is a key factor in any teacher's professional development. Simply reflecting on questions such as, "What do I do well?" "What do I need to learn how to better?" is an important first step. Some teachers rely on the following to make such self-assessment a habitual part of their professional lives.

Keep a Teaching Journal: At least weekly, preferably more often, schedule 10-15 quiet minutes during which you can write about your teaching. What is going well? What difficulties have you encountered? Are there students in your class who are not responding to instruction as you might have hoped? What might you do about that? Have you heard about any new professional ideas, books, or in-service sessions that you would like to pursue?

Every few months, review your entries. Are there any patterns you would like to address? What do you think of your teaching now compared to the last time you reviewed your entries? Are you pleased with your development? With the ways in which you respond to classroom difficulties?

Call on a Trusted Visitor: Several times a year, invite a trusted colleague to observe your classes. You may wish to ask your visitor to target his or her observations or simply invite general feedback. During the debriefing session, try to accept all commentary (perhaps even taking notes) rather than attempting to explain or respond. Reflect on what you learned.

Film a Class: Set up a tripod and video camera, and film a class or two. As you review the tapes, you may wish to consider the classroom's social dynamics, think about the physical arrangement of your room and how it suits your lessons, or key in on what you say and how you sound to students. Whatever your center of observation, be sure to note those things that you are doing well in addition to looking for areas for improvement.

Ask the Kids: Ask your students to give you feedback on your teaching. You may wish to do this after you have introduced a new concept as a way of assessing student understanding, or you may request feedback at the end of a marking period. You can design a survey that asks students to respond about a number of areas of interest. A simple form simply asks them, "What have I done to help you as a learner?" and "What else might I do to help you as a learner?"