

## CHAPTER ONE

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# *Introduction to Reflective Practice*

A teacher's day never really ends. Wouldn't you agree? In addition to performing the primary responsibility of teaching, many teachers would no doubt like to have the time to sit down and think about what they do inside and outside their classrooms, to catch their breath. They may also feel that they do not have the time to devote to reflecting on their work beyond the fleeting thought of, "Oh, that class went well," or "The students were totally tuned out today." It would be wonderful if administrators recognized the need for teachers to reflect on their work by freeing up some time for that purpose, but unfortunately, that's not the present reality.

*Reflective Practice in Action: 80 Reflection Breaks for Busy Teachers* can help teachers make the best use of their time before, during, and after class if they want to reflect on their work. The book offers questions and strategies, in the form of Reflection Breaks, on all areas of teaching and learning, to be used according to each teacher's preference. Each Reflection Break has a title for easy reference and is either jargon free or explained in detail.

### **WHAT REFLECTION BREAKS OFFER**

*Reflective Practice in Action: 80 Reflection Breaks for Busy Teachers* offers a systematic method—so that teachers can reflect at

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their own paces and at whatever levels they want. If desired, they can go directly to each Reflection Break without reading the surrounding explanation or theory. They can dip into the book at any place or time and think about the questions posed about their work. The explanations can always be read at a later time for deeper reflection. For example, a busy teacher may want to start a teaching journal during the semester. In this case, the teacher can just go straight to Chapter 8 and read the Reflection Breaks about journal writing. Later, when the teacher has finished teaching and has begun reflecting on journal entries, he or she may want to read Chapters 1 through 5 for a more detailed understanding of reflective practice.

One of the main premises of this book is that reflection is crucial for teachers to avoid burnout. I also hope that teachers will become more aware of their practices and more confident and informed decision makers as a result of using this book.

*Reflective Practice in Action: 80 Reflection Breaks for Busy Teachers* is mainly intended for practicing teachers and teachers enrolled in inservice programs, and it can also be used by beginning and student teachers. Its focus is reflecting on practice so that busy teachers can understand, implement, and enhance reflection in their teaching lives. Educational administrators can also use this book to reflect on their personal stances and understanding of teacher development and reflective practice and hence to encourage their teachers to use the book as part of their professional development.

### Structure of the Book

Each chapter is short and to the point.: Chapter 1 offers an introduction to the book as a whole. Chapter 2 lays out the benefits of engaging in reflective practice, setting the Reflection Breaks in motion. Chapter 3 outlines various approaches to reflective practice through time. Chapter 4 attempts to define reflective practice and discusses the different levels of reflection. Chapter 5 gives an overall framework to reflective practice for educators by offering a five-component model of reflective practice:

- Providing opportunities to reflect (the main component)
- Building in some ground rules to the process and into each activity

- Making provisions for four different kinds of time: individual, activity, development, and period of reflection
- Providing external input for enriched reflection
- Providing for low affective states

Chapters 6 through 9 detail four activities that can promote reflective practice: group discussions (Chapter 6), classroom observation (Chapter 7), journal writing (Chapter 8), and maintaining a teaching portfolio (Chapter 9). Chapter 10 offers teachers four additional activities they can use to aid reflection in their teaching lives.

*Reflective Practice in Action: 80 Reflection Breaks for Busy Teachers* is intended for all teachers regardless of the subjects they teach. Each Reflection Break has been tested in seminars and workshops conducted by me with practicing teachers in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other international settings.

If you use the Reflection Breaks in each chapter, I guarantee that you will become more aware of who you are as a teacher and of what informs your practice. I hope that this book enables you to have an exciting reflective journey and that you become a more reflective teacher as a result. You will certainly become a more informed decision maker, and your students can only benefit as a result of your increased level of awareness.

Now, you can begin with the first Reflection Break, taking stock of your development as a teacher thus far and analyzing the results.

### **Reflection Break 1 Taking Stock**

Reflect on yourself as a teacher as a starting point on your reflective journey:

- Do you enjoy going into school each morning?
- Do you find teaching exciting and challenging?
- Do you think of teaching as a job or a profession?
- What is the best aspect of your life as a teacher?
- What is the worst aspect of your life as a teacher?

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- Do you spend much time thinking about new ideas for teaching your classes?
- Do you ever discuss teaching with your colleagues in the staff room?
- Do you ever ask your peers to watch you teach and later comment on your lessons?
- Are there things you would like to change about your teaching? If so, do you believe that you can change them?
- What have you learned about yourself as a teacher so far?

Now you have begun. Continue your reflective journey through the various chapters in *Reflective Practice in Action*.