

# Preface

---

*If change is to occur, reflective thinking must become a taken-for-granted lens through which preservice teachers conceptualize their practice.*

—Ross and Hannay (1986)

**P***romoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers: 50 Action Strategies* provides teacher educators and staff developers, hereafter referred to as facilitators, with strategies to enhance the reflective thinking abilities of preservice and inservice educators. *Reflective thinking* refers to the process of making informed and logical decisions, then assessing the consequences of those decisions. The guide was developed on the premise that reflective thinking is required for effective teaching. Strategies for reflective thinking are approached at three levels: technical, contextual, and dialectical. Within each level, strategies have been field-tested with populations of preservice and inservice teachers. The guide has been reviewed by teacher educators across the nation to verify and validate its usefulness.

Three major goals supported the construction of this document. One was to develop a practical guide to be used by facilitators to augment the reflective thinking of practitioners.

The second was to design a document that is nonlinear in nature. Information gleaned from teacher educators in a nationwide telephone survey indicated the need for a guide with strategies that could be incorporated into existing course work as well as provide a general guideline for staff development in a seminar or workshop format. The successful use of this guide is not dependent on use in a lockstep, sequential fashion. Rather, the user is encouraged to select desired strategies that are pertinent to the needs of particular practitioners.

A third goal was to provide several assessment strategies that would facilitate determination of a practitioner's reflective thinking level so that a benchmark could be established and growth in reflective thinking determined.

Each chapter focuses on a major component of enhancing reflective thinking of practitioners.

---

## ORGANIZATION OF THE GUIDE

Chapters are arranged with a logical progression in mind. Chapter 1 provides a basis for introducing reflective thinking to practitioners. A reflective thinking model is presented to show the cyclical nature of reflective thinking and to discern the steps of reflection. The process is graphically displayed as well as explained in writing. Three levels of reflective thinking—technical, contextual, and dialectical—are presented along with characteristics of practitioners who are functioning reflectively at each level. The chapter is intended to provide facilitators with background information regarding reflective thinking. Strategies and support materials found in this chapter may be used to provide background knowledge to practitioners on both the process of reflection and reflective levels.

A final section of Chapter 1 deals with preparing a plan of action for continued growth in reflective thinking. Joyce and Showers (1995) stress that learning activities should be extended over a period of time, with feedback and sessions spaced at intervals throughout the development process. A strategic plan of action will allow practitioners to use what has been learned about reflection to create a long-range plan that incorporates existing and newly acquired schemata and continual feedback. Through such a plan, the natural tendency of adults to problem solve and to resolve discrepancies between what is and what should be addressed can be enhanced.

The authors assume that when facilitating reflection, certain materials will be in place. An overhead projector should be in the session location as well as materials such as Vis-à-Vis® pens, note cards, chart paper, newsprint, and masking tape. Many activities require clear transparencies to be used, as teams report information produced from their discussions. Other required materials have been kept to a minimum to enhance portability of the tasks. Facilitators may also choose to adapt guide materials to emerging technologies, such as the use of computers and projection panels or personal data assistants (PDAs). Locations for sessions should support teaming activities. It is suggested that tables and chairs be used to provide a less formal structure than the traditional lecturer-audience room format.

Chapter 2 focuses on assessment of reflective thinking. Consideration of a practitioner's current reflective level is paramount for providing individuals with benchmarks for determining reflective growth. An attribute profile is provided to be used in conjunction with other reflective thinking assessments to assist the facilitator and practitioners in determining levels of reflection. The use of the attribute profile will be one of the first activities used in course work or seminars. Practitioners should be assured that the profile is one component of many for obtaining baseline levels of reflection. There is no risk to taking the assessment. There are no correct or incorrect answers.

Strategies used to promote reflective thinking are the focus of Chapters 3 through 9. Strategies include observational learning; reflective journals; practicum activities, such as reflective teaching and microteaching; mental-model strategies, such as metaphors and repertory grids; narrative strategies, such as story, autobiographical sketches, and case study; establishing

technology-enhanced learning communities; and action research. For each strategy presented, an explanation is given along with reflective activities and questions. Action assignments, suggestions for success, journaling for reflective growth, and extended readings are provided to assist the facilitator in guiding practitioners through higher levels of reflective thinking. Strategies are intended to be selected based on general reflective levels, interest levels, and the facilitator's knowledge of the skill levels of the practitioners. Not all of the strategies within each category are intended to be used during any one session. Strategies generally require little direct instruction by the facilitator. Teaming of practitioners to obtain a product for discussion, application of the product created, and promotion of discussion by the facilitator are essential.

Objectives are provided for the facilitator to help focus the preparations toward presenting reflective thinking models, assessments, and strategies. Handouts and transparencies for each task are provided in each chapter.

## **USES FOR THE GUIDE**

The intention of creating the reflective thinking guide was that it be used by staff developers as a resource from which to draw activities for seminars on reflective thinking strategies. It may also be used by teacher educators in university-based course work as a main or supplementary text to enhance reflection in preservice teachers.

The reflective thinking guide can be used by teacher educators in several ways. First, the guide may serve as the primary material for use in seminars or workshops to enhance the reflective thinking of practitioners. As a staff development guide, activities from the text may be selected to create a cohesive program that is 10 to 15 hours in length. As was stated earlier, to provide the practitioner with the most practice, reflection time, and meaningful feedback, it is recommended by the authors that the time frame be spread out over a 4- to 6-week period, perhaps using five 3-hour sessions or four 4-hour sessions.

Second, the guide is designed for courses that correlate to participation of preservice teachers in field settings. When used in this context, activities found within the guide may be selected to support a particular activity or objective for each field experience. The activities may be incorporated into lessons focusing on such topics as classroom management or inclusion, leading the practitioners through a sequential process toward becoming more reflective in their observations and practice.

Journaling is an important component of the reflective thinking process and should be encouraged by the facilitator. A variety of assessment techniques are also provided to assist in determining baseline reflective thinking levels and subsequent growth in reflective thinking.

Third, course work designed to prepare preservice teachers for imminent field experiences may constitute a setting for use of the reflective thinking guide. Activities found in Chapter 1 may be used to introduce practitioners to the reflective thinking model and process. Also, activities such as "Observing

---

**xiv** PROMOTING  
REFLECTIVE  
THINKING IN  
TEACHERS

Effective Questioning” and “Formatting a Journal Entry” from Chapters 3 and 4, respectively, may be used to prepare practitioners for observational learning or journaling.

It is the sincere desire of the authors that this reflective thinking guide provide facilitators of preservice and inservice practitioners with an easy reference to strategies that fit the needs of both facilitators and practitioners. Attention is focused on adaptability in terms of time constraints and materials, value of strategies to promote increased reflection, and ease in selection of components to support existing course work and provide tasks for seminars to enhance reflective thinking.