

Growing Through Reflection

Kids need time to stop and reflect on what they are doing and how they are feeling. When we provide children with opportunities to think about their own thinking, we empower them to take charge of their lives. Reflecting on their own progress increases students' executive function and critical thinking skills.

Build in some of these reflective activities to raise more independent and self-directed learners.

Daily Reflective Routines

- **I Used to Think . . . But Now I Think** — Children focus on *how* and *why* their thinking has changed over time. Have them explain their initial thoughts, and then prompt them to think about why their thinking has shifted.
- **3-2-1 Bridge** — 3 thoughts, 2 questions, and 1 connection engage students in deeper thinking.
- **Sticky Notes** — These are a great way to make thinking visible. Ask children to write down what went well, what didn't, and/or what they can do differently tomorrow. Children can also use these notes to mark any questions they have during activities.

Gratitude Journals

One way to cultivate an environment of gratitude and positivity is by having students create and keep a gratitude journal (Sulla, 2018). Increasing awareness of gratitude and expressing appreciation are great ways to foster social and emotional learning. Gratitude is an emotion that stems from happiness and appreciation. Studies have shown that feeling gratitude activates the prefrontal cortex, which reduces stress levels, builds executive function, and benefits students' well-being.