

## What is a reflective curriculum?

A reflective curriculum is not a one-off survey that students complete at the end of the year giving feedback to the teacher. While those types of surveys can have a place in the classroom, a reflective curriculum is an on-going set of practices in which students formally reflect on the concerns that the teacher finds pedagogically important. It fully integrates reflective practices into the curriculum through daily formative reflections, reflections at the end of formative and summative assessments, and summative written narratives at culminating points throughout the year as determined by the teacher.

Much like shifting from traditional instruction to proficiency-based instruction, integrating a reflective curriculum requires the teacher to make a shift in mindset. A reflective curriculum is NOT about mastery of the curriculum or of the content. The reflective curriculum instead complements content assessments and focuses on the student's **experience** in the classroom as a learner of the language. It gives the student space to assert their own agency as a learner as they narrate experiences that are personally or academically meaningful to them or compare assignments and formally articulate their growth throughout the course. In the process of giving us insight into the inner workings of their psyches, the student will demonstrate content knowledge, standards mastery, and student progress, which emerge as they provide evidence to support their claims. Furthermore, providing a space for students' experiences allows for moments of serendipity in which they will tell you unexpected and wonderful stories. The experiences they share become concrete data we can use to make pedagogical decisions beyond the content.

A reflective curriculum is also a method to fairly and equitably grade what our students can control with their conscious minds. If we take seriously the idea that a person cannot control language acquisition because it is a subconscious process, then it SHOULD make us uncomfortable to assign a grade to a student's perceived proficiency level. The problem then becomes, how *do* we assign grades? For many of us, Tina Hargaden's Interpersonal Communication Rubric is a great tool for helping us

assign grades and manage our classrooms. We can use graphic organizers and daily formative listening and reading assessments like Quick Quizzes and student retells in L1 (English for us) to get grades in our gradebooks. We can use rubrics and continua such as those found in *Stepping Stones: Year One and Beyond* to show students the next steps in the pathway to higher-level performance, so that they can set goals and have concrete ways to reach them.

However, what if we also use the products of our reflective curriculum as a tool for assigning grades? A student may not have control over their language acquisition, but they certainly have control over their ability to reflect on their goals, performance, experience, struggles, and perseverance. They have control over how thoughtfully and deeply they reflect, and their ability to revise their reflections when we give them verbal feedback and ask them to improve upon what they have written. By shifting our grading mindset to the set of skills that students can control, we are actively preparing them to be 21st century learners who can self-monitor, self-assess, and self-correct.

When we ask our students to self-assess, and then to reflect on their growing abilities, and narrate their experiences in the form of the Narrative Reflection Portfolio that will be presented later in this manual, we ask them to write in English. Asking them to write in English allows them to express who they are as individuals with far deeper language than their burgeoning L2 proficiency will allow. When we require students to provide us with deep ideas, we must also require them to back those ideas with evidence gleaned from their classroom experience. Having them make a claim and support it with evidence reinforces ELA writing standards, and it also cuts down on students who would take this reflective opportunity to simply write nasty complaints about the class. Since they are tasked with proving their statements, you can call them out on the lack of intellectual rigor in their unsupported complaints. Once students see that they are held to the same writing standard as in their core academic classes, they will become much more careful about what they say.

A reflective, literacy-focused curriculum has many benefits for the student and the teacher. It has the potential to support our overall curriculum in an authentic,

student-centered way. It has the potential to leverage the work in our World Language classrooms to build cross-curricular, enduring literacy skills that can strengthen students' academic achievement far beyond their language learning careers. The content that follows will help you to conceive and implement a reflective, literacy-focused curriculum into your classroom without extensive prep.