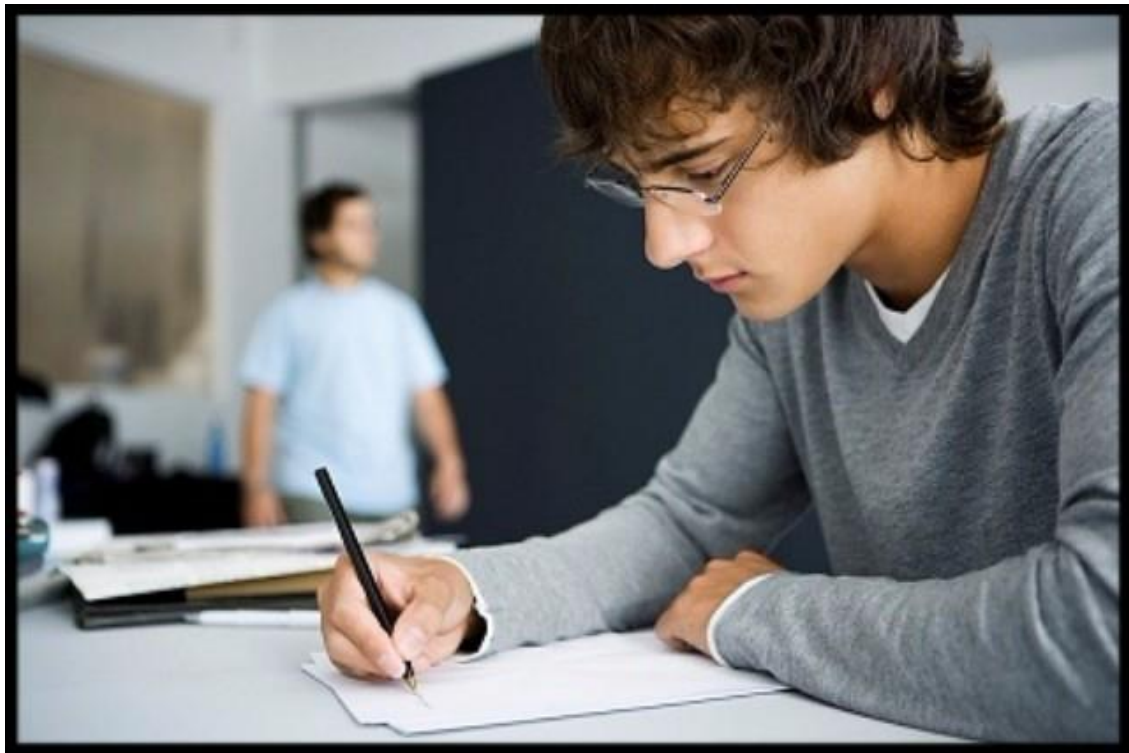


Building Student Self-Reflection is an Essential Part of the FYE Curriculum

How many college professors have ever wondered what their students are doing to prepare for an assignment, a project or a test? And then, how many professors, after seeing the results of an assignment would like their students to take those results and make improvements or strive to reach an even higher level of achievement? At the 2016 TASSR Annual Conference, Dr. Dianna Rust and Ryan Korstange from Middle Tennessee State University offered one idea that can help students to productively review assignments in their presentation ***Building Student Self-Reflection is an Essential Part of the FYE Curriculum.***



Korstange and Rust describe self-reflection as an active, careful, persistent consideration of work submitted. It is an essential learning tool for both the student and teacher. So, why is it so important to emphasize self-reflection in our courses? The following is a list of reasons shared in the presentation.

- Self-reflection completes the learning process that starts with effortful action (Cuseo, et. al 2007)
- It slows down the learning process (Moon 2001)
- Allows students to take ownership of their learning (Moon 2001)
- Increases the students' ability to transfer learning to other areas (Bransford et. al 2000)
- Allows students to learn from their failures (Bain 2012, Bader 2011)
- Contributes to Growth Mindset (Dweck 2006)

Research shows that students do not come to college with a “reflection” skill. Therefore, one of the best times for students to learn such an important skill is in their First Year Experience (FYE) class. Students at MTSU were given 10 reflective assignments. In each assignment students were asked to connect information to relevant experiences, connect across disciplines or apply information to new situations. Once each assignment was completed, the students were asked to reflect on their writing process and self-assess.

The results of applying self-reflection assignments in the FYE classes at MTSU were positive. On the Student Perception surveys that were given near the end of the semester, students commented that they were more engaged in class and had learned how to write at a higher level than when they started the semester. The FYE sections that included self-reflection had higher pass rates and retention rates than those that did not include self-reflection. The MTSU faculty acknowledged that most students do not know how to write reflectively, so faculty training was implemented for those who planned to teach an FYE course. Additionally, after the first semester of incorporating self-reflection assignments, the number of assignments was reduced to seven.

Reflection is beneficial in all disciplines. Faculty should try to incorporate short reflective assignments or exercises that allow students to thoughtfully consider the work they have submitted for a grade. For example, a mathematics professor may want students to be able to describe the specific tasks they completed to prepare for a test. Did they complete all assigned homework? Did they seek help immediately when they struggled with content? Did they work additional problems when reviewing for a test? Students who are not satisfied with their grade on an assignment in any course can share what specific tasks they should complete to improve their grade and students who exceeded their own expectations can share what contributed to their success. Self-reflection is a necessary activity that does not take time away from teaching course content, but does contribute to student success and retention.

Like so many other great TASSR presentations, Korstange and Rust offered a fresh take on the challenges that confront us each semester and inspired the audience to try something new on their own campuses. The 2017 conference will no doubt continue that tradition, so please plan to join us in Chattanooga in October. Only 22 spots are remaining for this year. You will find information about the conference and accommodations at www.tassr.org.



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