

In our last newsletter, we mentioned Donald Schon's *The Reflective Practitioner* and the practitioner's capacity to reflect in action (while doing something) and on action (after you have done it). Throughout the year, it is imperative that everyone -teachers, students, administrators, and mentors - reflect on their practices to determine if their goals are being met. This should not be the "autopsy" report but rather the ongoing diagnosis needed to inform instruction and improve practice; this is the formative assessment in which all classroom stakeholders need to engage.

When we are in our classrooms, decisions are made quickly. Teachers seldom have time to think about all the consequences that may result from a rapidly made decision. We know, however, that these decisions are made using the tools at hand; that is, our frame of reference and the experiences that shape our thinking. Nevertheless, we may ask ourselves the questions: "Why did I do that?" or "What was I thinking?"

While we try to make critical decisions after much thought and time devoted to the thinking, many times we must make an appraisal "at the spur of the moment" and make a judgement call. Afterwards, we may realize that there was another way to handle a situation or another appropriate resolution for the circumstance. In the heat of the moment, those alternatives were not obvious. When working with an instructional coach, teachers and other school leaders have an advantage... they have the opportunity to think aloud with a partner and discuss various options related to that particular situation. The immediacy of decision-making can be balanced with an intentional conversation about expected outcomes in preparation of the event.

Deliberate discussions about student work and classroom practices serve as both reflection and planning. In the *before* process, teachers and coaches collaborate and plan creative units of study that are literacy-based and may integrate technology into the instruction.

*During*

the lesson, the coach focuses on the agreed upon areas of interest and makes notes that will provide the content for the debriefing. In the

*after*

segment of the B,D,A cycle of consultation, the coach and teacher reflect on the areas of interest and determine whether the goals for the lesson were met. This part of the process is extremely valuable. It's where these important questions can be answered: "What did I expect my students to learn? How do I know that learning took place; What will I do to help those students who didn't 'get' it?" And most importantly, "If I were a student, would I want me as a teacher?"

Helping teachers and school leaders become reflective practitioners is no easy task. Planning and watching the delivery of classroom instruction are relatively painless; the thinking around these processes is clear: what are we going to do and how are we going to do it. The tough part is to figure out *why* something worked well, or didn't, and *what* we can do to make it better. Obviously, we want to believe that reflection results in changes in practices that will yield improved student achievement and better learning environments for students. How's that for data collection question... "Do students of highly reflective teachers learn more, better, or differently than students of teachers who do not work with coaches or engage in reflective practices?" PIIC needs a few more years to reflect on its practices and answer these questions!