



Your practical guide to:

# Enabling effective teacher reflection

# Introduction

*"We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience."* - John Dewey

There is one quality above all others that makes a good teacher - the ability to reflect on what, why and how they do things and to adapt and develop their excellence in teaching. As the [Lifelong Learning UK Standards](#) make clear, reflection is a core component of effective continuing professional development (CPD) and key to becoming a skilled teacher.

But teacher reflection is not just essential for teachers. According to [research by Prof. John Hattie](#), developing excellence in teaching has the single most powerful influence on student achievement.

## What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice is 'learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and practice' (Finlay, 2008).

Reflective teaching is a personal tool that teachers can use to observe and evaluate the way they behave in their classroom. It can be both a private process as well as one that they discuss with colleagues and/or leaders.

When teachers collect information regarding activities in their classrooms and take the time to analyse them from a distance, they can identify more than just what worked and what didn't. They will be able to look at the underlying principles and beliefs that define the way that they work. This kind of self-awareness is a powerful ally for a teacher, especially when so much of what and how they teach can change in the moment.



# 5 benefits of **being reflective**

*“If you are anything like me, you’ve spent years putting reflection on the back seat. Other things seemed more important. But, when I finally gave reflection the respect it was due and made it a daily practice, things changed in my own life, and in my classroom for my students.”* - **A.J Juliani, Author and Education and Innovation Specialist**

## 1. Professional growth

Firstly and most importantly, reflective practice is the key to improvement. If teachers don't think about, analyse and evaluate their professional practice they cannot improve. Also once teachers start to take ownership of their CPD in this way, their confidence grows.

## 2. Keeping up-to-date and innovative

Just as you wouldn't want to be operated on by a surgeon who wasn't familiar with the latest techniques, we probably won't want to be taught by someone who doesn't know their subject or the best ways of teaching and learning. Reflective practice allows teachers to create and experiment with new ideas and approaches to gain maximum success.

## 3. Understanding learners

Reflective practice encourages teachers to understand their learners and their abilities and needs. Reflection helps teachers to put themselves in their students shoes, which is something many skilled teachers do. Stephen Brookfield believes that: 'Of all the pedagogic tasks teachers face, getting inside students heads is one of the trickiest. It is also the most crucial' (Brookfield, 1995).

## 4. Developing reflective learners

Reflective teachers are more likely to develop reflective learners. If teachers practice reflection they can more effectively encourage learners to reflect on, analyse, evaluate and improve their own learning. These are key skills in developing them to become independent learners.

## 5. Humility

*“Implementing extreme ownership requires checking your ego and operating with a high degree of humility. Admitting mistakes, taking ownership and developing a plan to overcome challenges are integral to any successful team.”* - **Jocko Willink**

When we reflect we must be honest. At least honest with ourselves about our choices, our success, our mistakes, and our growth. Meaning that self-reflection acts as a constant reminder to teachers to stay humble and continue working hard to achieve results.

# How does it **work**?

Reflective teaching is about more than just summarising what happens in the classroom, it's a more systemic approach to looking at what happened. It requires patience, and careful observation of the entire lesson experience.

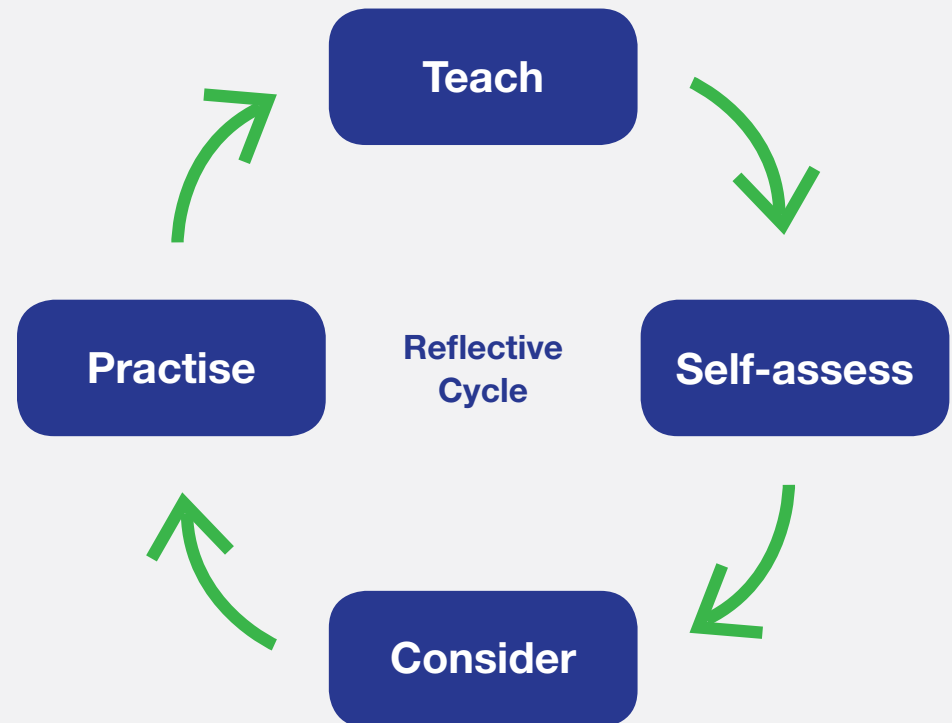
According to Jack Richards, reflection or critical reflection, refers to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making, and as a source for planning and action." (Richard, 1990)

## In a professional setting reflection is:

- deliberate;
- purposeful;
- structured;
- about linking theory and practice;
- to do with learning;
- about change and development - becoming a reflective teacher.

## The process of reflection is a cycle of:

- teach
- self-assess the effect teaching has had on the learners
- consider new ways of teaching to improve the quality of learning
- try those ideas in the classroom
- repeat the process



# The challenges of **teacher reflection**

## **Perspective**

What a teacher sees in a lesson is different from what the students see. Sometimes, for deeper insight, the teacher needs to gain the perspective of others, be it their students or colleagues.

## **Focus**

We don't always focus on the right things; it's easy for teachers to dwell on problems rather than objectively review the lesson as a whole.

## **Memory**

Research shows that the ability to accurately recall a lesson some time afterwards is limited.

## **Isolation**

Self-reflection is typically a private, personal experience. Making teachers take a real, deep look at their experiences can be difficult.

## **Recognising progress**

Setting measurable benchmarks for progress is difficult when the process of traditional self-reflection relies on subjective feelings about practice.

## **Understanding of self**

It's difficult not to cloud reflections on our performance with our perception of our abilities, traits and personality.



# How can you overcome these challenges?

Professional athletes use video to stay on top of their game. Politicians use video to perfect their speeches. Surgeons use video to continually refine their skills. All of these professionals study videos of experts in their fields to emulate great performance, to be inspired by new ideas and to identify areas of improvement. These professionals have been using video for decades because it works, and teachers can do the same.

Video allows teachers to reflect more effectively and accurately on their performance and to see the lesson as a whole from the students perspective, rather than relying on memory. It also allows them to get feedback from others and to objectively measure progress, helping them to gain greater understanding of their own abilities and traits.

*“If you look at the research it says that about 80% of what happens in a class a teacher does not see or hear. How can we get more eyes into the class? How do you get other teachers going in there, looking at the impact and feeding back to help the teacher see what it’s like being a student in their classroom? I’m a great fan of recording classrooms and using video to show teachers how they look to students. That’s the power of video, it’s another way to see your impact” - Prof. John Hattie.*

While feedback from others is helpful, video brings a new level of depth and awareness to teacher reflection; a firsthand sense of self rather than the hearsay of others, making it a highly effective tool for teacher CPD.

**IRIS Connect** enables teachers to capture an objective record of teaching and learning that can be shared. Using the IRIS Connect mobile app, teachers record their lessons which are automatically uploaded to a web platform. Once there they can privately view the videos and annotate their teaching practice using timelinked notes and analytical tools.



These videos become an invaluable resource for the individual teacher and wider school, teaching alliance or multi-academy trust if they choose to share them, allowing many teachers to benefit from the solutions of successful teachers.



# What is IRIS Connect?

Our video reflection and collaboration platform provides teachers with every professional learning activity that research shows is vital for improvement.

Join our community and get all the tools and support you need to revolutionise teacher professional learning.

Discover the impact we're having across schools by reading our [case studies >](#)

[Book A Demo](#)

**To find out more:**

[www.irisconnect.co.uk](http://www.irisconnect.co.uk) | [info@irisconnect.co.uk](mailto:info@irisconnect.co.uk) | 0333 1362 484 | @IRIS\_Connect



*"We currently sit in the top 1% nationally for the progress our children make. Outstanding is our next goal and IRIS Connect is pivotal in helping us to achieve it. We've also dramatically reduced our CPD spend by 47%."*

- Claire Phillips, Deputy Headteacher, Ainslie Wood Primary School

**iris**  
connect™  
*discover. develop. share.*