



Unit 3 – The Role of the Preschool Teacher

Key Topic 4: Building Skills for Reflective Teaching

Focus Statement

Students explore ways that preschool teachers incorporate reflective practices in their teaching.

Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) Student Learning Outcomes

The Curriculum Alignment Project's (CAP) lower division eight courses, CAP expansion courses, and student learning outcomes are mapped onto each instructional guide learning experience. See Appendix A for the specific student learning outcomes, objectives, and examples of course content and topics for the courses listed below.

- Introduction to Curriculum
- Teaching in a Diverse Society
- Practicum-Field Experience
- Adult Supervision and Mentoring in Early Care and Education
- Administration II: Personnel and Leadership in Early Childhood Education

Instructional Methodologies

- Class discussion
- Interview
- Notetaking outline or tool
- Observations
- Pairs or small groups
- Reflective discussion
- Short paper or report



California Early Childhood Educator Competency Areas to Consider

These competency areas are from the California Department of Education, Early Education and Support Division's *California Early Childhood Educator Competencies* (CDE 2011). The "Competency Areas to Consider" below are listed in this instructional guide as a preliminary exploration of how particular competency areas might be addressed through these learning experiences.

- Culture, Diversity, and Equity
- Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance
- Learning Environments and Curriculum
- Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Professionalism
- Administration and Supervision



Unit 3 – The Role of the Preschool Teacher

Key Topic 4: Building Skills for Reflective Teaching

Before You Start

“Effective preschool teachers are continually aware of the effects of the program structure, the learning environment, activities, and the routines on the children. Teachers are also attentive to the influence of their behavior and other adults’ behavior on the children” (*California Preschool Program Guidelines*, p. 46). And in order for teachers to be aware and attentive, they need to be reflective teachers.

This key topic focuses on strategies that teachers can use to develop and strengthen their reflective practice. The three text boxes on pages 46 and 47 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* include questions and behaviors that students can use as tools for reflection. These text boxes are titled:

- “Questions for Reflection”
- “Becoming a Reflective Teacher”
- “Thinking Lens”

The “Questions for Reflection” are taken from the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1* (p. 167). The questions are based on a vignette in the Writing strand of the language and literacy domain of that publication.

Throughout each volume of the curriculum framework, “Questions for Reflection” are provided to enhance students’ understanding of the information in each strand. The Faculty Initiative Project’s instructional guides for the three volumes of the curriculum framework include key topics that provide overviews of the organizational structure of each domain or chapter. These key topics may support students and faculty in locating these “Questions for Reflection.” The *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1* can be downloaded from the California Department of Education Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psframework.asp#psframevol1> (accessed January 20, 2016).

The information in the text boxes titled “Becoming a Reflective Teacher” and “Thinking Lens” is from the article also titled “Becoming a Reflective Teacher” (Carter et al. 2010). Students will be asked to review this article in the active learning for this key topic. The article can be downloaded from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Web site at



http://www.naeyc.org/files/tyc/file/TYC_V3N4_Reflectiveteacherexpanded.pdf (accessed January 20, 2016).

A NAEYC resource with some professional development activities that can be used with this article is referenced. This four-page guide is part of *NEXT: The Teaching Young Children Staff Development Guide* that accompanies each issue of NAEYC's *Teaching Young Children* journal. The guide for this article can be downloaded at

http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCUQFjABahUKEwiF7biz7uXHAhVRO4gKHUTUD2o&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.naeyc.org%2Ffiles%2Ftyc%2Ffile%2FTYC_V3N4_NEXTReflectiveteacher.pdf&usg=AFQjCNEGc9u40Enz59vDhmP93qfMW5Bm1w (accessed January 20, 2016).

There is an option for students to do classroom observations. If faculty choose to have students visit programs, it may be helpful for faculty to identify programs available for student observations. If students are working in preschool programs, faculty may also let students observe their own or other classrooms at their site. Remind students to check with the program administrator about observation policies and procedures prior to visiting the program.

Handout 1, "Becoming a Reflective Teacher," is a form for listing specific questions and examples that students could use in becoming reflective teachers. This handout is based on some practices and questions described in Chapter 3 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* and the "Becoming a Reflective Teacher" article. Handout 2, "Instructor Sample of Becoming a Reflective Teacher," is provided as a resource for faculty. It is the same as Handout 1 with suggested questions and examples filled in. Both handouts will be available when this instructional guide is online at <http://facultyinitiative.wested.org/> (accessed January 20, 2016). Students will also be asked to review parts of Chapter 3. If students do not have copies of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*, the Portable Document Format (PDF) version can be downloaded from the California Department of Education Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/preschoolproggdlns2015.pdf> (accessed January 20, 2016).

Information Delivery



Slide 2

There are two sources of information for this key topic:

- Chapter 3 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* (pp. 46-47)
- Carter, M., W. Cividanes, D. Curtis, and D. Lebo. 2010. "Becoming a Reflective Teacher." *Teaching Young Children* 3 (4): 18–20.



Both can be downloaded as described in the “Before You Start” section.

Active Learning



Slides 3-5

Getting it started

Begin this key topic by asking students to read the article “Becoming a Reflective Teacher.” Point out that the information in two of the text boxes in the article is also in the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* on pages 46 and 47. Discuss with students the nine practices of a reflective teacher, which are listed in the text box, “Becoming a Reflective Teacher,” on page 46 and in the article, and examples of what each practice would look like. Also note that the first bullet, “Know yourself,” on page 47 includes a question about adult perspectives that is not in the article.



Slide 6

The learning story strategy may be new to many students. Suggestions for writing a learning story are in *NEXT: The Teaching Young Children Staff Development Guide* (April/May 2010), which supports the “Becoming a Reflective Teacher” article. Information for downloading the guide is in the “Before You Start” section of this key topic.



Slide 7

Keeping it going

Give students Handout 1 or ask them to create a similar notetaking page. They are to complete the handout by listing the questions from the “Thinking Lens” text box into the right column of the handout. These questions could guide teachers in enacting the behavior listed in the left column of the handout. Some questions may apply to more than one behavior. Also encourage students to think of other examples. Handout 2, provided for faculty, is a sample of Handout 1 with some questions and examples listed.

After students have completed the handout, ask students to share their responses. Encourage them to note where they have similar or different ideas from their classmates and how some different perspectives might be helpful for their own professional growth.



Slide 8

Taking it further

The seven “Questions for Reflection” on page 46 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* are from the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1*. These questions are

Online Options

Students could work in their groups out of class and then post their answers to the seven vignette questions online. After students review their peers’ summaries, the instructor could facilitate an online discussion of the groups’ responses.



based on a vignette found on page 165 of this publication. Ask students to read the vignette and then form small groups to discuss the seven questions. As they formulate their answers, they should also consider how some of the questions and examples they listed in Handout 1 relate to the seven questions and inform their answers.

Putting it together

Convene the class to discuss the groups' answers to the questions. Ask one group to share its thoughts for the first question and then ask the rest of the class for other ideas. Continue by asking a different group to begin the discussion of each remaining question until all seven questions have been covered. In addition to sharing their answers to the seven reflection questions related to the vignette, the groups should also describe their thoughts about the "Thinking Lens" questions and other examples.

Another approach

Instead of or in addition to completing Handout 1, faculty may choose to ask students to interview a teacher to gather other questions and ways that teachers engage in reflective practice—the behaviors listed in the green text box on page 46. Students could also use Handout 1 to record the teacher's responses. Encourage students to ask the teachers to be as specific as possible.



Slide 9

After students have completed their interviews, students could write a summary of their interviews to submit as an individual assignment or discuss the interviews in a class session. In either case, the following questions are suggested:



Slide 10

- What is the teacher's background in teaching preschool children?
- What responses were similar to the questions in the "Thinking Lens"? What were some new strategies or questions? What responses surprised you?
- Based on your interview, what insights occurred to you about being a reflective teacher?

Reflection

This learning experience can be concluded by asking students to think about the following questions:

- Which questions or examples from Handout 1 caught your attention?



Slides 11-12

- Which ones seem the easiest for you to incorporate into your practice? Which ones seem more difficult?
- If you were to think about becoming a reflective teacher as taking a trip, where would you see yourself: (1) trying to decide where to go, (2) making the arrangements, (3) packing, (4) starting out, (5) in the middle, (6) at the end, (7) sharing photos with friends, or (8) helping others take a similar trip?
- What can you do to move from one phase of your trip to the next?

This second set of more general reflective questions can be used in this and other key topics for additional class discussion or to guide individual student journaling.



Slides 13-15

- Which ideas or part of this class session stood out most for you?
- What seemed familiar or reinforced what you already know or have experienced? What gave you a new perspective or insight that causes you to think differently about teaching preschool children and/or engaging their families?
- Why do you think the content of this class session was presented the way it was? How did this approach help you understand the content? What else would have helped? What does this tell you about how you learn?
- How will you decide what to apply from this class session in your work with preschool children and families? What will you do to ensure you will implement what you have decided to use?

Deeper Understanding



Slides 16-17

In this learning segment, students will conduct an observation of a preschool class and reflect on the observation by using the questions in the “Thinking Lens.” Depending on the availability of preschool programs, faculty may choose to allow students to work in pairs or groups of three. Students who are working in a program can also use a specific activity they are engaged in with children.

Remind students to check about classroom observation procedures with the program administrator or designee when making arrangements to do an observation. It is often helpful to explain the purpose of the observation so that the administrator can suggest a time that would be most appropriate. The classroom observation could also be paired with the teacher interview described in the “Another approach” section.



Students are to write summaries of their observations by answering as many of the “Thinking Lens” questions as they can. If they also interviewed the classroom teacher, they should summarize the interview, too. Students can conclude their summaries with one or two paragraphs about what they learned about themselves as reflective teachers through this observation.

A four-page professional development guide in *NEXT: The Teaching Young Children Staff Development Guide* (April/May 2010) has additional suggestions that faculty may want to consider for this key topic. Some of these are similar to and/or could expand the active learning described in the previous segments. These include ideas for a classroom observation.



Becoming a Reflective Teacher

After reading the article “A Reflective Teacher,” list questions from the “Thinking Lens” or other ways that would help a teacher carry out the behavior in the left column. A question or example may apply to more than one behavior.



Unit 3: The Role of the Preschool Teacher
 Getting Building Skills for Reflective Teaching
 Handout 1: Becoming a Reflective Teacher

“A reflective teacher . . . ”	Questions and examples
examines his or her own reactions to children or their actions to understand their source.	
is curious about children’s play and watches it closely.	
documents details of children’s conversations and activities.	
takes time to study notes and photos to puzzle out what is significant.	



“A reflective teacher . . . ”	Questions and examples
eagerly shares stories about children’s learning with families and co-workers.	
asks co-workers and children’s families for their insights.	
reads professional literature to learn more.	
shows children photos and stories of themselves to hear their views.	
changes the environment and materials to encourage new play and learning possibilities.	



Instructor Sample of Becoming a Reflective Teacher Handout

This version of the handout with some questions and examples listed is provided as a sample for faculty. The list of questions and examples is not an exhaustive list.

Handout Instructions: After reading the article “A Reflective Teacher,” list questions from the “Thinking Lens” or other ways that would help a teacher carry out the behavior in the left column. A question or example may apply to more than one behavior.



Unit 3: The Role of the Preschool Teacher
Getting Building Skills for Reflective Teaching
Handout 2: Instructor Sample of Becoming a Reflective Teacher Handout

“A reflective teacher . . .”	Questions and examples
examines his or her own reactions to children or their actions to understand their source.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What captures my attention as the children engage, explore, and talk with each other and with me? • What delights me as I watch and listen? • How might my background and values influence how I respond to the children? • What adult perspectives (e.g., standards, health and safety, time, goals) are on my mind? • What values, philosophy and desired outcomes do I want to influence my response?
is curious about children’s play and watches it closely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I notice in the children’s faces and actions? • Where do I see examples of children’s strengths and abilities? • What are the children learning from this experience? • What is the child drawn to and excited about? • What might the child be trying to accomplish? • Why might the child be talking to and playing with others this way? • What ideas might the child be exploring?
documents details of children’s conversations and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A learning story • Why might the child be talking to and playing with others this way? • How does this child’s play (or other activity) demonstrate desired early learning outcomes or standards? • What new vocabulary can teachers introduce?
takes time to study notes and photos to puzzle out what is significant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A learning story • What is the child drawn to and excited about? • What might the child be trying to accomplish? • Why might the child be talking to and playing with others this way? • What ideas might the child be exploring?



“A reflective teacher . . . ”	Questions and examples
<p>takes time to study notes and photos to puzzle out what is significant. (Continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What child development or early learning theories apply to this experience? • How does this child’s play (or other activity) demonstrate desired early learning outcomes or standards? • How do schedules, routines, the physical space, and materials support or limit the children’s play?
<p>eagerly shares stories about children’s learning with families and co-workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A learning story • How might the child’s culture and family background be influencing this situation?
<p>asks co-workers and children’s families for their insights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might the child’s culture and family background be influencing this situation? • What questions could I ask to get the perspective of the child’s family? • Who else or what other perspectives should I consider?
<p>reads professional literature to learn more.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What child development or early learning theories apply to this experience? • How does this child’s play (or other activity) demonstrate desired early learning outcomes or standards?
<p>shows children photos and stories of themselves to hear their views.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A learning story (modified for child) • What is the child drawn to and excited about? • What might the child be trying to accomplish? • Why might the child be talking to and playing with others this way? • What ideas might the child be exploring?
<p>changes the environment and materials to encourage new play and learning possibilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do schedules, routines, the physical space, and materials support or limit the children’s play? • What changes or additions to the space or materials would help to strengthen children’s relationships? • How do schedules and routines influence this experience? • What other materials and activities could be offered to build on this experience?



“A reflective teacher . . . ”	Questions and examples
changes the environment and materials to encourage new play and learning possibilities. <i>(Continued)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What new or existing relationships could be strengthened? • Which learning goals could be addressed? • What other materials and activities could be offered to build on this experience? • What new vocabulary can teachers introduce?