

# Prioritizing student reflection: unlocking the key to learning



Swivl

# The unrealized potential of regular student reflection

As a reflective technology company, we have dedicated over 13 years to collaborating with education organizations around the world. Our goal has always been to realize the untapped potential of reflection in schools and beyond.

Recently, we conducted a comprehensive survey to understand how often students engage in reflective practices and how educators perceive its impact.

**Our findings revealed that while many educators believe in the power of reflection, few feel that their students are engaging in it frequently enough.**

In this ebook, we will share the results of our survey and provide a structured approach for you to reflect on your own teaching practice. As you review the findings, we encourage you to think about how you can integrate reflection into your daily routine, ultimately benefiting both you and your students.

Together, we will explore the current state of reflection in education, where it needs to go in the future, and practical steps you can take to bring more and better reflection to your classroom.

# Is reflection essential for learning in your classroom?

Educators universally recognize the importance of reflection, yet it often competes with other priorities in the classroom.



100%

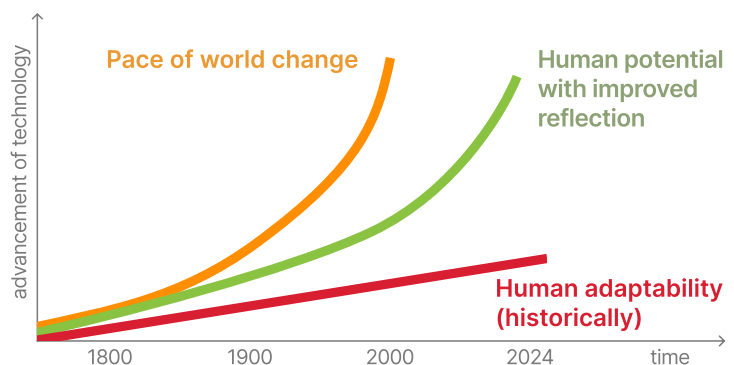
educators agree regular reflection is essential to the student learning process

## What is reflection?

**Reflection is the ability to learn from experience.** It involves stepping back from an experience, examining it from different perspectives, discovering new insights, and integrating those insights into a broader understanding of the world.

**In today's fast-paced world, reflection is the essential skill.**

With the rapid changes brought by technology, AI, globalization, and economic shifts, the ability to learn from experiences and adapt is crucial. By reflecting on our experiences and integrating those lessons into our understanding of the world, there is hope that we can keep up with the pace of change.



# Reflection is essential to learning

If reflection is essential for modern life, it should also be a key part of our educational system.

**Reflection allows students to view their experiences from different angles, helping them make connections, and solidify their learning.** This process transforms simple lessons into meaningful knowledge that sticks with them.

Developmental psychologists like **Jean Piaget** and **Robert Kegan** emphasize that real growth happens through reflection. It is a key part of mental development and progress.

Incorporating reflection into teaching can improve student outcomes by helping students thoroughly understand and apply what they've learned. This process ensures that students grasp the material on a deeper level and can connect it to their existing knowledge and real-life situations.

## The foundations of reflection

- **Learning from experience:** Helping students understand and grow from what they go through.
- **Managing challenges:** Teaching students to handle difficulties effectively.
- **Cultivating a positive mindset:** Encouraging an optimistic and motivated attitude.
- **Increasing self-awareness:** Continually helping students become more aware of their thoughts and feelings.



### Key takeaways

- 100% of educators agree that reflection is essential to learning.
- Reflection enables students to learn from their experiences.



### Pause and reflect

- What role does reflection play in learning in your classroom?
- What differences do you notice between students who reflect consistently and those who don't?
- Can you recall a time when you learned a valuable lesson through reflection?



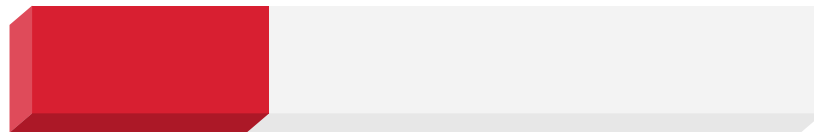
# How often do your students reflect?

Despite widespread recognition of its importance, reflection is not consistently prioritized in schools.



**50%**

**schools/districts have goals for student reflection**



**30%**

**students reflect daily, primarily during peer shares or with exit tickets**

In our survey of educators, only 30% reported that their students reflect daily. This means that 70% of educators do not prioritize reflection in their daily practices.

This is concerning. **Without regular reflection, students miss the opportunity to deeply process their experiences, connect new knowledge to what they already know, and develop critical thinking skills.** The lack of daily reflection prevents students from engaging in metacognitive practices that promote deeper learning and personal growth.

**There are various reasons for this gap.** Educators are often overwhelmed with numerous responsibilities—managing classroom behavior, adhering to curriculum standards, preparing students for standardized tests, and more. With so many demands, it's easy for reflection to be deprioritized.

# What does reflection look like in schools?

In our survey of educators, 50% reported that their school or district has a goal for student reflection. This shows that **many schools recognize the value of reflection and are actively promoting it.**

When asked about the most common ways to reflect with their students, **75% of educators identified peer shares or exit tickets.** These methods typically involve students recalling what they've learned and summarizing their understanding at the end of a lesson. However, these and other common reflection practices are far from perfect.

## Why traditional reflection methods fall short

While each of these reflection methods have benefits, the drawbacks may explain why reflection isn't used to its full potential in schools.

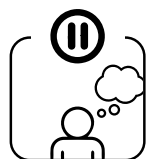
- **Exit tickets:** Often provide minimal information and require teachers to grade them, adding to their workload.
- **Peer shares:** Teachers cannot listen in on all peer conversations, making it difficult to gauge each student's level of understanding.
- **Reflection journals:** If not done regularly or sincerely, it's hard to get a true sense of how a student is doing. Also leaves teachers with a pile of journals for grading.
- **Video reflections:** Teachers need to watch and synthesize all the videos, which can be time-consuming.

By addressing these challenges and finding better ways to incorporate reflection, we can make it a more effective and integral part of learning, helping every student grow and learn more deeply.



### Key takeaways

- Only 30% of students have the opportunity to reflect daily.
- Reflection is often overlooked and deprioritized in the classroom.
- The limitations of common reflective practices, such as exit tickets, peer shares, and journals, have contributed to the shortage of reflection in schools.



### Pause and reflect

- How often do students have opportunities to reflect in your classroom?
- What insights or realizations have your students gained through their reflections?
- What additional or unseen information do you wish you could gather from your students' reflections?

# Are you seeing the full picture in your students' reflections?

A significant number of educators feel they are not reaping the full benefits of student reflection.



**80%**

educators want a solution that encourages deeper, daily student reflections



**65%**

educators say it takes a lot of effort to get students to reflect daily

These survey results highlight **the need for a stronger foundation for daily reflection** - even if you believe in your current reflective routines.

Strengthening a reflective foundation is something that teachers and administrators often lack the time to develop from scratch. Without this foundation, efforts to observe, set, and track goals may fall short because students aren't ready to invest in self-improvement. They aren't in the right Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky) to be reflective or receptive to reflection and goal-setting.

**Reflection should not be a sporadic activity or an end-of-unit task.** It needs to be a daily habit —demonstrating how you are thinking, regulating oneself in response to challenges, fine-tuning one's mindset, and continuously expanding awareness.

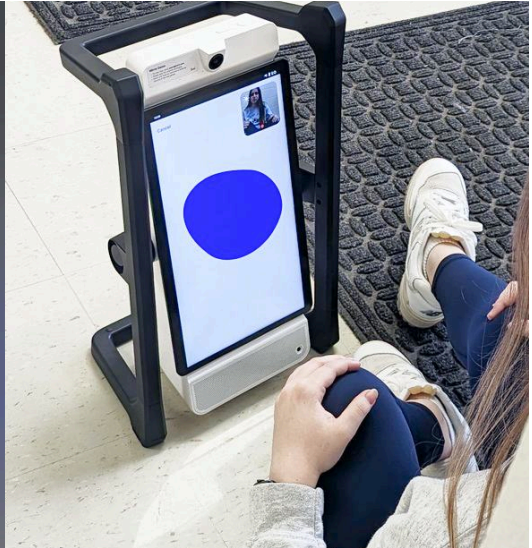
# Are written reflections enough?

Often, written reflections do not capture students' true thoughts and understanding. Students may obscure their real feelings and insights in written assignments.

As **Annette Lang, Technology Instructor and RESA coordinator** at Bio-Med Science Academy (Ohio) told us,

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When my students wrote their reflections I felt like I was missing out on what they really knew. Written reflections lack the depth and context I need to understand each student's needs.



Similarly, **Traci Johnson, an English Teacher & Instructional Coach** at Rochester Schools (Illinois), shared,

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Some reflection prompts worked better than others, but we felt students weren't doing the work to understand how their successes and struggles helped them grow and how they can apply that to future learning. They were trying to say what they thought the teacher wanted to hear.

# How well do you really know your students?

**Understanding students deeply is a challenge many teachers face.** Students often feel self-conscious, have trouble trusting adults, and learn early on to tell teachers what they think the teachers want to hear, rather than what they are truly thinking. This behavior prevents teachers from getting the information they need to genuinely help students, even when prompting them to reflect and share.



**It's sometimes difficult for me to get into my students' brains to help create a unique roadmap of success for each of them. Learning gaps aren't always explicit until a student is failing. Until then, often students don't trust or are intimidated by speaking to adults, which only makes my job harder. School years are short, and it can be difficult to make significant progress with students who aren't comfortable taking a chance to build trust with me.**

High School Teacher

**Creating better reflection routines that make students feel more comfortable taking the risk to express themselves authentically would help bridge this gap.** By fostering a trusting and open environment, teachers can gain deeper insights into their students' thoughts and needs, allowing for more personalized and effective support.



## Key takeaways

- Students often hide much of what they know and think.
- The majority of educators struggle to get students to reflect deeply, even when they encourage reflection.



## Pause and reflect

- How often do your students miss opportunities to reflect on their learning?
- Have you ever suspected that students are not sharing everything they could or should when reflecting in writing?
- Can you recall a time when a student shared something verbally that they would never have conveyed in writing?

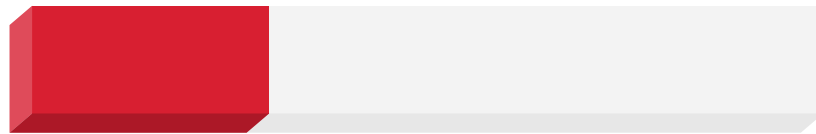
# How do you get more and better reflection from students?

Despite the clear importance of reflection, many students are not reflecting regularly.



**100%**

educators agree regular reflection is essential



**30%**

students reflect daily

Despite the clear importance of reflection, many students are not reflecting regularly. While 100% of educators agree that regular reflection is essential, only 30% of students reflect daily.

Moreover, the type of reflection often practiced (usually written) may not be as effective as desired. Students may comply by completing assigned reflections, such as journaling or exit tickets, but are they truly sharing their experiences honestly? Are you seeing the depth of their understanding and struggles?



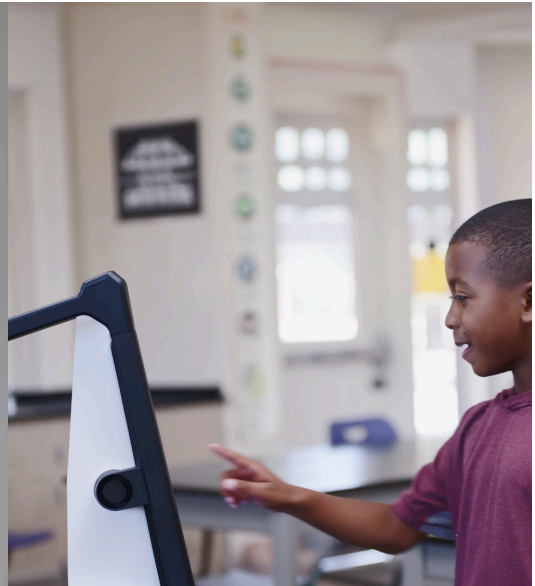
# The power of spoken reflections

To get more authentic and insightful reflections, consider using spoken reflections instead of written ones. Spoken reflections encourage students to share more candidly, activating a stream of consciousness that allows them to express themselves more freely than they might in writing.

**Educators like Gabe Nemiroff, a social studies teacher** at Albuquerque Talent Development Academy (New Mexico), have observed significant differences when switching from written to spoken reflections:

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Students are able to be more candidly reflective. Verbal responses have made it possible to maintain a more raw version of what they are experiencing in a way that isn't gated by them having to write in a way that they think they are supposed to.



## Gaining insights from reflections

Once students are reflecting honestly, it's crucial for teachers to glean as much as possible from their responses. Examine every student's response for the following:

**How well has the student mastered the learning objective? And, how deep is their understanding?**

- Assess how well the student has grasped the learning objectives. Look for evidence of their depth of understanding and ability to recall and interpret their experiences.

**Is the student being appropriately challenged and supported in their learning?**

- Determine if the student's experiences are within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Identify if they feel overwhelmed or insufficiently challenged.

**How does the student feel about the learning experience?**

- Pay attention to the emotions expressed by the student. Look for signs of growth, motivation, and overall sentiment towards the learning experience.

# Finding the right tool

Facilitating, analyzing, and providing feedback on reflections for an entire class can be overwhelming and time-consuming. Technological advancements, like AI, offer solutions to automate this process.

Mirror by Swivl is a tool that guides students through spoken reflections for any learning objective, provides instant AI-powered feedback to help students grow, and analyzes reflections for key insights into student understanding, ZPD, and mindset. This allows teachers to focus on individualized learning and improving their teaching while ensuring students benefit from regular reflective practices.

# Providing meaningful feedback

Effective feedback can significantly enhance student learning and achievement. By delivering feedback immediately after a reflection, you empower students to take action and change their thinking right away. This timely feedback helps them improve their reflective skills, build confidence, and take charge of their own learning.



## Key takeaways

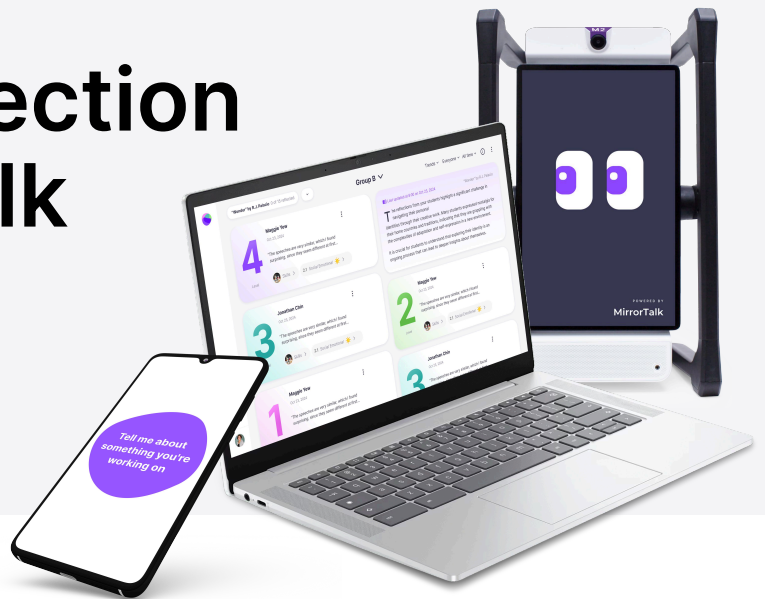
- Verbal > Written Reflection: Verbal reflections often provide deeper insights into student understanding, mindset, and emotional state.
- An AI-powered reflection tool like MirrorTalk can reduce the time required to prompt, facilitate, and analyze reflections, making the process more efficient for teachers.



## Pause and reflect

- What would your classroom look like if every student completed a verbal reflection related to the daily objective?
- What ways can you streamline the reflection process to ease the burden on you, the teacher?
- What transformation can you envision for your students if they started reflecting more often?

# Prioritize reflection with MirrorTalk



With MirrorTalk, I can invite all 104 of my students to reflect regularly and bring feedback to them almost instantly.

Annette, Technology Instructor, OH



Students are more comfortable talking to MirrorTalk than in front of the teacher or class, so I feel like there is more true knowledge shown.

Jennifer, Instructional Coach, TX

MirrorTalk empowers educators like you to get better, more consistent reflection from your students. With MirrorTalk, you can set up guided spoken reflections in seconds, provide students with instant feedback, and automatically score and analyze their reflections.

We believe in the transformative potential of reflection, and **we want to help you bring more effective reflection practices to your school.**

**Sign up to try MirrorTalk in your classroom free.** MirrorTalk software works on any device, supports your entire class roster, and lets students record verbal reflections anywhere—on their phone, tablet, or laptop.

If you find MirrorTalk transformative for your students, our team will work with you to keep this valuable tool in your classroom. **Don't miss the chance to see the impact reflection with MirrorTalk can have on your students!**

[Try MirrorTalk](#)