

First Term Reflection

(can you believe it's already mid-November??)

A couple of times over the course of the year we will write reflections that will go home for your family to read, so that they can share in your learning process. Your family will have homework, too: to offer positive feedback on your reflective powers (only commenting on what you are doing well), and to offer advice as to how to take a step forward in the area you yourself have identified as where you would like to grow. Notice that this is very different from them correcting your writing or criticizing your work. I will send home instructions for them that will make this very explicit.

If the idea of this makes you want to vomit because you are nervous/anxious/scared about how your parents may respond, please find a private time to talk to me and I will work with you to help assuage (ease) those fears.

The act of reflection is a very important part of the learning process: by actively looking back at our journey, we cement the learning that occurred, and we give ourselves the opportunity to take purposeful steps forward in the name of positive change; and by doing so, we increase the odds of our finding success and happiness.

Several years ago, another 6/7 class came up with criteria for what they considered successful reflections; that is the criteria I will use when looking at your work:

- **Honest**
- **Thorough and detailed**
- **Provides context:** assumes your reader is a very smart person who knows nothing about what you are describing—you don't need to talk down to them, but you cannot assume knowledge about your topic; you were there, they were not
- **Descriptive:** you are using words in such a way that your reader can experience what you experienced—they can see and feel it
- Use of **specific examples**, shared as **short stories**
- Digs into **how** and **why**; digs below the surface and resists surface answers
- **Proofread** for errors in conventions and opportunities for **precise word choice**
- *Optional:* the former 6/7 class also had the following as a key aspect of the criteria: use a **signature**, in case you become famous—I'll leave that one up to you!

And I'm also going to ask you to go one step further: can you embrace the Lloyd Alexander Challenge?

The Lloyd Alexander Challenge

What have you learned from studying the work of master writer Lloyd Alexander that might be useful here? You might consider some of the following:

- Image-building through purposeful verb, adjective, and adverb choice
- Variety in word choice: when is using specific descriptive language the right choice?
When is using simpler words the more effective choice?
- Variety in sentence structure and length
- Use of literary devices, such as:
 - simile and metaphor
 - alliteration, in order to draw attention to key words
 - onomatopoeia
 - personification
 - repetition
- An effective use of punctuation

Questions for Exploration

A key part of this assignment is answering the following questions:

1. In what area or areas do you feel you have demonstrated the most **growth** since starting the school year? This could be in an area related to **academics** or **work habits** or **social-emotional development**.

- **Clearly identify the area or areas** where you experienced growth—be specific (not just Group Work, but my ability to make others feel included by doing X, Y, and Z, etc.)
- **Tell the story of how this growth occurred**—what were you doing (or not doing)? Do your best to make this story detailed and specific. Take your time. Consider what you have learned about effective storytelling from Lloyd Alexander.

Remember that your audience (your parents) has not experienced these things in the ways that you have, so you need to provide them with enough **context** to follow your ideas.

- **Explain how this growth may help you in the future**, short-term (this month) and long-term (a year, five years, ten years from now). **Use specific examples**.
2. Where do you feel **stuck** right now? What is challenging for you? Again, this could be in the area of **academics** or **work habits** or **social-emotional development**.

- **Explain the idea**
- **Tell a story**, with you as the main character, about you engaging with this thing and encountering stuck-ness or challenge. Do your best to make this story specific and detailed.

Remember to provide **context** for your reader so that they can follow your story with ease. What do you need to explain to them (who, what, where, when, why, how) to help them understand what you are talking about?

- **Explain why, for you, this is particular thing is challenging**. What is it about you—the way you work, your typical ways of being, your upbringing, your past experiences—that makes this challenging?

(continued on the next page)

- **Explain why unlocking change in this area might bring greater ease and happiness in your life:** what has life been like in the past for you, in relation to this way of being? How is it negatively impacting your present? What does the future look like with this way of being unchanged? What does the future look like with this way of being released?

Try to use specific examples.

After you have written your first draft:

- ☐ **Reread the criteria.** Have you done your best to address each of those aspects?
- ☐ **Reread the questions** in this document. Have you done your best to address **each of the bullet points**?
- ☐ **Proofread carefully, line by line.** In addition to looking for errors in spelling, punctuation, and sentence construction, also keep an eye out for opportunities for precise word choice.
- ☐ Find a private place to **read your work out loud to yourself**—this is the best way to spot uncaught errors and to listen for flow between ideas

Things We Have Done Since the Beginning of the Year (a non-exhaustive list)

Language Arts

Seen and Heard lists

Daily Diary entries

The Book of Three

- exploding paragraphs
 - exploring the impact of
 - word choice
 - punctuation
 - image-building
 - sentence length and sentence structure
 - paragraph length and paragraph structure
 - use of literary devices: alliteration, repetition, simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, personification
 - asking questions
 - making logical predictions
- class discussion while reading
- written responses after chapters, exploring ideas about:
 - word choice
 - literary devices
 - character development
 - image building
- reading character roles aloud
- noticing Prof. Wu Wei's oral language techniques

Short reflections: what to keep and what to release from the past; first week learning and challenges

Leaf writing—using descriptive language to help someone else “see” your leaf

Sharing ideas in partnerships, groups, and with the whole class

Active listening during class and small group discussions and during the instructive phase of lessons

Vocal warm-ups

Socratic Circles—prep and taking part in the Circle discussion; observing the discussion from the Outer Circle

Drafting written aspects of Brain Lapbooks

Math

Math mindset videos

Ned and Kirsten (in small groups, each with one piece of the information; working together to visualize and solve the problem)

Number Theory: defining place value, describing numbers of great value and decimals (verbally, in writing, and in expanded form), modelling with base-10 blocks, prime numbers and composites, factors and multiples

Using proper math vocabulary

Visual representations of the problem-solving process

Decimals numbers—zooming in on number lines in order to plot decimal numbers with precision

Operations with decimal numbers

Following the problem-solving criteria

Measurement for art and design activities

Socials

Re-Civilization thought-experiment

The key aspects of civilizations

Civ V

- Cause-and-effect—exploring the impact of decisions and actions
- Impact of geography on your civilization
- The challenge of balancing the competing needs of your civilization: economy, food, production, citizen happiness; military, technological advancements, access to resources, diplomacy with other civilizations

Science

Brain videos—making webs

Independent research into brain parts

Following criteria for note-taking

Making connections to other brain parts

Communicating learning from independent research—creating drafts for the brain lap book

Connections to CEC work

Art and Design

Comp book covers

Index Cards—image creation, silencing The Two Questions (“Is it good?” “Does it suck?”)

Lynda Barry drawing exercises; Ivan Brunetti-style drawing

Visual aspect of the brain lapbooks

Drafting name plates

Creating name plates

Exploring interactives for the brain lapbooks

Drafting each aspect of the brain project

Physical Health Education

Good sportspersonship – all-out participation, encouraging of teammates, celebrating wins and loses equally, trying to make steps forward from your current level of skill

Minor games—teamwork, ball skills, and strategic thinking

Volleyball

Ball and chicken passing exercise as metaphor for group work

Morning Check-ins—emotional intelligence

Consciousness Explorers Club: guided meditations and other mindfulness techniques (like breathing and the Five Grounding Senses)

Mindset exploration and pliable awareness (Bruce Lee and Wu Wei, Hubble Telescope, Lynda Barry, math mindset, Brené Brown’s vulnerability TED Talk)

French

Alphabet

Numbers

Greetings

Group Work

Team-building: strategies passing the variety of sports objects and the rubber chicken; class names

Group work jobs: Chairperson, Diplomat, Questioner, Reporter, Encourager

Small groups work: the Ned and Kirsten math problem; *Civ V* groups, Yahtzee, survival thought-experiment

Class jobs

Actively creating a respectful, inclusive, and positive work environment

Partner work

Creating the Class Agreement

Clean-up

Work Ethic

Staying on task during work blocks and other class activities

Applying mindset exploration to class work (silencing the Two Questions, approaching work with pliable awareness and Lynda Barry's calm and friendly way of being, etc.)

Homework

Organization of materials

Attempt at thoroughness

Using criteria to shape the approach to the work

Focus tools

Self-regulation: adjusting your voice and body to suit the environment

Music

Friendships and social interactions—in class, at recess and lunch, before and after school

Volunteer positions in the Highlands community