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Hey everyone, this is Katie Novak and you're listening to the education Table, a micro podcast where we answer your questions about inclusive education in ten minutes or less. In today's episode, we're discussing how to universally design student reflection in all content areas. I'll share a personal story about making a regrettable decision, explore the value of daily student reflection in the research, and then provide concrete strategies to help students reflect effectively. Let's get started. Started once during a road trip, I decided to buy hard boiled eggs from a gas station. At the moment, it seemed like a quick and protein packed snack. However, upon reflection, I realized it was a terrible decision. As John Dewey said, we do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience.

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After one bite of that egg, I learned that in the future, I'm going to pass on gas station eggs, which probably is pretty obvious to many of you listening. That experience highlights the importance of reflection. We try things and sometimes we win and sometimes we eat gas station hard boiled eggs. But it's essential to embrace these trial periods to determine what works best for us so that we can make better decisions in the future. I often say I make a lot of mistakes, but I don't often make the same mistakes over and over again. Similarly, encouraging students to reflect on their learning experience helps them to understand what works for them, and then improves their decision making and learning strategies in the future. The value of student reflection in education is very well supported by research.

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Daily reflection helps students internalize what they've learned, recognize their strengths and areas where they need to grow, and it helps them to develop metacognitive skills. According to a study by Hattie and Donahue in 2016, reflection is a super powerful tool for learning, with an effect size of 0.6, which is about two years of growth. And so that indicates there's a really substantial positive impact on student achievement when we weave in student reflection. There's also research published in the Harvard Business Review that highlights that reflection actually improves performance. So in a study by Di Stefano and colleagues, participants who spent 15 minutes reflecting at the end of every day performed 23% better after ten days than those who did not carve out time to reflect. This evidence really highlights the importance of integrating reflection into daily classroom routines to enhance student learning outcomes.

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To help students reflect effectively, consider implementing the following strategies in your universally designed learning environment. First, always start an end class with opening and closing routines that prompt reflection and visual thinking. For example, begin the day with what do you hope to learn today, for example? And then end with what was the most important thing you learned today and why. Having routines like this encourages students to set goals after they learn about the standards that you're focusing on. And then at the end of the period, they can also reflect on their progress. And so it's super important not only to prompt with these routines, but to have students visibly represent those in some way.

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Through the lens of UDL, you can provide lots of options and choices, like maybe they draw a picture or write in their notebooks, or maybe they type a note and put it into a discussion board. But the reflection daily is key. Another really good strategy is to use exams. So essentially, whenever you assign an exam or an assessment, you add a question at the end that asks students to reflect on their preparation for the exam and how they did. You might prompt them with what strategies did you use to prepare for this exam or based on how you did in this exam, what do you feel like you might do differently the next time?

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And so this practice, which is used often in college classrooms, really helps kids to think about their learning process and then think about how they're going to improve their process in the future. Also a really good idea periodically to have community circles, which is a part of the restorative practices umbrella. And you can get all the students together in a circle and reflect on what is working in the classroom and what needs to be improved. And when you're in these circles together, you essentially have the opportunity to hear from students about their experience. They can provide feedback, you can provide feedback, you're all equal participants and collectively find solutions for how to have the class be more supportive and more rigorous and more engaging.

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And this is a really great way not only to promote reflection, but also to build community and shared responsibility for learning. The last strategy is to schedule regular check ins with kids to reflect. As a former english teacher, I loved being able to have writing conferences with students to ask them what they learned about themselves as writers, where they're growing, where their strengths are, and it's a really good practice in all grades and subject areas, and they can be one on one. Or it might just be small group discussions where students share their reflections about themselves as learners in the class, and you can provide feedback and support. So to wrap up universally, designing student reflection in every content area at every age is a really powerful way to enhance learning and decision making.

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By implementing strategies like opening and closing routines, exam wrapper questions, restorative circles, and conferencing with students, we can help them develop their reflective minds, muscles that will support growth and success. Thank you so much for joining me at the education table. Be sure to check out the show notes for more resources on student reflection. Until next time. Onward.