



The **Tufts Literacy Corps**
America Reads/America Counts at Tufts University

Becoming A Reflective Practitioner

Teaching is challenging. Anyone who works with a wide variety of learners finds out that while some students may be delightfully easy to work with (often because their learning style closely matches our own), others puzzle us or present challenges that undermine their learning. Learning as much as possible about our students and their learning is pivotal to effective tutoring. For example, we must pace our sessions for highly distractible children differently from those who can focus for almost 45 minutes at a stretch. Similarly, our most effective instruction is often built on topics that genuinely engage our students. Tutoring, therefore, is most successful when we know our students and can tailor instruction to their interests.

Developing teaching skill also relies heavily on the ability to examine and analyze one's own behavior. To do this, it's important to put aside the tendency to avoid admitting to errors. Successful teachers and tutors know that teaching is messy. Getting good at it requires the ability to figure out what happened, why it didn't work and how to be more effective next time. It also requires the ability to recognize when things are going well and why.

Reflection Questions

1. What does my student most need to learn and/or develop during the next three months? How will I sequence sessions into a tutoring agenda that delivers this content? What do I already know how to do? What do I need to learn?
2. What engages my tutee most fully? What gets this child excited about learning? How can I make this happen more regularly in our sessions?
3. What was my best tutoring moment this week? Why was it "the best?" How can I build on it and strengthen my student's experience?
4. What did not go as well as I expected this week? What did I do to adjust? Were my modifications effective? How did things develop?
5. Tutoring unavoidably requires us to explain on the spur of the moment at times, so we all stumble occasionally. Describe a time when you could see yourself stumbling over your words and/or making the topic more confusing for your tutee than illuminating. How could you have explained things more clearly?
6. Alternatively, describe a time when you observed yourself communicating clearly and effectively with your student. What were you explaining? What did you say? How did the child respond?