

## Reflective Practice in Head Start and Early Head Start

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As administrators and educators, we work in a fast paced work environment that strives to *Race to the Top* to design and implement integrated systems of high-quality early learning programs and services. Reflection is the foundation of purposeful learning. It's the active process of seeing one's own experience in order to take a closer look at it, sometimes to direct attention to it briefly, but often to explore it in greater depth. As we develop greater service delivery systems and innovative approaches to learning it is important that we embrace the purpose of reflection. Our aim is to allow the possibility of learning through experience.

“Meaningful, reflective conversations can sustain and nourish us. They can raise individual and collective consciousness. Above all else they involve a discussion of values. This is the heart of the improvement process.” (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998,p1122)

Shulman (1999) defines reflection as “this is what a teacher does when he or she looks back at the teaching and learning that has occurred, and reconstructs, re-enacts, and/or recaptures the events, the emotions, and the accomplishments.”

Reflective practice has also been defined as the act of creating a mental space in which to contemplate a question or idea, such as, "What do I know now about teaching young children?" This moment allows a mental transformation to a time and a situation that leads to a deeper perspective.

Reflective Practice is a conscious process for practitioners to examine what they do, share ideas, and engage in ongoing development of their professional skills. It is a cyclic process of learning through experience that can be used to solve problems, understand and expand on successes, and explore new ideas. It may be undertaken individually although it works most effectively when there is a team commitment in the workplace to collaborate together on a regular basis. Teams can engage in a cycle of thinking about their work, reviewing outcomes and making planned changes to their practice. This cycle forms the framework for undertaking action research and contributes to building professional expertise and quality learning environments.

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## Round Table Questions

Do you have the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning?

Why should we embrace reflective practice?

Why is reflective practice so important in early childhood learning?  
development and teaching?

How can we achieve this best practice?

- Amulya, J. (2004) *What is Reflective Practice? The Centre for Reflective Community Practice*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Retrieved 26 June 2012, from <http://www.itslifejimbutnotasweknowit.org.uk/files/whatisreflectivepractice.pdf>
- Reflection (Three Building Blocks of Reflective Supervision) Zero to Three – 2001 Paralakian R. Look, Listen and Learn. Reflective supervision and relationship based Work.