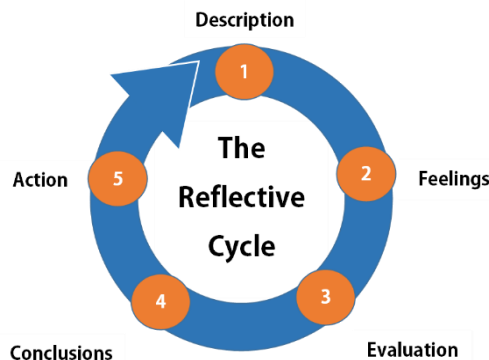




The Early Childhood Education *Bulletin*

LEADERSHIP CORNER

By Monique Wilkinson



Gibbs' Reflective Cycle¹

Conventional wisdom tells us "experience is the best teacher." Now consider this quote from American educational reformer John Dewey: "We don't learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience."

Research tells us that educators who regularly reflect on what they do, why they do it, and how this new knowledge can be used to improve their practice achieve the best outcomes for children and families (MacNaughton, 2005; Sylva et al, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2008; Raban et al, 2007).

What does reflective practice look like? Best practices in instructional support for children include asking "why" and "how" questions to guide reflection, analyze and evaluate learning and play, and deepen understanding. Consider sports teams that watch a tape of the previous night's game. They're able to identify mistakes and correct them at practice (www.edunators.com), as well as identify what worked well. Reflective practice can be likened to instructional support for early childhood practitioners. It involves "replaying the

game tape" about experiences with children, families and co-workers. It also involves asking questions and generating information and solutions in order to improve teaching practices and, ultimately, child outcomes. Purposeful questioning and feedback strategies can help teachers make sense of what happened, and draw conclusions about how to improve the activity for the next time.

The IEECE currently offers opportunities for center leaders and practitioners to become involved in reflective practice to support professional development. For more information about courses that support reflective practice, contact Monique Wilkinson, (561) 868-3829 or wilkinsm@palmbeachstate.edu.

¹Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Further Educational Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.