

# REFLECTION IN ACTION: BRIDGING PRACTICE, PURPOSE, AND PROGRESS

Jenny Kuban, MS, Managing Editor, JSE, Grand Canyon University

---

## REFLECTION

As the educational community continues to evolve, reflection has emerged as a central tool for transformation. Reflective practice enables educators, mentors, and leaders to adapt their strategies and identities in classrooms, counseling centers, churches, and community spaces. Pausing to ask, “What are we doing and why?” helps us realign our methods with our mission. It grounds us in intentionality while giving space to reimagine new pathways forward.

This Journal of Scholarly Engagement issue showcases how reflection moves beyond abstract theory and becomes a force for real change. The featured manuscripts reveal how educators, researchers, and leaders apply reflective practices to address disruptive behavior, neurodiversity, program development, and inclusive instruction. Each article provides an example of how reflection, grounded in context and purpose, can reshape the learning experience for both students and practitioners.

Reflection, in its most authentic form, is more than a professional requirement; it is a personal and communal practice that fosters awareness, growth, and renewed commitment to one’s work. It invites educators to consider the complexities of student experiences, the intersectionality of learners’ identities, and the broader systems in which learning occurs. Instead of falling into routine, reflective educators approach their work with curiosity and responsiveness, asking how to support those they serve more effectively. Reflection invites educators to engage in deliberate learning, develop greater confidence, and act with clarity when navigating unexpected or challenging circumstances (Machost & Stains, 2023). Whether responding to disruptive behavior in a 5th-grade classroom, designing an inclusive curriculum, or motivating volunteerism through faith, reflection

bridges theory and practice. It sharpens our insight and re-centers our values.

Reflective practice also strengthens resilience and adaptability in complex educational demands. It can illustrate areas for improvement that may otherwise remain hidden, provide context for student behaviors, and elevate the voices of marginalized learners. For example, reflective approaches such as faculty-led curriculum audits or structured focus groups can surface equity gaps in course content, classroom dynamics, or student access, especially when designed to include diverse perspectives and lived experiences. Reflective strategies that intentionally gather feedback and revisit assumptions promote more inclusive, learner-centered environments (Machost & Stains, 2023). When reflection is embedded in the daily practice of teaching, leadership, or service, it empowers educators to take ownership of their impact and to lead with humility and purpose.

This Journal of Scholarly Engagement issue brings together a diverse set of manuscripts demonstrating the transformative power of reflective thinking in educational practice. The authors explore topics ranging from student behavior management and ADHD accommodations to faith-driven service and sex education for students with intellectual disabilities. Each manuscript reveals how reflective inquiry can lead to meaningful innovation, improved student and community outcomes, and enhanced professional identity development. These works represent a shared commitment to progress, not through perfection, but through thoughtful, iterative growth.

## CURRENT ISSUE

The June 2025 issue highlights six manuscripts showcasing reflection as a methodology and a mindset. Each author draws from experience, scholarship, and practice to illuminate

how intentional self-examination leads to transformation, whether in the classroom, mentoring relationships, or curriculum development. These works exemplify the intersection of purpose-driven work and personal accountability, guided by empathy, inquiry, and a commitment to educational equity.

Branham, Casteel, and Moore begin with an applied program evaluation of the *THRIVE Resilience Program for Teens*. Their mixed-methods study demonstrates how structured social-emotional learning (SEL), when paired with substance abuse prevention education, can increase students' confidence, emotional awareness, and perceptions of harm regarding risky behaviors. The authors illustrate how reflection is embedded not only in student learning but also in the design and iterative implementation of the program itself. Their research highlights the importance of SEL frameworks that are responsive, evidence-based, and grounded in lived student experience.

In *Exploring the Intersection of Cognitive Therapy and Education*, Archer Olson weaves personal narrative and cognitive science into a compelling critique of teacher preparation. Drawing from her recovery journey after a traumatic brain injury, she identifies gaps in how educators are trained to understand memory, trauma, and neurodiversity. Through reflective storytelling and scholarly inquiry, she advocates for a more integrative teacher education model that blends psychological insight with pedagogical tools to support students who learn and process information differently. Her work is a powerful reminder of how reflection can emerge from lived experience and inform systemic change.

Skots' *Reflecting on the Impact of Growth Mindset Teaching on Reducing Disruptive Behaviors in a 5th Grade Classroom* offers a powerful case study in classroom transformation. Skots documents a noticeable improvement in student behavior, emotional regulation, and teacher-student relationships by shifting from traditional discipline methods to growth mindset strategies. Her reflection reveals the power of mindset not only as a student trait but also as a teacher lens that nurtures grace, accountability, and belief in each learner's capacity to grow.

Phelps's manuscript, *Teacher Inclusive Practices for Students with ADHD*, explores the intersections of personal experience and professional practice. As both an educator and a parent, Phelps critically examines the inconsistencies and inequities in general education support for ADHD students. Through reflective analysis of current research and her journey, she offers a call to action for schools to invest in ongoing professional development, create inclusive classroom cultures, and shift from compliance-based support to relationship-centered frameworks.

Branch's *Reflecting on Staff Teaching Sex Education Curriculum to Students with Intellectual Disabilities* addresses a long-standing gap in curriculum and staff preparedness. Her study elevates the voices of staff working in special education settings and explores the discomfort, policy confusion, and lack of training that often accompany efforts to teach sex education. Through thematic analysis, Branch identifies actionable strategies to promote inclusivity, uphold dignity, and ensure that all students, regardless of ability, receive accurate, respectful, and developmentally appropriate information.

Concluding this issue, Clark and Basko present *The Influence of Faith-Based Motivational Functions on Motivation to Volunteer*. Their qualitative study draws from the Faith-Based Volunteer Motivation model to explore how spiritual beliefs, communal connection, and altruistic values influence long-term engagement in volunteer roles. Their findings reveal that volunteerism becomes a profoundly fulfilling and sustained service when rooted in reflection and values alignment. This study bridges psychological theory with ministry and nonprofit work, offering practical insights for faith-based leaders and organizations.

Each of these manuscripts serves as a testament to the role of reflective practice in advancing scholarship and applied change. Whether enhancing program evaluation, informing curriculum decisions, or challenging established assumptions, these studies invite readers to reflect on their practices, and to do so with curiosity, courage, and care.

Considering the lessons presented in this issue, one theme stands out: reflection empowers action. Reflective practitioners bring intentionality to their work, whether in education, caregiving,

counseling, or leadership, driven by practice, purpose, and progress. The authors in this volume model what it means to ask difficult questions, to learn from lived experience, and to adapt in the service of others.

The Journal of Scholarly Engagement remains committed to uplifting practitioner scholarship that centers on what we do and why it matters. Reflection will remain a powerful compass as our educational landscape shifts in response to diverse learner needs, social challenges, and institutional change.

## References

- Machost, H., & Stains, M. (2023). Reflective practices in education: A primer for practitioners. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, 22(es2), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.22-07-0148>