

Example reflection using the 4Rs of reflection model

Stage	Student's reflective writing	Language features
Report	I'm particularly interested in environmental education and ways we can teach children to appreciate the natural world around them. At the primary school where I did my first placement, I observed a lesson where a place-based pedagogy (Orr 2013) was applied to a Year 6 class. In this class, the children went into their schoolyard where they collected plant samples, photographed flowers and wrote poems or drew pictures about the trees. I was really inspired by the way the class was organised and how the activities encouraged curiosity in the children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the topic by explaining its connection to your coursework. • A reflection is personal, your language can be subjective and somewhat less formal than other academic writing. Note the use of personal language: <i>I, my, we</i> • Using a narrative (story) approach can sometimes show the contrast between different experiences.
Relate	My own learning experience of environmental education was very different to the experience these children enjoyed. For example, my educational history in natural science was experienced primarily through textbook learning. Unlike these children, my understanding of the environment was seen as separate to the environment around me. Orr (2013, p. 184) characterises text book learning like mine as the 'abstraction' of education. He believes abstracted learning emotionally detaches us from our connection to the natural world. To address the emotional disconnect between ourselves and the natural world, Orr encourages exploration of place as a 'laboratory for learning'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use past tense to report on your past personal experiences. • A good reflection will draw links between experience and ideas raised in unit readings and discussions. • Use reporting verbs (characterises, believes, encourages) to integrate sources into your reflection. • Use present tense when you discuss theories of other writers.
Reason	The children I observed, remained engaged and motivated throughout their class. By having to draw what they saw, they noticed the shapes and structures of the plants, soil colours and changes and the place of plants and people within a larger ecosystem. Watching how the children physically engaged with the world around them, I felt they were establishing a deeper connection to nature. My observation of the children in this activity, reflects Orr's (2013, p. 184) idea, that careful observation of the natural world can build a stronger ethical approaches towards environmental issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, draw links between the experience and the ideas in unit readings.
Reconstruct	When I compare the experience of observing the Year 6 class activity to my own experience of learning through textbooks, I can see how hands on teaching can inspire children to be more connected to their learning. I believe that curriculum planning and teaching needs to include activities that encourage students to be more involved in exploring the environment in which they live. As part of my future teaching practice, I intend to explore how hands-on, place-based pedagogy can contribute to educating children about the world around them and in turn build resilience in the face of environmental changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclude reflection by linking back to the original idea you wanted to explore in your introduction. • Be clear about what the experience has taught you. • Avoid using words that are too general, for example: "Overall this was a great experience. I learned a lot." What was great?