THE 3 LEVELS OF REFLECTION

The three levels of reflection can serve as a guide for evaluating students' reflection (Bradley, 1995). A description of each level is matched with students' fictional class comments and ways an instructor invites the student to delve more deeply into reflection. The following example draws from a course about learning disabilities in which students serve at a day program that provides education and rehabilitation services.

LEVEL ONE

- Gives examples of observed behaviors or characteristics of the client or setting, but provides no insight into reasons behind the observation; observations tend to be one dimensional and conventional or unassimilated repetitions of what has been heard in class or from peers.
- Tends to focus on just one aspect of the situation.
- Uses supported personal beliefs as frequently as "hard" evidence.
- May acknowledge differences of perspective but does not discriminate effectively among them.

Student: "When his mother dropped off Stewart today, she seemed to quickly leave him at the door. She didn't help him with his coat and lunch or make sure he saw one of the teachers. Maybe her parenting is making his disability worse."

Faculty: "How might you learn more about the particularities of this child or rules about how children get dropped off? Which of our readings might help you distinguish between the physiological and cognitive components of disability and environmental influences?"

LEVEL TWO

- Observations are fairly thorough and nuanced although they tend not to be placed in a broader context.
- Provides a cogent critique from one perspective, but fails to see the broader system in which the aspect is embedded and other factors which may make change difficult.
• Uses unsupported personal beliefs and evidence but is beginning to be able to differentiate between them.
• Perceives legitimate differences of viewpoint.
• Demonstrates a beginning ability to interpret evidence.

Student: "Today I was asked to work with the older students-18-21-year-olds who are mildly mentally retarded. I helped a girl get better at putting tools together so that she might get a job. I'm not sure if she will ever be able to live on her own, but maybe a group home is best."

Faculty: "Tell me more about what you think adulthood might mean for this student. What are our dominant social values about work, and how does that impact what you (and others) expect of this student?"

LEVEL THREE

• Views things from multiple perspectives; able to observe multiple aspects of the situation and place them in context.
• Perceives conflicting goals within and among the individuals involved in a situation and recognizes that the differences can be evaluated.
• Recognizes that actions must be situationally dependent and understands many of the factors which affect their choice.
• Makes appropriate judgments based on reasoning and evidence.
• Has reasonable assessment of the importance of the decisions facing clients and of his or her responsibility as a part of clients' lives.

Student: "I attended a staff meeting today and realized that most of the staff are white while most of our students are black. Although the staff seems to work well with the children and families, the role of race and power in the school can't be ignored. What does it mean for me to be a white woman who wants to work in a community where most of my students might be black? The local school system is much more racially diverse than our school. Now I see the concrete results of biased diagnosis. What is my role as a teacher in helping students be appropriately diagnosed and placed?"

Faculty: "You have clearly identified important questions of power and ethical responsibilities. I encourage you to bring this up in class as well as with your supervisor at the school."

In addition to understanding the elements of reflection and evaluation, it may be useful to take a step back and consider the unique experience of the student-where he/she is with his/her educational and moral development.