

Optimistic Closure

What is Closure?

The closure is the time when you wrap up a class period or school day and help students organize information and experiences in a meaningful context in their minds. This helps students better understand what they have learned and provides a way in which they can apply it to the world around them. A strong closure can help students better retain information beyond the immediate learning environment. A helpful activity when closing a class period or school day is to engage students in a quick discussion about what exactly they learned and what it means to them now. Equally important is for closure to serve as a time for helping students become reflective about what they learned and how they were as learners.

Why reflection?

- Reflection makes all of us self-aware. It challenges us to think deeply about how we learn.
- Reflection deepens ownership. When we reflect, we become sensitive to the personal connection that exists between ourselves, our learning, and our work. The more we consider these connections, the deeper they seem to become. Reflection makes things matter more.
- Reflection helps us get comfortable with being uncomfortable. It also helps us fail forward. It's through reflection that we discover our greatest power as a learning community: our collective expertise and our willingness to encourage and celebrate risk-taking.
- Reflection helps us know ourselves better. It helps us sharpen our vision so we can align our actions to it. Reflection also helps us notice when we're getting off track.
- Perhaps most importantly, reflection helps us advocate for ourselves and support others. Taking the time to reflect enables us to identify what we want, what we need, and what we must do to help ourselves. It also helps us realize how our gifts and strengths might be used in service to others.

Ten Reflective Questions to Ask at the End of Class or at the End of the Day

1. Reflect on your thinking, learning, and work today. What were you most proud of?
2. Where did you encounter struggle today, and what did you do to deal with it?
3. What about your thinking, learning, or work today brought you the most satisfaction? Why?
4. What is frustrating you? How do you plan to deal with that frustration?
5. What lessons were learned from failure today?
6. Where did you meet success, and who might benefit most from what you've learned along the way? How can you share this with them?
7. What are your next steps? Which of those steps will come easiest? Where might you struggle? What can you do now to navigate the road ahead with the most success?
8. What made you curious today?
9. How did I help you today? How did I hinder you? What can I do tomorrow to help you more?
10. How did you help the class today? How did you hinder the class today? What can you do tomorrow to help other learners more?

Other Creative Closure Activities

1. Snowstorm

Students write down what they learned or experienced on a piece of scratch paper and wad it up. Given a signal, they throw their paper snowballs in the air. Then each learner picks up a nearby response and reads it aloud.

2. Two-Dollar Summary

Students write a two-dollar (or more) summary of their class period or day. Each word is worth ten cents. For extra scaffolding, ask students to include specific words in their statement. (Source (PDF): Ann Lewis and Aleta Thompson)

3. DJ Summary

Learners write what they learned in the form of a favorite song. Offer extra praise if they sing.

4. So What?

Students answer the following prompts:

What takeaways from the class period or day will be important to know three years from now? Why?

5. Dramatize It

Have students dramatize a real-life application of a skill or an event from the day.

6. Find a First-Grade Student

Have students orally describe a concept, procedure, or skill in terms so simple that a child in first grade would get it.

7. Students I Learned from the Most

Students write positive notes to peers describing what they learned from them during a class period or from other encounters throughout the day.

Source :Modified from Edutopia – Closure Activities by Tod Finley

Planning for Positive Closure

Be intentional in planning time for closure, making it an actual component of a class period or end of day segment.

- **Consider setting an alarm.** Having a mechanism such as a timer or buzzer that signals that the class or school day is almost over and that closure activities are about to start keeps teachers and other staff accountable and lets students know the importance of closure.
- **Create a routine around closure.** Find closure activities that fit your students and make those activities a part of your daily routine. Plan for activities that provide a chance for students to be aware of themselves as both learners and collaborators with other students. Remember, closure is for students' benefit as much as it is a feedback opportunity for teachers and other staff.
- **Create routines with Students.** Invite students to contribute ideas about practices for closure.

Committing to closure is not committing to more paperwork to review and/or grade. Many successful closure activities do not result in more work for the teacher.