

# Reflection Questions for Teachers and Students: A School Year Like No Other



To help you reflect on the 2016-2017 year, Lydia Breiseth, Manager of Colorín Colorado, has put together some reflection questions with the input of a group of veteran educators and teacher leaders, as well as a list of questions and writing prompts for students.

*Note: While these questions were written with educators of ELLs and immigrants in mind, they are applicable in a wide variety of settings, including other professional organizations. Special thanks to Larry Ferlazzo, Kristina Robertson, Susan Lafond and Cassandra Lawrence.*

As the 2016-17 school year draws to a close, it is an important time to stop and reflect on this past year, a year filled with a range of both expected and unexpected challenges and opportunities for many students, families, teachers, and administrators. It's also an opportunity to take a deep breath and think about how to best direct your energies in the coming year, as well as to think about what teaching coach Elena Aguilar calls your "impact on systems," particularly in your unique and important work with English language learners and immigrant students and their families.

To help in this effort, we've put together some reflection questions with the input of some trusted advisors, and we encourage you to start with [Teaching Tolerance's blog post](#) on what you would say to yourself at the beginning of this school year if you could go back in time.

We recommend exploring these questions through personal reflection (or perhaps some writing or artwork if you're so inclined) or conversation with others; they also may provide the basis for further in-depth conversation among colleagues or at the school level, which may be particularly helpful as you process this year and think about the next year. In addition, we have included some questions for students that might be of interest as writing or discussion prompts.

## Related Resources

For more on the importance of reflecting as well as some resources that will help you think about your role, take a look at the following:

- [Questions to Ask Yourself as the School Year Winds Down](#) by Justin Minkel (*Education Week*)
- [Reflecting on a Year of Learning](#) by Elena Aguilar (*Education Week*)
- [You Are Already a Leader: Identifying Your Leadership Skills on Behalf of ELLs](#) by Diane Staehr Fenner

**We want to hear from you!**

Feel free to share some of your responses via e-mail at [info@colorincolorado.org](mailto:info@colorincolorado.org).

## **This Year's Challenges and Opportunities**

What was the most difficult challenge (or series of challenges) I faced this year?

What strengths did I show in addressing those challenges?

Who or what helped me address those challenges?

What opportunities did those challenges create?

What did I learn about:

- my students' lives, families, and past experiences?
- my colleagues?
- my school community?
- my local community?
- myself?

How did I take care of and nurture myself this past year?

## **My Students and Their Families**

What are some of the key challenges my students and their families faced this year?

How were students and their families differently impacted by these challenges?

What helped my students and their families begin to address those challenges?

What opportunities resulted from those challenges?

What strengths did my students and their families show in addressing those challenges?

What is something my students accomplished this year?

How did they grow over the course of the year academically and personally?

## **My Role & Looking Ahead**

*Adapted from Elena Aguilar's [Questions for Reflecting on a Year of Learning](#)*

What kinds of advocacy work did I do this year?

What impact did I have on my students and their families?

What impact did I have on the systems in my classroom, building, or district? Can I see any systems that might have shifted (even just a little bit) as a result of my work?

How did I grow as an educator this year?

How can I harness what I learned and continue to move forward with it?

What do I anticipate facing next year? What is my plan of action?

How do I see my role for the coming year? Has my role (or my idea of my role) changed over the course of the year?

Are there professional activities I'd like to explore over the summer or in the coming year to help me continue to grow?

Are there networks that would provide me with some extra support?

How can I find out about support, resources, and networking opportunities from my teacher's union?

Are there resources or relationships I need to do my work more effectively? Is there information I need? If so, what steps can I take to get what I need?

Are there local connections I can make or develop to help me support my students even more effectively in the coming year?

What are some changes that I would like to see in the following year in my classroom or school?

What can I do to make those changes happen or at least start the process of change?

## **Ending on a Positive Note**

What is something I accomplished this year?

In what ways have I grown professionally and personally?

What has given me hope?

What has brought me joy?

Who or what was particularly helpful in a moment when I needed it?

Which colleague had a positive impact on my students this year?

What is something I did that made a difference for someone else?

## **End-of-Year Reflection Questions for Students**

A challenge or difficult moment for me this year was when....

The way I took care of myself during this challenge was....

This challenge reminded me that I have many strengths, such as....

An opportunity that came from this challenge was....

The impact of this year on my future might be that....

One thing I am worried about is....

One thing that gave me hope was....

One thing that gave me joy was...

One thing I am especially proud of is...

An adult who helped me was....

Something nice that a classmate did for me was....

A time that I made a difference for another person was when...

Next year, I am excited to....

This year, I learned that...

## References

Aguilar, Elena. (2014) Reflecting on a Year of Learning. *Education Week*.

[http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/coaching\\_teachers/2014/05/reflecting\\_on\\_a\\_year\\_of\\_learning.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/coaching_teachers/2014/05/reflecting_on_a_year_of_learning.html)

Aguilar, E. Questions for Reflecting on a Year of Learning.

[blogs.edweek.org/teachers/coaching\\_teachers/End%20of%20Year%20Reflection%20Questions.docx](http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/coaching_teachers/End%20of%20Year%20Reflection%20Questions.docx)