5

Involving Students

Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.

—Benjamin Franklin, author,
inventor, U.S. Founding Father

Throughout her entire school life, Jasmine understood one kind of assessment—number and letter grades. Every paper she had ever written, every project, and every quiz was returned with an arbitrary number or percentage, which translated to a corresponding A through F letter grade. An enthusiastic student, Jasmine sat at an old table with a laptop computer perched obtrusively in front of her. She typed as feverishly as her unskilled fingers would allow, and a summary of the book she read the past summer gradually came to life on a web page that her teacher built for her. "I like the detail you give about the protagonist." My voice echoed from behind Jasmine, startling the young author, who turned sheepishly and whispered, "What's it worth?"

After a moment of contemplation, I shrugged and answered her question with one of my own: "What do *you* think it's worth?"

Visibly confused, Jasmine pursed her lips and studied her shoes before answering my question with two more of her own: "I mean how many points is it? What grade do you think it will get?"

I sat in the open chair next to her. "Let's discuss it. Tell me what you have done and what you've learned from the assignment. If we absolutely had to put a grade on it, how would *you* grade it?"

Jasmine's eyebrows furrowed, her lips tightened again, and her shoulders shrugged. Then, her head nodded from right to left. "I don't know."

"You have to know," I said, my chin resting on clasped fingers. "Because your opinion is what matters most."

At that moment, everything Jasmine had ever learned about assessment was changing. She would never receive a number or letter, she learned, on anything she produced in her language arts class from that point forward. Jasmine and her peers, and most students around the world, had been victims of assessment 2.0 for their entire school lives. Anything different from a measurement was foreign to them. "What if I don't think it's very good?" Jasmine asked. "Will I get an F?"

> By removing letter grades from the final product, it ceased being exactly that, final.
>
> —Pernille Ripp (2014), teacher and education author

I slowly rose pushed in the chair, patted the eager author on her shoulder and smiled. "Just keep writing, Jasmine. It's already better than you know."

Old-school assessment practices are not only detrimental to learning for many reasons, including the ones outlined in Chapter 1, they leave students out of the process, which is both illogical and sad. "Grades tell students that even though they devour their books and can't wait to talk to somebody about them, when they forget to include the title and

author on a book report, they must not be "A+" readers. Grading tells students that they may have way too much responsibility at the age of 10, but that I don't care whether they're too tired today to do their best work" (Ripp, 2014, p. 113). And students do indeed have bad days, often caused by issues unrelated to learning. Let's not forget how Tori, in Chapter 4, struggled with writing in elementary school, due in large part to her dyslexia—a learning disability that her state-mandated standardized test did not consider, when labeling her a failure. Eliminating traditional grades allows students to overcome days when they are not at their best, when peripheral problems interfere with academics. More important, the SE2R (Summarize, Explain, Redirect, Resubmit) process creates learning opportunities that never end. "By removing letter grades from the final product, it ceased being exactly that, final. Now when an assignment is handed in, my students know it may not be done. It is no longer seen as an end product, but instead as another potential stepping stone in our learning journey" (Ripp, 2014, p. 114).

THE DANGER OF TOO MUCH WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Narrative feedback is not simply written descriptors of work. When used in concert with the student, feedback turns into a beautiful conversation about learning. When I first abandoned grades, I was so caught up in providing SE2R feedback that I didn't realize that what I had done was create an ongoing *War and Peace*–type narrative for my students. I was disappointed to learn that much of the feedback I was writing was being overlooked or, in some cases, completely ignored. One day, I returned part of a lengthy project. It was written on paper, as this was prior to the days when I taught in a classroom filled with computers. Weaving my way through the pods of tables where my students sat in small groups, I was shocked to see that many weren't reading the comments that I had spent hours writing. "What did you think of my

feedback?" I asked several students. When my query was met with shrugs, I realized something was terribly wrong. Forging ahead, I asked several enthusiastic students, who had mastered this particular activity, why they hadn't read the feedback. "Honestly," a brave boy whispered "you write stuff every day. It can get a bit long."

"Okay," I answered, "so tell me exactly what you did and why you did it." Each student in the group burst into a brief dissertation about his or her project, eager to share near-textbook commentary about their work. This enthusiastic dialogue helped me conclude that the problem wasn't with my precisely written SE2R feedback. It was that the students weren't part of the conversation. It occurred to me at that moment that lengthy written feedback wasn't necessary for every activity or project checkpoint. Sometimes, it is best to ask students a simple question about their work and allow the conversation to soar.

SE2R SHORTHAND

The day students told me that daily written feedback was too much was a revelation. I knew that eliminating grades in favor of SE2R would radically increase my workload, but I was determined to proceed with as much feedback as possible, believing that it was the right thing to do. Once I moved beyond the frustration of knowing that students were ignoring some of my feedback, it struck me that this was a logical and wonderful thing. Now, I could write less and help my students more by creating an ongoing dialogue about learning. Furthermore, I could record any discussions that I believed to be necessary additions to our online grade book, which I used only to provide feedback to students (mainly for report card conferences) and parents. If students were completing a written critique of a peer's novel reflection on their blogs, I might want brief feedback online as a record of this ongoing activity and of our discussions. The blog post commenting helped students learn how to give constructive feedback, while improving their writing skills, which was something we examined not only weekly but also at the end of a

marking period when it was time to settle on report card grades. There's more on report cards later in this chapter.

Chats with individuals during blogging could move quickly, and with more than 100 students, forgetting the details of these conversations was easy. Because SE2R was always part of any discussion about academics, another system for annotating this dialogue helped when adding lengthier feedback. I call this system *SE2R shorthand.* Figure 5.1 is an example of SE2R shorthand for the novel reflection critique.

Figure 5.1 SE2R Shorthand

Activity: Reflection Critique	
Note	**SE2R Conversion**
<300	You have completed your critique according to guidelines, but it is less than 300 words. Please lengthen it and resubmit.
>500	You have completed your critique according to guidelines, but it is more than 500 words. Please cut unnecessary portions of the critique and resubmit.
DM	You wrote a 300-500-word critique, with a properly used vocabulary word, but you did not include an example of a key detail that demonstrates understanding of our model critique. Please add a key detail to your post and resubmit.
DU	You wrote a 300-500-word critique, with a properly used vocabulary word, but your example of a key detail that demonstrates understanding of our model critique is unclear. Please explain how the detail you supplied indicates the author's understanding of the model critique and resubmit.
V	You wrote a 300-500-word critique, with an example of a key detail that demonstrates understanding of our model critique, but you left out a properly used, highlighted vocabulary word from our student word bank. Please add a vocabulary word to your post and resubmit.
M	You wrote a 300-500-word critique, with an example of a key detail that demonstrates understanding of our model critique. You included a properly used, highlighted vocabulary word from our student word bank. You have mastered this activity, according to our guidelines. Well done.

The rows represent the types of shorthand notes I wrote on a clipboard that contained my class roster. The roster was printed in a spreadsheet, so blocks appeared next to each student. These had a variety of uses and one was shorthand notes. Guidelines for the novel reflection critiques instructed students to write 300 to 500 words.

One shorthand designation I might add to my clipboard for an individual could indicate that the critique is less than 300 words. I would ask if the student could add any detail to the post, but until it was done, I would write this note next to the student's name: < 300. Students were also instructed to mention one specific detail from the author of the post they were reviewing and explain why it fit our class model of a well-written critique. If the blog post was missing this important portion of the activity, I would mention it during a one-to-one conversation, but I'd also note it on my class roster like this: DM (detail missing). If the interpretation of the author's detail was unclear, I would use this shorthand note: DU (detail unclear). Since vocabulary was a central piece on all writing activities, the guidelines for the novel reflection critique called for at least one properly used, highlighted vocabulary word from the student-generated word bank (a long list of new words we created from books students read as part of our Reading All Year project). If the vocabulary word was omitted from the critique or used improperly or was not highlighted, I would make this shorthand note: V (vocabulary). Of course, in an individual discussion about an assignment it's easy to flesh out a simple problem like this one. In most cases, the problem can be rectified quickly. If it's a simple highlighting matter, this can be taken care of immediately, and a shorthand note isn't necessary. For students who have completed all parts of the activity according to the guidelines, the shorthand designation is M for *mastery.*

YES, YOU HAVE TIME FOR FEEDBACK

At some point in the day, during a planning period or after school, I take the shorthand notes and convert them to SE2R

feedback, which is placed in the comment section of the online grade book or directly beneath each student's blog post. Opponents of written narrative feedback, instead of grades, contend that there isn't enough time to write the kinds of narratives shown in this book. "I'd love to give my students SE2R feedback," a teacher told me at a conference once, "but with 120 students, I simply don't have the time." My first response to this argument is that all feedback doesn't have to be written. Often, verbal feedback is enough. However, for teachers who are compelled to have some kind of daily assessment placed in a grade book (some schools mandate this), shorthand SE2R reduces the time significantly, and the amazing benefits are not lost.

Consider the shorthand notes in Figure 5.1, focusing on the detailed narrative conversions. Efficiency dictates setting up shorthand notes and lengthier conversions before assessing an activity. This can be done for just about anything but is best for quick activities that are completed more than once a week. When ready to post your feedback, you'll likely have numerous students who should receive the same comments. So, if 12 of my students mastered the activity, I write the entire SE2R feedback conversion, the content next to M in Figure 5.1, in one student's comment section. Now, much as a teacher in the grade world would do if these 12 students scored 20/20, I copy the complete SE2R feedback that has been added to one student's record and paste it into the remaining 11 students' comment boxes. For five students who wrote less than 300 words, I write the < 300 conversion (Figure 5.1) in one student's comment box. Again, I copy it and paste it into the other four comment areas for those students who received the < 300 note on my clipboard. This process continues for all students, and it takes 10 minutes or less to post feedback for a class of 30 students. Best of all, rather than learning nothing from a number or letter grade, every student knows exactly what was accomplished and what, if anything, needs to be done to complete the task. Because I've already talked to each individual, some may choose to ignore the written feedback. Still, a record

exists for other shareholders—parents, counselors, and other teachers.

Remember, a score of 14/20 says, "You're finished, and you got a C," and the student will likely shrug and think, *Who cares? I'm average.* Meanwhile, the SE2R conversion will invite this student to return to the activity and complete something that is missing, in order to demonstrate mastery learning. And the purportedly average student will do it every time, moving from average to expert, often in the same day.

Although shorthand SE2R simplifies the process of providing written feedback, it isn't always needed when discussing an activity with students individually. It's easy through summary and explanation to help the student see what should be added to demonstrate understanding. For example, in the novel reflection critique, if a vocabulary word were missing, a student would most likely go to the word bank at that very moment, locate a word that works in the critique and add it to the blog post. Sometimes, I would be on the other side of the classroom discussing another student's writing, and a student would invite me back to reassess the critique with the missing vocabulary word or something else from the activity guidelines.

> This is the power of involving students in this insightful dialogue about learning.

At that point, an entirely different conversation may take place. "Why did you choose this word? Were you considering others? Is it possible to use a different form of the word to improve the writing?" Even though a student may have needed one element to demonstrate understanding of a particular concept or skill, the student may continue to expand on the work when challenged with a few key questions. This is the power of involving students in this insightful dialogue about learning. Granted, every activity can't be handled this way, but when it can, mastery learning happens quickly, and this is a beautiful thing.

THE SE2R PORTFOLIO

As indicated throughout this book, the most important reason to eliminate grades is that they take the student out of the assessment process. A feedback system provides a narrative that leads to a fascinating conversation with students about learning, which makes all forms of measurement obsolete. When teachers provide written feedback throughout a school year, this narrative can be collected and maintained in one place, creating an SE2R portfolio.

Teachers have been using portfolio assessment for many years. This involves placing various work samples that students have created throughout a school year and housing them in large folders or boxes. The theory is that students, parents and, perhaps, students' future teachers can evaluate the work to see how individuals have progressed over time. Portfolio assessment is well intentioned, but the problem is that the folders and boxes of work too often remain in a closet collecting dust, or they are sent home with students never to be used again. Even if these compendiums of work are reviewed, it's difficult to see authentic achievement, as activities are covered in number and letter grades, obscuring the net worth of the work—what was learned.

If Sarah has a pile of essays with scores ranging from 22/25 to 80/100, what does she learn from this? There's no consistency in how activities are valued, so even if the percentages are used to measure achievement, this too is meaningless. Sarah scores 88% on one writing sample (22/25). Later in the year, she manages only 80% (80/100). Did her writing competency decline? Using these indiscriminate numbers and percentages, it's impossible to know. However, if Sarah's work samples contain SE2R feedback, the portfolio's value increases exponentially. Still, the box of papers and projects can be discarded and replaced with a digital representation of Sarah's work, containing only the feedback she's received and how she has resolved it.

The SE2R portfolio is a large sample of feedback a student has received throughout the school year (Figure 5.2). The portfolio should be created when the first SE2R is given. It's worthwhile to give up an entire class period to teach students how to effectively create and manage the SE2R portfolio because it will ultimately represent the most valuable picture of their academic growth—far superior to a final report card and a GPA. If possible, the SE2R portfolio should be created and maintained in an online space; a cloud-based file is best. Examples include a classroom website, blog page, Google Doc, or Dropbox file. Teach students to create categories for the different kinds of work they'll create throughout the year. An elementary grade math teacher might ask students to generate these categories: *Math Facts, Word Problems, Projects, Lab Activities.* Note the *Resolution* column in Figure 5.2; this is the portfolio's most vital section, because it's where students will write how they resolved any part of an activity or project that was unfinished. This is how redirection is handled.

Each time feedback is provided, students record the feedback in the proper category in their SE2R portfolio. This is easy for narratives that students receive digitally (more on digital feedback in Chapter 6). For example, students could copy comments received on a blog post and then paste the feedback into their SE2R portfolios, maintained in a separate web page. As previously noted, pivotal to the success of the SE2R portfolio is that students write how they respond if redirection and request for resubmission were given; this is the *Resolution* section in Figure 5.2. This part of the process can't be overemphasized. Like having students evaluate themselves (more on this in the next section) and asking questions that elicit self-evaluation, the SE2R portfolio is critical to a student's growth as a self-evaluative independent learner. Being critical of one's own actions is a highly underrated life skill. If teachers begin cultivating this skill early, students will flourish not only in their K–12 lives but also in college and in their careers. SE2R portfolios should be updated weekly; again, this is extremely valuable class time.

Figure 5.2 SE2R Portfolio

My Feedback

PAGE [Edit · Files · Versions · New]

Date	Reflection Blog Posts	Book Chat	Feedback Resolution
9/2		You participated in a book chat with three peers in your group. You shared details about your book. You did not ask any questions about others' books. To improve listening skills, it's important to ask at least one question.	**September 13** I asked two people in my group questions about their books during this chat.
9/5	You completed a 250-word reflection letter on your blog. You clearly identify one key setting in your story. However, you didn't explain how the setting impacts decisions the characters make. Please add this explanation to your post. Let me know when you have done so.		**September 7** Last night I added two sentences to my blog. I said that Ponyboy was at the movies. He decided to go alone in a dangerous neighborhood. So he got jumped by the socs. Mr. Barnes said I accomplished the task.

As the year progresses, updating the portfolio will take less time. Soon, students will begin discussing their entries with peers. Plus, each time they see feedback that redirects them, they'll want to return to activities, make changes and resubmit. Students become eager to add to the resolution section of their portfolios, as they realize this demonstrates mastery, which stirs pride in learning. And this is the kind of pride that is worth encouraging.

TALKING ABOUT FEEDBACK

Supplying effective feedback requires far more than jotting down observations of student work. "As it happens, applying feedback in complex situations is challenging. A fairly daunting list of things can undermine its effectiveness. Feedback can be too vague to be actionable. It can be specific and clear only to have recipients misunderstand it" (Lemov, Woolway, & Yezzi, 2012, p. 108). Avoiding these issues, while not easy, can be done through conversation with students. As noted in several places throughout this book, conversation about learning is an invaluable part of the SE2R process. However, up to this point, not much has been written about discussing the feedback that students receive. The primary motivation behind discussions about feedback should be to clarify any misunderstanding of it and to help students make the feedback actionable. According to *Practice Perfect* authors, Doug Lemov, Erica Woolway, and Katie Yezzi (2012), experienced educators, "Recipients may signal that they take feedback seriously, that they value it, but this does not necessarily mean that they use feedback" (p. 109). There is nothing complex about conversing with individuals about feedback. However, it is part of a successful no-grades classroom that teachers often neglect. This is understandable. Teachers are accustomed to observing student activities and responding, typically with opinion. Once they become skilled providers of SE2R, it's easy to be swept away by the thrill of summarizing,

explaining, redirecting, and request-
ing resubmission. Then, students
start responding to the feedback,
and the excitement swells because
this kind of reaction from students is
uncommon in the grades world.

> Tell students that the process of self-evaluation is as important as anything they will ever do in a classroom.

When I became overly engaged
in writing feedback, I told myself to slow down and talk about
the feedback with my students. This reminded me that con-
versations about feedback are as important, possibly more so,
than the original SE2R. These conversations encourage young
learners to become self-advocates, which is the primary goal
in a student-centered classroom. "Once students have bought
into the idea of self-advocacy (even if still reluctant to take the
first step), it's time to get them reflecting. Reflection is a tre-
mendous tool, where students can really think about a specific
assignment and their journey through it" (Sackstein, 2014). A
perfect time to slow down and reflect on learning is when
students are reviewing feedback or adding it to their SE2R
portfolios. Here is a list of questions that can be used as a
starting ground for successful conversations that bring stu-
dents into the assessment process, helping them become self-
advocates:

- What is your reaction to this?
- What will you do next?
- Do you agree with my explanation of what you did?
- What have you learned that you didn't know before the activity?
- What could you have done differently to improve?
- What prior lesson, model, or guideline did you revisit for help?
- Did you spend time reviewing the work and reflecting before you submitted it?
- How are your resolutions looking?
- Why didn't you resolve this activity/project?
- Are you satisfied with this?

Modeling this conversation in advance will help students visualize what can otherwise be an embarrassing conference, especially with shy students who are uncomfortable talking to teachers. Remember, most students will have never participated in a discussion about how they respond to teacher feedback. Tell students that the process of self-evaluation is as important as anything they will ever do in a classroom. Remind them constantly that their opinions about how they learn are the opinions that matter most. This ongoing process is what leads to self-advocacy.

Report Card Time: Now What?

When discussing SE2R feedback in place of grades at schools and conferences, it doesn't take long for a teacher or administrator to ask about report cards. "I can eliminate grades during the marking period, but I still have to put a grade on report cards," is a common complaint. Many years ago, when I decided to stop grading, I knew the report card would pose a problem. This is an issue that must be confronted early in the school year with all stakeholders—students, parents, and administrators. When explaining the no-grades system to students in August, they always ask about report cards. This is one of my favorite parts of the year, because of their reaction to my response. "We'll discuss your progress over the course of the marking period," I explain, "and we'll decide on the grade together." Lots of puzzled looks follow. Talking about grades makes sense; most students have done it in the past with teachers who ask them what they believe their grade should be and to justify their opinions. Even in these cases, the teacher always makes the final judgment, typically based on how the math adds up. There were 1,000 points possible. Paul amassed a total of 710, good for 70% and a report card grade of C. Any discussion about this is nothing more than smoke and mirrors. Familiar with this ruse, students persist: "Okay, but you're still going to tell us our final grade, right?" This is where the jaws really

drop. I inform them that we'll reflect on their accomplishments and discuss how their work fits in the A, B, C's of the grade world but, in the end, they will decide the final grade. Students never really believe this until the end of the marking period arrives and we discuss the grade and decide on it.

In order to effectively discuss and decide on a final report card grade, it's necessary to set aside several days for individual conversations. The first year I conducted grade conferences, I tried to squeeze them into two days. My average class size was 25. I assumed each conference would take no more than three minutes. This was a huge miscalculation. The average grade conference took five minutes and some took 10. Three or four days was necessary to complete effective conferences, as these turned into awe-inspiring discussions about learning over time. It's easy to assume this is impossible, with other objectives that must be met in a marking period, but this is some of the most useful time you'll spend with students all year.

Student decides her report card grade.

In preparation for the individual grade conference, I ask students to review all of their work from the prior grading period. They look at everything they've done online, visiting their web pages, blogs, and most important, their SE2R portfolios. During conferences, students are busy reviewing everything and considering how this fits into the letter grade matrix. We have abandoned grades, but they've been graded their entire school lives so they understand the basics. Also, we talk about this prior to the conference, and I emphasize that I don't want to reduce their learning to A's, B's, and C's.

There have been times when I said nothing at all about how students should determine their report card grades. "You know how grades work. Consider what you've accomplished and figure it out." After five minutes of reviewing activities and feedback, most easily settled on a letter that I would then place on the report card. Other times, I've had groups that were less confident in their abilities to examine a large amount of school-work, voluminous narrative feedback, and to conclude what their report card grades should be. This is understandable; it's a unique challenge to return to the constraints of the grades world once you're accustomed to residing in a world where learning is centered on conversation and self-evaluation. So, we discussed guidelines for deciding on a final report card grade. We agreed that a marking period filled with completed activities and mastery, based on resolution of all redirection to prior learning, merits a report card grade in the A to B range. Although few, if any students, receive D's or F's because they've been given the chance to rework activities, we agree that if 60 percent or less of our work was not revisited and resubmitted, this would equate to a grade in the D to F range.

> Grade conferences turn into goal-setting sessions.

Individual grade conferences turn into so much more than labeling work with a letter. As students discuss their accomplishments and the learning outcomes they believe they didn't master in a grading period, their self-evaluation skills begin to grow. "I'm writing more than ever," a student

would say, "but I still need to cut down on my mechanical errors." In effect, grade conferences turn into goal-setting sessions. This, of course, fans the intrinsic motivation that encourages students to work harder moving forward. I've experienced students who struggled to adjust to the no-grade system and failed to resolve the SE2R they received on numerous activities and projects. When it's time to put a grade on a report card, and students give themselves a D or an F, it means much more than a teacher doing it, especially when the students have to tell their parents that they decided on the low mark. Imagine a parent asking, "Why did your teacher give you an F?" and the response being, "He didn't give me an F. I gave it to myself." The parent–child conversation that follows is one more important part of the feedback continuum.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Like the one-room schoolhouse, corporal punishment, and note taking on slates, report cards will one day disappear from schools worldwide. Some visionary school administrators like those at Anastasis Academy in Colorado solved the problem by never using report cards in the first place. Anastasis founder Kelly Tenkely (2014) did not want assessment based on data. "In starting Anastasis Academy, we quickly found that no traditional grading system could adequately assess students as they were learning. We ditched formal A to F grading and instead used standards-based grading. The idea was that if we assessed students based on standards (which we used as some of our learning goals), stakeholders would be able to better map progress as they went."

What troubles educators and policy makers, who lack the vision to eliminate measurement, is how to demonstrate learning at the end of a school year. How can students be promoted to the next level and, eventually, to college without a report card? There are many methods of demonstrating learning

without letters and GPAs. Since education is rapidly moving into the digital world, work samples can be maintained in the cloud. Over the course of one school year, activities and feedback can be deposited into an online folder, similar to an SE2R portfolio. This sort of digital portfolio assessment is still in its infancy, but it is not new. Big Picture, a large consortium of progressive schools that embrace student-centered learning, use digital portfolios in lieu of grades as a means of introducing students to college admissions deans. "Such assessments authenticate for the student what she knows and validates for the teacher what the student knows and how she knows what she knows—not only the student's know-what but know-how and even know-why" (Big Picture Learning, 2014). In fact, teachers, school counselors, and college admissions deans can easily access academic growth from the years of content that students curate in digital files. Students can carry this library of achievement with them on mobile devices. Imagine having the ability to sit down with a teacher or college professor and quickly respond to any request for a work sample with the swipe of finger.

> It is amazing what happens when you take away the labels and help kids understand that no matter where they start from, there is something to be learned, forward progress to be made. They choose lofty goals. They do the impossible.
>
> —Kelly Tenkely, co-founder, Anastasis Academy

A valuable part of this digital compilation of student work and feedback should be performance reviews. A performance review is similar to what teachers receive when evaluated by administrators. It is a narrative about one's abilities, skills, knowledge base, and growth over time. This is a part of narrative feedback that often elicits a knee-jerk reaction of, "There's no time for that." Like the report card conference and individual conversations about learning, the performance review is a critical piece of student growth. It is similar to a report card in only one way—the best way. The intention of a report card is to summarize learning; as noted throughout this book, it fails miserably. The performance

review also summarizes learning, but because it is a written report by a teacher or team of teachers who have spent a school year assessing student accomplishments and discussing those accomplishments with each individual, the performance review succeeds where the traditional report card fails. Plus, performance reviews can be used as part of the college admission process. "How does a student get into college without a GPA?" people ask. The answer is a large digital portfolio and years of meaningful written assessments from teachers and the self-evaluations of students.

There are many ways a teacher can create performance reviews that simplify the process. One such method is to involve as many teachers as possible. This is easy if the document is created in a cloud-based file. In the sample team performance review on page 78, a page is created in a Google Doc for reviews of Laura Johnson, a fictitious student. Mr. Fox, the language arts teacher, adds his review, and the document will be shared with Laura's other teachers, and they can enter the document at their leisure and post their reviews. This approach is especially easy in elementary schools, where students have fewer teachers, and in schools that use academic teaming. If multiple teachers have the same group of students, the entire roster can be divided equally. Each teacher will create the performance review documents for a segment of students, lightening the workload for all. For example, on a team of 120 students, four teachers might each set up 30 documents. One teacher should coordinate the effort, creating a folder that contains all student reviews and sharing it with others. It takes two to four weeks to complete this many reviews, depending on how much is written on average per student, so the process should begin with roughly one month of school remaining.

Writing performance reviews for 100 or even 50 students may seem like a daunting task, but each one may vary in length and doesn't have to be too long. The review Mr. Fox writes is just over 200 words. It might take five minutes to accomplish this task, so the time it takes to complete performance reviews

Performance Review for Laura Johnson 2013–14 school year

Mr. Fox (language arts): You completed two year-long projects and demonstrated exceptional growth in many skills through these projects. In the beginning of the year, you were a reluctant reader and admitted you'd never read a book voluntarily. During our Reading All Year Project, you selected and read 17 books, a remarkable accomplishment that deserves to be celebrated. While reading these books, you completed weekly reflections in which you discussed characters and plot and made many comparisons to other experiences and life lessons, based on what you read. You also completed our diary-writing project; you posted more than 70 entries (an average of two per week). Your character took life through your writing, and you eliminated many of the mechanical errors you were making at the beginning of the year. Specifically, you have mastered basic sentence structure, no longer writing run-ons or sentence fragments. You show expertise in the basics of comma use and capitalization. You have good command of vocabulary. You presented numerous oral presentations with clarity and good voice. You collaborate well and easily evaluate your own learning. You've shown excellent growth throughout the year and have much to be proud of. You discovered books this year. Please continue reading, and everything else will be easy.

Miss Wade (science):

Mrs. Rogan (social studies):

Mr. Kosar (math):

Mr. Sanchez (Spanish):

for all students could total as little as five or six hours. Breaking this task up over time, though, will lessen the burden, and *burden* is really an inaccurate term, because reflecting on all students' growth and sharing your observations with them is a truly rewarding experience. If you make assessment an ongoing conversation throughout the year, you might be uncomfortable writing a performance review, without each student's voice. In this case, you might share some or all of your performance review with your students and invite them to add their own reflections about the school year. I was always astonished by the honesty of students about their own learning. "It still sounds like a lot of work," people have told me. Of course it's work. There's not much about being a teacher that isn't. The end result though is magical. "It is amazing what happens when you take away the labels and help kids understand that no matter where they start from, there is something to be learned, forward progress to be made. They choose lofty goals. They do the impossible" (Tenkely, 2014).

REFLECTION

Brainstorm some SE2R shorthand that you might use on a future assignment. Consider reviewing Figure 5.1 as a guide. Convert the shorthand into complete SE2R feedback. How much time will shorthand SE2R save?

In an effort to involve students in the feedback process, consider creating a focus group of students who can help you write SE2R and create shorthand notes. What feedback does the focus group provide that helps facilitate a conversation about learning in your class?