



Year-End Reflection: Insights and Preparation

To support our member schools as they close out the school year, Folio's spring programming focused on cultivating thoughtful end-of-year reflection processes for faculty and staff. Members participated in a Folio Town Hall led by renowned mindfulness coach Dave Mochel, a Member Spotlight led by Justin Cerenzia from St. George's, a virtual Reflection Workshop, and five Mastermind calls.

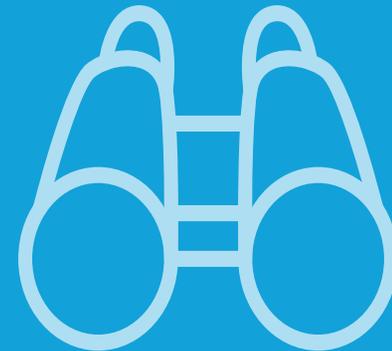
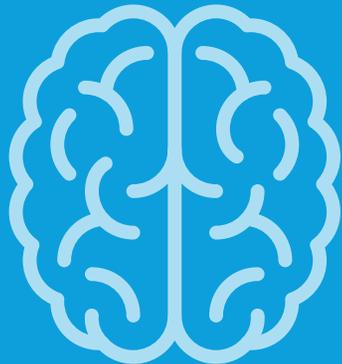
Folio members and facilitators shared their thoughts about how school leaders can move faculty and staff from a reactionary and fearful mindset to a growth mindset where they are ready and able to reflect, and about how school leaders can close out this year on a "win" and use that confidence to help plan for next year.

For more information, visit foliocollaborative.org
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The takeaways from these conversations can help you finalize your school's end-of-year reflection processes and maximize the new Folio platform features.

- Help your community feel grounded and safe so that they are able to reflect.
- Use your “essential question” to drive your end-of-year reflection process.
- Design your end-of-year reflection process to maximize purpose and minimize added struggle.
- Let faculty and staff know that you have heard them.
- Plan for what comes next.





Help your community feel grounded and safe so that they are able to reflect.

Grounding exercises create a healthy detachment from our current experiences so that we are able to create a safe space for reflection.

- Dave Mochel led our Town Hall group in an opening grounding exercise and explained how the physiological responses that occur as a result of these types of exercises “prime” us to be ready for reflection. During these centering activities, our brains increase production of our “happy” chemicals and decrease production of cortisol, a stress chemical. These changes allow us to activate the learning and growth part of our brains. Visit [Dave’s website](#) for recorded guided meditations to use with your faculty and staff.
- During Folio’s Reflection Workshop, Folio members explored ways to help people become “unstuck” from fear and anxiety—moving toward a more resilient mindset. This can include celebrating, via a gallery-style showcase, the engaging and meaningful work done in the transition to distance learning; using the storytelling process as a way for faculty to share their experiences (see the [Storycorp website](#) for a great DIY); and leading guided reflection and mindfulness activities at the beginning of faculty meetings.

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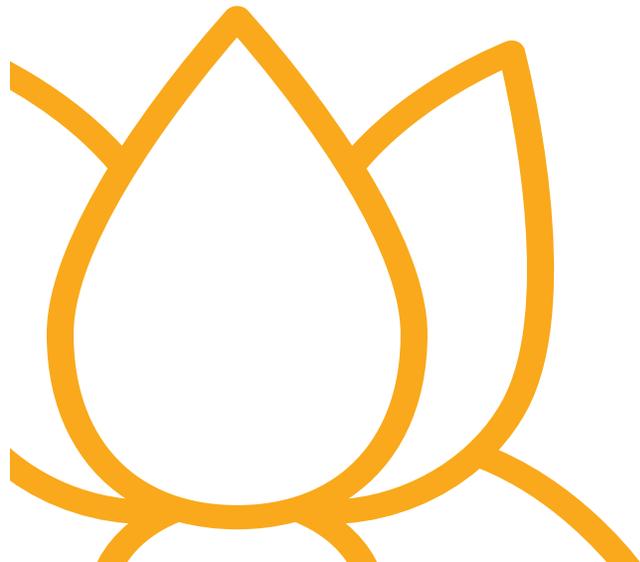
Check out these additional resources on becoming grounded and finding safety:

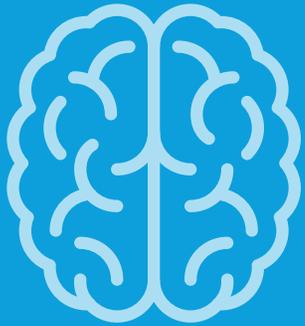
- [Meditation recordings on Dave’s website](#)
- [“The 3 Secrets of Resilient People” by Lucy Hone \(TED talk\)](#)
- [Hardwiring Happiness: Rick Hanson \(TED talk\)](#)
- [5 Steps for Surviving the Change You Didn’t Plan For](#)
- [Downloadable Tools from Elena Aguilar’s Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience](#)
- [Brené on Anxiety, Calm + Over/Under-Functioning podcast](#)
- [Red Brain, Green Brain](#)
- [Why your brain loves good storytelling](#)
- [Learn to Love Your Amygdala](#)
- [What happens during an amygdala hijack](#)

• **Use the Folio platform to support grounding.** 

- The new **Mindful Minute** feature allows faculty and staff to quickly reflect on their recent experiences by listing one or two successful strategies that they want to capture, describing a challenge that they navigated, and selecting an emoticon that best represents how they are feeling that day. We know that emotions and intuitive impulses can get in the way of rational decision making; by pausing to reflect objectively on what's working and what's not working, and then articulating a strategy to overcome that obstacle, people are more likely to make a wise and informed decision when the challenge arises again.
- The new **Folio Task List** is a convenient way to “assign” work or actions. As you support calmness and safety, why not use the **Task List** to share resources about mindfulness, reflection, and overall wellness? You can “assign” teachers to read an article, go for a walk, attend a virtual yoga class - whatever makes sense for your particular context. An added bonus: by having your teachers complete these sorts of wellness-centered “tasks,” they’ll experience the sense of satisfaction that comes with knowing what’s expected of them and successfully completing it!

During these centering activities, our brains increase production of our “happy” chemicals and decrease production of cortisol, a stress chemical, changes which allow us to activate the learning and growth part of our brains.





Use your “essential question” to drive your end-of-year reflection process.

As Justin Cerenzia told fellow Folio members his week’s Member Spotlight, we must “know our why. And don’t start with our how.” Determine your team’s purpose for this year’s end-of-year reflection process first, and then use that purpose to guide your facilitation and question selection.

- Dave Mochel encouraged Town Hall participants to “anchor our reflections in what matters,” stating that we need to connect with what’s most important and begin our reflections from that starting point. Then practice “kind and honest self-evaluation,” asking ourselves “what’s working? What’s not working? What is really important to keep in mind?”
- During Folio’s Reflection Workshop, members shared that, in some cases, the goal for year-end reflection has shifted as a result of COVID-19. Whereas this reflection in previous years was designed to be closely related to a teacher’s individual goals, some leaders discussed adapting this spring’s reflection process to become a way for faculty and staff to acknowledge and celebrate their work, share gratitude for others, and pause to mark the end of a challenging academic year.

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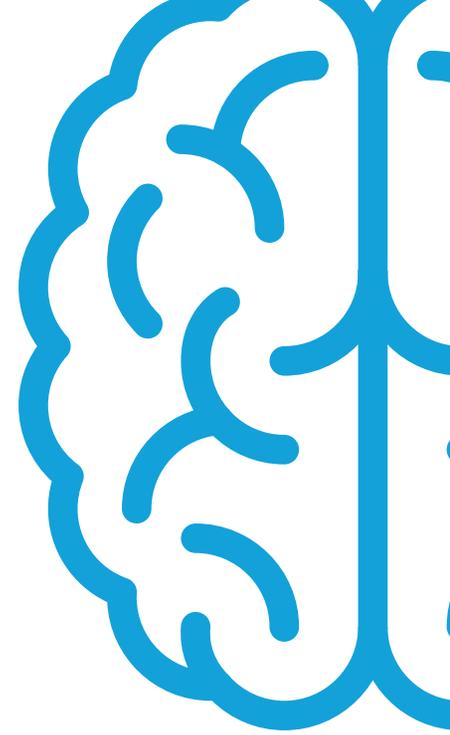
Know our why.
And don’t start
with our how.

Here are some additional resources for teacher self-reflection:

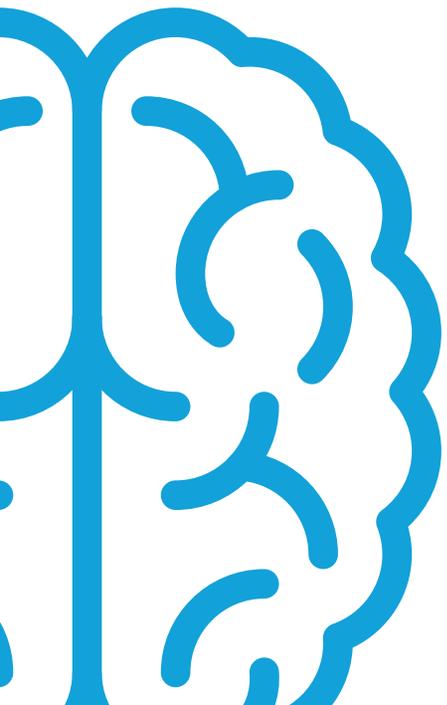
- See Dave’s [“What is most important?” list of questions for self-reflection.](#)
- [Your end-of-year reflection](#)
- [End-of-year reflection for teachers](#)
- [10 Teacher questions for self-reflection](#)

• **Use the Folio platform to create a custom, meaningful end-of-year reflection process.** 

- The new [Self Reflection Year-End Summary Note](#) makes it easier for faculty and staff to complete an end-of-year reflection. They can complete a preloaded, customizable reflection form (created by their Folio admin) and share it with their supervisor. By doing this, the reflection “gives the brain an opportunity to pause amidst the chaos, untangle and sort through observations and experiences, consider multiple possible interpretations, and create meaning. This meaning becomes learning, which can then inform future mindsets and actions. This “meaning making” is crucial to their ongoing growth and development.” ([Harvard Business Review](#))



Practice “kind and honest self-evaluation,” asking ourselves “what’s working? What’s not working? What is really important to keep in mind?”





Design your end-of-year reflection process to maximize purpose and minimize added struggle.

School leaders are understandably reluctant to ask faculty and staff to do “one more thing.” Given this, it’s important to design your school’s process in a way that maximizes purpose and minimizes struggle.

- Dave Mochel introduced the “Hearty Mindset” concept, explaining that while “discomfort is inevitable...and exists as a source of information,” struggle is “different than discomfort.” Once “all of our secondary energy goes into struggle, it’s no longer available for purpose.” In other words, we tire ourselves out with struggle and deplete our ability to focus on what matters — our purpose.
- Collaborative Members shared their plans for adapting their current end-of-year reflection process to better meet faculty and staff needs. Some school leaders are offering multiple ways for staff to complete the reflection, including small group discussion, independent writing, and one-on-one conversations. Others are also considering “chunking out” the reflection process into quicker activities spaced throughout the summer as a way to make the process more manageable.

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Consider these additional resources for developing a process for faculty and staff reflection.

- [Make End-of-Year Reflection Matter](#)
- [Folio End-of-Year Reflection framework](#)
- [Learning in the Thick of It](#)

• **Use the Folio platform to streamline and integrate the reflection process for your faculty and staff.** 

- For individual reflection: The Folio admin can create a self-reflection Year End Summary form with a few simple prompts and ask faculty and staff to respond to those questions in a [Self-Reflection Year End Summary](#) note.
- For small group reflection: Folio admins can create a waypoint for a Workspace and associate a Year End Summary Note with it; collaborators in the Workspace could then complete the waypoint using the [Self-Reflection Year End Summary Form](#).
- As a way to incorporate additional types of reflection beyond the [Year End Summary Form](#), think about having faculty and staff attach a video or audio recording (to the note) of themselves reflecting on their experiences. For some, this might be easier or more natural than recording their reflections in written form.
- Admins can use the [Task List](#) to assign and remind faculty and staff to engage in certain reflection activities over a period of time (for example, admins could assign teachers to practice a grounding exercise this week, to talk with a colleague about wins from this school year the following week, to review student surveys the third week, and to close out the reflection process by completing the [Self-Reflection Year End Summary Form](#) in week 4).





Let faculty and staff know that you have heard them.

Faculty and staff need to know that you are listening, especially after a challenging spring. By acknowledging and validating the ideas shared by teachers in their reflections, you effectively demonstrate compassion, understanding, and empathy. These are all traits that can diffuse some of the emotional intensity that they may be feeling right now.

- Dave Mochel reminded us how powerful our connections to each other are, especially with something as personal as an end-of-year reflection. While we might not agree with how a teacher describes their experiences (especially when those descriptions don't match our own experiences), it's important to listen carefully, make sure that you understand, and ask "how can I help you?". As leaders, we have influence through connection, not by being "right."
- Members shared their plans for debriefing the end-of-year reflections with their faculty and staff. In addition to the traditional one-on-one conversation with each teacher (via Zoom, a phone call, or even during a walk and talk (masks on, of course!) leaders proposed having teachers meet in small groups by departments

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Here are additional resources related to listening and understanding.

- [The Magic of Validation](#)
- [Leadership Development Skills: Acknowledging and Validating](#)
- [Understanding Validation: A Way to Communicate Acceptance](#)

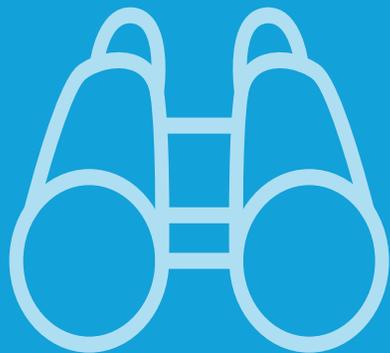
(via Zoom breakout rooms) to discuss their reflections and share insights and “ah-ha” moments. Members also discussed using recorded video as a way to reflect and listen in an asynchronous way, especially for those teachers who might be feeling Zoomed-out.

• **In the Folio platform, use the comment field to show that you are paying attention.** 

- Review the [Year End Summary Note](#) and use the comment field when viewing the note to respond in a way that acknowledges and validates the teacher’s reflections.
- Think of using a tool like Elena Aguilar’s [Coaching Stems](#) to help guide your responses.



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Plan for what comes next.

As Paul Romer, the Stanford economist and Nobel prize winner, has said, “a crisis is a terrible thing to waste.” School leaders must be thinking of ways to ensure that they are not “wasting” the opportunities presented by this pandemic and instead emerge as different, more resilient, and “unbroken” schools.

- Dave Mochel reminded us that while we may have been given a certain amount of grace because we were in “crisis mode” this spring. In the Fall, school leaders and faculty will be expected to demonstrate the learning from these past few months. He urged the use of our neuroplasticity, the ability for our brain to literally rewire and make us more skilled at whatever we “practiced” that day. Dave suggested that at the end of every day, in a “quiet and wise” state, we should write about the practical things that have helped us and our teams function better. Then, in moments when we’re struggling, we will have a list of proven strategies that allow us to “trust our wise selves.”
- Justin Cerenzia described how his school’s embrace of the Japanese Wabi-Sabi philosophy—that “nothing lasts, nothing is finished, nothing is perfect”—has helped

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establish an ecosystem of growth and development at his school. The resulting reflective culture in which faculty and staff are encouraged to “fail well. Learn. Fail again” has allowed them to be nimble as they adapt to the COVID-19 crisis.

- Folio members echoed the belief that schools must use the reflection cycle as a way to learn from their success and challenges this year as a “tremendous growth opportunity” to reimagine work as educators. They discussed using the reflection data to intentionally inform professional development this summer as well as serve as the basis for next year’s individual and school-wide goals.
- **Use the Folio platform to plant the seeds for what comes next.** 
 - Faculty and staff can use the new [Self-Reflection Year End Summary](#) note to capture ideas that might inform next year’s goals.
 - Consider creating a reflection prompt that asks faculty and staff to describe how they will apply their learning for SY 2020-2021.
 - Supervisor can react to these plans using the comment feature.
 - Based on their identified areas for growth, teachers can use the Professional Development feature to submit relevant learning opportunities for approval. For example:
 - teachers might ask to participate in an online learning design course or do a book study on creating community in a virtual learning environment.
 - teachers can also create Professional Development activities to meet their future needs such as a Fall workshop or online Professional Learning Communities.

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