

I Used to Think . . . & Now I Think

Featuring the work of Megan Stariha and Mark Grundberg,
with inspiration from Richard F. Elmore

Taking a few minutes to observe and document changes in your own thinking over time helps you make sense of what you're learning and how you're growing.

This assignment was inspired by a book of the same name in which experts on education reform described how their minds had changed toward the topic (or occasionally, how their convictions deepened) through their long experience in the field.

It's rare these days to hear experts—or anyone—say that they have changed their minds. Change happens gradually, particularly about ideas, behaviors, or conceptions of self. It can be hard to notice change while it's happening. But if you're excited to adopt the creative behaviors and mindsets expressed through the assignments in this book—or if you're in the midst of any other kind of learning experience or transition in your life—using this assignment

to note incremental changes will help you consolidate and reinforce those new abilities and ultimately firm up the direction in which you wish to move.

First, do any other assignment in this book.

Then take a piece of paper and divide it into two columns.

At the top of one column, write "I Used to Think . . ." and on the other "And Now I Think . . ."

On the "Used to . . ." side, list your previous ideas or preconceptions about the assignment activity or topic, and on the "And Now I . . ." side write your thoughts on the same subject after completing it.

Although every assignment in this book is designed for a specific purpose, there's no guarantee that what you take away is what was intended. You may have multiple interpretations based on your own life and prior experiences. One goal of *this* assignment is to free you from my assumptions about the value of any particular learning experience and to prompt you to articulate the impact in your own words.

You can also adapt this framework to any other learning experience, on your own or with a group. Use it with colleagues after you've all attended a conference together or completed a team retreat. Use it with friends or family to process a political shift or an emotional event. Ultimately, you may find this phrase creeping into your everyday vocabulary as a shorthand to describe how you are developing and changing as a person and as a creative thinker and doer.

