Metacognition: Evaluating your essay process

Before students turn in an essay, I have them turn the paper over to the blank sheet of paper on the back (they can attach a piece of notebook paper, too). On the back, they write a brief (1-2 sentences) response to the following questions:

1.   What did you do well in this paper? (This can be an element of writing, grammar, structure, or something about the topic or argument).

2. What would you change if you had additional time?

3.  The third question varies throughout the semester depending on what I want to know about the students. Some examples include: What writing topic would you like to review in class? What was the biggest challenge of this essay? What will you do differently for your next essay? What else do I need to know about your paper?

The benefit of this process is that it allows me to focus on giving additional instruction/attention to those areas that the student already knows need work. Students have to review their work one final time and honestly evaluate its strengths and weaknesses.