



Some Questions about Starting a Reflective Journal

What is a reflective journal?

A journal is a written record of a person's thinking. The act of thinking/ writing leads to the construction of meaning.

What are the advantages of a reflective practice journal?

A reflective journal will serve as a link between course work or theory and the activities or practices observed in a classroom. Reflective writing will provide a student with an opportunity to demonstrate how well the lessons have been integrated and applied. Finally, keeping a reflective journal will provide a student with a record of his/her growth as an informed, dynamic professional.

Is it the same as a diary?

No. A diary may cover personal, day-to-day topics, but a professional journal will be concerned with topics related to the profession of education.

What do I write about?

Write about lessons the cooperating teacher teaches; what seemed to be effective and why; what could have been done differently and why; techniques which are used for transitions for daily activities; attendance, handing out materials, dismissal, etc. Again, what worked and why is the essence of reflection. Student behavior and classroom management are also fertile areas for reflective writing.

Do I just write about what I see or what I read?

Writing a description of what may have been experienced, seen, or read is a starting point but reflection is then required. The reflection may manifest itself in several modes. It may be an analysis of a student's own personal opinions, beliefs, biases, attitudes, prejudices, etc. in light of the field observation. It may be an examination of what lies behind the particular topic. It may be an informed discussion of the social worthiness of the idea, experience, etc. It may be an envisioning of the action that may be taken. Usually, reflective writing involves a recognition of relationships between any of the above. These are offered as a guide (not a straitjacket) to aid the student in the reflective process.

Who is going to read this journal?

The course instructor, with the student's permission.

How much do I write and when do I write?

At the very least, one entry should follow each field observation.

What about correct grammar, mechanics, usage and typing?

Entries will most likely be written in a "flow of consciousness" manner. The student should be concerned with where thoughts are leading, as well as with the mechanics, etc.

How will I benefit from the journaling?

A student will begin developing awareness of one's self as a learner and of the learning that is being done throughout this semester of field experience. A student will also enter into the mode of a reflective education professional, i.e., one who connects concepts and experiences, questions and critiques, dialogues with others, and never stops being a learner.