

*Telling stories through journal writing becomes a quest for understanding and integration,
a bridge of inner mindscape and the outer landscape.*

Joanne Cooper

STUDENT TEACHER JOURNAL WRITING

Student Teachers are required to keep a journal which should help them articulate connections between new information and their acquired knowledge. Research increasingly reveals that highly effective teachers are generally those able to reflectively review and evaluate their experiences. Reflective teachers enthusiastically, persistently, and carefully consider and reconsider beliefs and practices that underlie their teaching. Through reflection novice and experienced teachers grow and develop new understandings. Journal writing is an invaluable vehicle in enhancing this reflective practice. The journal will be a place for the Student Teacher to think, learn and understand their students, their beliefs, their role as a teacher; a place to collect observations, responses and data; a place to make connections with their beliefs as a student and now as a teacher. Hopefully the journal will also be a place for formulating and recording questions: personal doubts, pedagogical questions, and issues of concern about teaching practices and subject content. It should provide the Student Teacher with a non-threatening place to wonder aloud, on paper, about the meaning of classroom events, issues, interpretations, problems and solutions.

The hope is that the Student Teacher will not only use this new information but also be able to apply it to his/her own teaching practice. A Student teacher who writes about new information and ideas - in addition to reading, talking, and listening - will gain insights that will enhance their own growth as a teacher. The journal writing process also provides catharsis for troublesome emotional struggles during this complex time of professional growth.

The Student Teacher is asked to *regularly set aside a time to write*, preferably daily, but to *at least attempt to write an entry two or three times a week*. The more often a journal is written the greater the chance to catch one's thoughts and analyze one's beliefs. When possible it is important to write for an extended period of time. The more writing one does at a single sitting the greater the opportunity of developing a thought or finding a new one. *Date each entry*. The key to journals is the location of each entry in a particular time; good journals have systematic and complete documentation. The journal is not only a place to write one's thoughts and feelings, but a way to record and later reflect upon changes in thoughts and beliefs. New thoughts and ideas may be discovered when the Student Teacher reflects on previous writings.

The journal may be shared with the Cooperating Teacher or College Supervisor or to both. The Student Teacher needs to be assured that the audience for whom it was intended will read the journal and provide periodic responses. The Cooperating Teacher and College Supervisor need to be flexible in joining or withdrawing from the dialogue the Student Teacher wishes to establish. However, it is important to remember that a Student Teacher has a right to privacy. They may choose not to share pieces or parts of their journal with their College Supervisor, Cooperating Teacher, or any other interested party. Since the Student Teacher will be writing not only about themselves, but their students, colleagues and/ or members of the school community in which they are working, it is strongly recommended that the journal is kept in a

safe place.

Although somewhat time consuming, it is hoped that through the journal the Student Teacher will have the unique opportunity to keep track of events and to privately reflect on the personal and public meaning of those events. Hopefully, through the narrative created in the journal the Student Teacher will be able to answer questions such as: "What happened? Why did it happen? What was my role? What beliefs did my actions reflect? Did my actions reflect beliefs and assumptions about which I was not aware? Did the consequences of my actions raise doubts or influence my beliefs? How should I want to act in the future on the basis of what happened?"

KEY POINTS FOR STUDENT TEACHERS TO REMEMBER WHEN JOURNAL WRITING:

1. Journal writing should be completed on the Student Teacher's own time, not at the expense of helping the Cooperating Teacher, planning, or working with children.
2. Keep journal in a loose leaf or spiral bound notebook/folder. Computer generated is also acceptable.
3. Date the entry.
4. Set aside time at least two to three times a week to write in the journal.
5. Write in an informal, conversational tone with disregard for spelling, grammar, etc.
6. Describe classroom observations and occurrences that include your beliefs relative to your successes or failures and what you learned from the experience for next time.
7. As the semester progresses, take the time to look back at prior entries and compare to current experiences, observations, and understandings.
8. *On the following page, examine the sample "Reflection" form developed for Student Teacher use by one of our Cooperating Teachers.* This format could be used once the Student Teacher actually begins handling some of the teaching responsibilities.

*Thoroughly to teach another is the best way to learn for yourself.
Tryon Edwards*